

# EARLY LEARNING PARENTS' PAGES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### Chocolate Crinkles



### Happy Holidays



### Celebrating Holidays Around the World



### Holiday Season 2020



### Farm Share



## Toys for Infants and Babies



It can be confusing when considering the best toys to buy for your baby. The advertising for toys can make it difficult for parents to decide which toys make the most appropriate gift. Consider your child's level of development when buying gifts or offering gift suggestions to family members. [Toys for infants and babies](#) should help them connect with family members and care givers. Buy or recommend gifts that support the physical, social-emotional and cognitive development of your child. Look for toys that are [safe and stimulating for babies](#). If a toy has to be controlled or held by an adult, don't buy it.

[From birth to 6 months](#), your baby's vision is developing rapidly while they use their eyes to connect with the world around them. They will prefer toys that have strong color contrast such as black, white and red at first. Later they will prefer the primary colors (red, blue, yellow) and secondary colors (orange, green and purple). Infants enjoy mobiles, brightly colored rattles and soft toys that make gentle noises. Your child is beginning to respond to sounds and will enjoy toys that have music or make sounds. Rattles, baby-safe mirrors, small stuffed animals or dolls, teething toys and soft small (but big enough so they will not fit in their mouth) balls are good toys.

[At 6 months](#) your baby will begin exploring their surroundings more and will begin to communicate through sounds as they start to learn words. Babies love repetition and will repeat actions and sounds over and over. Toys that encourage repetition such as rattles, soft blocks, toy musical instruments and busy boxes make good gifts for babies.

Your baby is developing physical skills quickly and will enjoy toys that encourage discoveries and exploration such as plastic buckets for filling and dumping, a ring stack or stacking cups, a simple shape sorter or a jack-in-the-box. They are crawling and cruising and will like push and pull toys, chunky cars and trucks or large plastic balls.

Don't forget books! You should [read to your child](#) beginning at birth. Make reading to your child a daily routine. New books make wonderful gifts for babies. Sturdy board books and plastic books are great because your baby will put the books in their mouth. There are cloth books that are washable as well. Look through the books and talk about the pictures. Read to your child as often as possible.

At this age, your child is still putting everything in their mouth. Make sure that all of their toys are made of washable and safe materials. Their toys should be large enough that they do not fit in their mouth. Do not buy toys with small pieces that may come off and become choking hazards. Read the toy packaging for potential choking and safety hazards and age suggestions. This will help you choose a toy that will provide your child hours of fun.

## Happy Holidays



This year may look different for your family due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but social distancing and other COVID-19 restrictions do not need to dampen your holiday spirits. Whatever your holiday plans are, consider including stress relief and healthy activities as part of your holiday celebrations.

Healthy Children.org has a [website](#) that offers suggestions to families to help them avoid stress and be mindful of keeping their children happy and healthy during this time of celebrations. Their suggestions include maintaining your [normal family schedule](#) as much as possible. When young children follow their normal bedtime routines and [get plenty of sleep](#), they are less anxious and feel better. Make sure your child is getting enough exercise and spending time outside whenever possible.

Spreading joy during the holiday season is fun. Have special family time each day to play a game, read a story, or go for a walk. Discuss special holiday traditions that your family enjoys. Playing and laughing together relieves stress and helps make wonderful memories. Have your child help you bake some of your family's favorite cookies or breads. Make extras to share with a neighbor or an elderly relative. Helping others will bring joy to your family. Teach your child how to express [gratitude](#) and be a role model by expressing your appreciation to family members.

Embrace the holiday restrictions by making holiday crafts or gifts together. You can make holiday face coverings. Decorate a Christmas tree with masks and pictures of relatives you may not be able to visit. Make videos of holiday traditions and email them to family members or friends. Grandparents would love to get a video of their grandchildren singing holiday songs, wrapping gifts or baking cookies. You can video chat with relatives during your holiday dinner to have the conversations you would have if you were sharing a meal with them.

[Create a family media plan](#) to help your child spend less time in front of screens and more time interacting with family and friends during the holiday season. Plan virtual field trips or virtual visits to zoos or museums. It may be safer for your family or easier than traveling to these places.

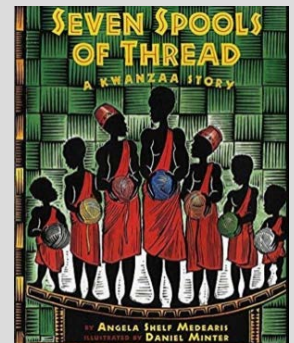
Just remember to enjoy the holidays and make special memories as a family.

