

## 6 Educational Activities and Crafts to Celebrate St. Patrick's Day

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It's early March, and we all know what that means: it's time to wear your green! In America, many folks, Irish or not, celebrate St. Patrick's Day on March 17th. For most, it's a fun day filled with traditions or festivities meant to observe and celebrate the Irish culture. Because our country is a diverse place that recognizes a whole host of cultural backgrounds, celebrations have become commonplace, including events such as large parades or festivals in cities around the nation.

Even for families that don't hail from Ireland, St. Patrick's Day can still serve as a fun way to learn more about this culture and the holiday's history. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or both, why not use this exciting holiday as a rich learning experience for kids as a way to celebrate different cultures from around the world?

Join us as we discuss the best ways to teach children about St. Patrick's Day, and find 6 educational celebration ideas to observe the holiday at home or at school!

# What is St. Patrick's Day? A Primer for the Non-Irish

Sometimes referred to as St. Paddy's Day for short, this intriguing holiday began many years ago as a religious feast day in the Roman Catholic Church. While St. Patrick was never officially canonized a saint, since he lived so long ago in the 4th and 5th centuries, he is said to be the Patron Saint of Ireland, after having brought Christianity to Ireland.

Legends often state that St. Patrick was instead known for driving snakes out of Ireland, however it is unknown whether there is any truth to the stories that have been handed down through the centuries. What historians know to be true is that he was born in England and was taken as a slave to Ireland as a teenager where he later escaped. Years later upon his return, he is said to have brought Christianity with him to convert the people of Ireland.

Though it started out as a religious holiday, St. Patrick's Day has since transformed into a more secular holiday. In America, we use it to celebrate our Irish American friends, and to honor and celebrate their culture. For kids, it can serve as a fascinating learning experience that can help them to learn more about different cultures and nationalities!

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## Fun and Easy St. Patrick's Day Activities for Kids

Irish or not, everyone can celebrate St. Patrick's Day! Whether you're a parent at home with your virtual or homeschooled learner, or a teacher planning for classroom activities- be it in person or online-try the following ideas to inspire your students to learn more about this exciting holiday, as well as about Irish culture:

Make a leprechaun or pot of gold bookmark!



The best crafts for kids are those that are fun to make, and educational, too! The great thing about making bookmarks is that they can be as simple or complex as you want to make them depending on the supplies children already have on hand. Older children can tackle origami bookmarks that can be placed on the edges of the pages, while younger learners may simply paint scenes on a simple strip of paper that can be laminated for durability.

To get started, decide upon the which type of bookmark children should make, and gather supplies such as construction paper, a pencil, and perhaps some paints. Offer kids the option to create a cute leprechaun friend that can serve as a reading companion, or a pot of gold that can symbolize how reading can be a reward in itself! Let little learners design their own bookmark and be sure to remind them to use it as they're reading their favorite books!

### Create a bar graph using lucky charms cereal

Bar graphs are important tools to use with children when analyzing data in math and science. For this activity, challenge kids to practice counting and tallying data for the types of marshmallows they find in a pre-determined amount of Lucky Charms cereal. For older students, encourage them to use this data to estimate how many marshmallows are in each box of cereal, and which pieces are the most and least common!

Supplies needed:

- 1-2 boxes of Lucky Charms cereal, depending on if this is being done at home or in a classroom
- Measuring cups
- Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Paper towel or paper plate

What to do:

To start, prepare the bar graphs by drawing them on the paper, leaving a space for each different marshmallow piece included in the cereal. For example, leave a space for the leprechaun hat, another for the rainbow piece, etc. Help learners place marshmallow pieces on the graph below or to the side of where the bars will go.

Determine how many cups you would like children to analyze for marshmallows. For instance, instruct learners to measure one or two cups of cereal, and place it on a paper towel or plate.

Next, tell kids to sort through the cereal to separate the cereal from the marshmallow pieces and to count all the different marshmallow bits they find, grouping like pieces together.

Using crayons, encourage children to shade in the boxes in the bar graph to tally how many of each piece they found in the cereal. Analyze the data to discover which designs are used the least, and which show up the most!

Extend this activity for older learners by challenging them use the data to determine how many marshmallows are in the box, and which pieces are used the most and least often. Simply use nutritional information on the side of the cereal box to find information such as how many cups of cereal are in a serving, and how many servings are in the box. From there, task little mathematicians with using their marshmallow data to estimate how many of each piece may be in the box!

**“Go green” and plant clover seeds using recycled containers!**

Legend has it that St. Patrick taught the people of Ireland about Christianity and the Holy Trinity using the shamrock, 3-leaf clover! Use this bit of information teach a bit about the legend, while also transforming it into a science lesson that can be completed at home or in school!



For this activity, kids will “go green” by creating a potting container out of recycled materials to grow a plant from seed. If available, find clover seeds to plant to teach children a little bit about the legend, and the plant that is iconic to Ireland. However, feel free to select any green plant that is locally available, as students can still learn about saving the environment by reusing materials to grow new life.

Get started by creating small potting containers by repurposing water bottles, milk jugs, mason jars, or any container that no longer is needed and can be filled with soil. Help kids to prepare it with potting mix, and if possible, create small drainage holes at the bottom of each container.

Watch as children plant their seeds and witness the cycle of life in action, as their seed sprouts and grows!

### Learn about limericks!

Limericks are funny little five-verse poems that have a catchy beat and rhyme scheme, and they just so happen to have originated in the Irish town of Limerick. Teaching about limericks are one way to encourage little learners to love poetry, while learning more about Irish culture and history.

To get started, search and find limericks for kids to read, which are readily available online. Be careful, as limericks are meant to be humorous, and there are many that are best shared only with adults! Read a few with children, so they can get a sense of the beat, and enjoy the rhymes.

Task learners with writing a few limericks of their own! Challenge kids by asking them to write about St. Patrick’s Day topics, such as leprechauns, or rainbows!

### Go on a St. Patrick’s Day scavenger hunt

Scavenger hunts are awesome interactive games for kids that students can play even in an online environment! This activity is great for virtual learning, and can be completed at home by families, too! Most parents and families already know the basic idea surrounding a scavenger hunt, but this time be sure that it is geared around finding objects that can be related to St. Patrick’s Day. Some ideas include asking kids to find green items around the house, a pot, or even a potato, which is often associated with Ireland! Make your list and send the kids searching; don’t forget to ask students to share what they found!

### Make a homemade rainbow using a CD or DVD disk!

Rainbows make for an excellent science lesson, especially as learners understand just how they’re made. However, it could be hard to create without a prism at home to help learners make one themselves. To make a rainbow without a prism, instruct kids to grab

a CD or DVD disk. Have children shine a flashlight on the shiny side of the disk as they tilt it to discover the colors. While there isn't a pot at the end of this rainbow, it can still serve as a quick and easy experiment that is perfect for St. Patrick's Day!

While it's not a major or Federal holiday in the states, St. Patrick's Day is a fun day that can serve as an enriching learning experience for kids. No matter if you're a parent teaching your child about different cultures, or a teacher celebrating in your face-to-face or online class, give the ideas above a try to bring some fun and festivities to your lessons this month!

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