# Holiday Books

The Crayons' Christmas



Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story



All-of-a-Kind Family Hanukkah



## Celebrating Holidays Around the World

As the holiday season is upon us, many children may learn about how holidays are celebrated around the world in their child care program or at home. You can celebrate the holidays with your child through music, books and art to help them learn about Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Christmas or other holiday traditions.

Learning about different holiday traditions can be fun! Here are a few ways you and your child can celebrate this season.

- Have an [at-home dance party](#) to Jewish [music for Hanukkah](#).
- [Make a card](#) for Kwanzaa
- Find a book about Christmas at a local library to read together (or see the ones on the previous page).

Visit our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages and share how you and your child are celebrating during the holiday season.



## Holiday Season 2020

As the year is coming to a close, the Coronavirus is still a concern for many families. As parents, it is important to prioritize your [mental and physical health](#). Holidays are a great time to focus on what is important to you and your family. The [Boston's Children's Hospital](#) reminds us to keep these safety tips in mind when you spend time with your family. Whether you continue family traditions or start new ones this year, keep these safety tips in mind.

### [Safety Tips for Trees, Lights and Other Decorations](#)

- Keep trees away from the fireplace, radiator or portable heater. Do not block walkways or exits.
- If you have an artificial tree, be sure it is fire resistant. If you have an alive tree, be sure to keep it watered.
- Check all lights before hanging them on your home or tree.
- Be sure lights are out of the reach of young children's hands.
- Turn all lights off when you go to bed or leave the house.

When planning to have or attend gatherings with extended family and friends, reduce your family's risk for catching or spreading the Coronavirus by following the holiday considerations from the [CDC](#).

### [Considerations for gatherings:](#)

- Community levels of COVID-19
- Location of your gathering
- Number of people attending your gathering
- Locations attendees travel from
- Attendees health prior to and during gathering



However, your family chooses to spend the holidays this year, remember to be safe and keep the health and safety of yourself and those around you a priority. Happy Holidays!



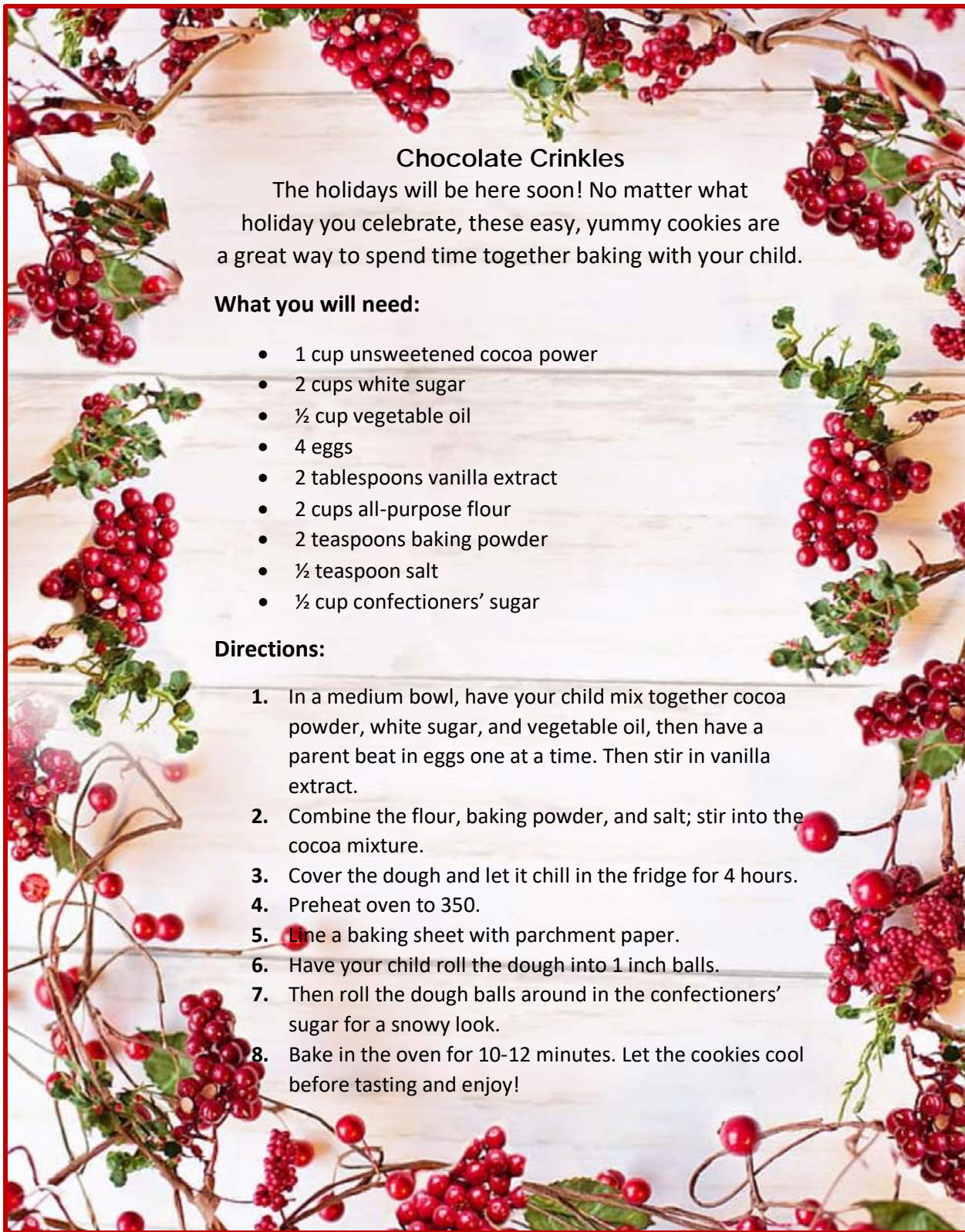
# Farm Share



Created in 1991, Farm Share is a non-profit organization that brings food to Floridians in need. Farm Share continues to partner with local farmers to feed the hungry by allowing unused, edible crops to be given to those who need it most, free of charge. Last year alone, Farm Share distributed more than 88 million pounds of food to all of Florida's 67 counties.

To find distribution locations that can help with your holiday meal planning, click [here](#).

To help volunteer or donate to Farm Share, click [here](#).



## Chocolate Crinkles

The holidays will be here soon! No matter what holiday you celebrate, these easy, yummy cookies are a great way to spend time together baking with your child.

### What you will need:

- 1 cup unsweetened cocoa power
- 2 cups white sugar
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 4 eggs
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup confectioners' sugar

### Directions:

1. In a medium bowl, have your child mix together cocoa powder, white sugar, and vegetable oil, then have a parent beat in eggs one at a time. Then stir in vanilla extract.
2. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt; stir into the cocoa mixture.
3. Cover the dough and let it chill in the fridge for 4 hours.
4. Preheat oven to 350.
5. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
6. Have your child roll the dough into 1 inch balls.
7. Then roll the dough balls around in the confectioners' sugar for a snowy look.
8. Bake in the oven for 10-12 minutes. Let the cookies cool before tasting and enjoy!

## Learn about CLASS Scores

If your child is enrolled in a preschool program that is contracted with the local early learning coalition to provide services for children through the [School Readiness Program](#), their child care provider will have a CLASS score. [CLASS scores](#) are based on the effectiveness of the teachers' interactions with children. These positive interactions support children's learning and development. The [CLASS scores](#) are based on an assessment tool, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®). [Click here to find more information about Class scores.](#)

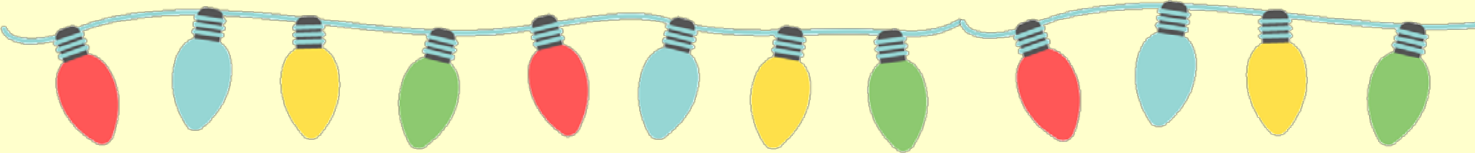
Put a **FREEZE** on Winter Holiday Fires

The U.S. Fire Administration wants to “Put a FREEZE on Winter Holiday Fires”.



Did you know?

- Candles start **more than 1/3** of home decoration fires.
- Candles should be **at least 12 inches away** from anything that burns.
- **Battery-operated** flameless candles are safer to use.
- A heat source too close to the Christmas tree causes **1 in every 4** winter fires.
- **Manufacturer’s manuals provide instructions** for the number of light strands to connect.
- Trees should be **at least 3 feet away** from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators and space heaters.



Special Days



- December 3<sup>rd</sup> Make a Gift Day
- December 21<sup>st</sup> First Day of Winter
- December 26<sup>th</sup> Candy Cane Day
- December 27<sup>th</sup> Visit the Zoo Day



Richard Corcoran  
Commissioner of Education  
Shan Goff  
Executive Director



OFFICE OF  
**Early Learning**  
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

250 Marriott Drive  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
Toll-Free 866-357-3239  
[www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com](http://www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com)