



# Preschool Educator Guide: Nuts About Squirrels

## National Standards (K)

### 4.1 Science as Inquiry

- Understanding scientific inquiry
- Abilities necessary to do science inquiry

### 4.3 Life Sciences

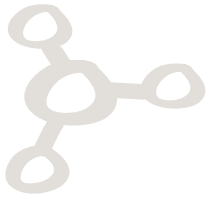
- Characteristics of organisms
- Life cycles of organisms
- Organisms and environments



## The Learning Continuum: Before, During and After Your Visit

### Guide Theme

In preparation for a visit to the New York Hall of Science, each child will imagine that he or she is a scientist. As a group of scientists, your students will use the inquiry method to practice observation skills and make discoveries through exploration and play. Placing a NYSCI visit at the center of an inquiry provides the students with continuity and purpose, and provides teachers with a way of assessing student understanding.



### Begin Exploration at School

Before coming to NYSCI, students can practice being scientists at school by trying the continuum activities and reading books from the list provided. These continuum activities vary in time, depth and work to prepare early learners to get the most out of their trip.

### Exploration at NYSCI

The students will experience a squirrel-themed activity at NYSCI. The workshop focuses on the body parts, habitat, life cycle and behavior of squirrels. After the guided activity, students will have time to use their skills and explore the exhibits in the Preschool Studio.

### Preschool Studio Exhibits List

- Loft
- Ball Drop Wall
- Discovery Boxes
- Puppet Theater
- Brickworks
- Train Table



### Finish Exploration at School

Students can continue their experience at school with one or more of the continuum activities.



## Continuum Activities

### Where did you hide the acorns?

Your class can pretend to be squirrels and play a memory game. During the fall, oak trees drop thousands of acorns. Squirrels collect lots of acorns to get ready for the winter. They hide stores of acorns in many different secret spots so that other squirrels or animals won't steal them. New oak trees can grow when squirrels don't come back and dig up the acorns! If you were a squirrel do you think you would remember where you put your acorns?

**Time:** 20 minutes (10 minutes each day)

#### Materials

- Brown or green construction paper
- Crayons
- Scissors

#### Instructions

1. Have each student in the class draw an oversized acorn on brown construction paper and then carefully cut it out. Write their name on the paper acorn.
2. Near the end of the school day, have the students pretend to be squirrels and have each student choose a place around the classroom to hide his or her acorn for the winter.
3. The next day, pretend it is now winter and have the students search for the acorns they hid.
4. Did everyone find an acorn? What might happen to any acorns the squirrels left behind?

### Forgotten Acorns

Imagine that squirrels have buried acorns in so many places that they forgot some of them. What might happen to the acorns?

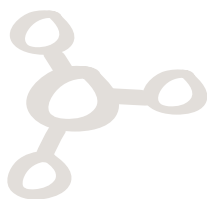
**Time:** Long term. This works best as a fall activity, when acorns have fallen from the trees.

#### Materials

- Acorns
- Plate
- Damp towel
- Flowerpots
- Potting soil

#### Instructions

1. Collect a few acorns from your yard or school playground.
2. Place acorns on a plate, sandwiched between damp towels.
3. Guess what might happen to the acorns and record predictions. Try drawing a picture of what you think might happen.
4. Keep the towel damp for a week. Observe acorns and record observations by writing and drawing.
5. If any of the acorns sprout, continue the experiment by planting them in the potting soil. Record new predictions and watch what happens!





# Preschool Educator Guide: Nuts About Squirrels

## Nuts About Classification

**Time:** 15 minutes

### Materials

- Assorted nuts (with and without shells)
- Drawing materials

**Caution:** If eating, take allergy precautions.

### Instructions

1. Gather different nuts or buy a can of mixed nuts.
2. Classify the nuts by shape, size and color. What makes them different? What makes them similar?
3. Imagine what kinds of body parts an animal would need to crack the shell and eat each type of nut. Draw a picture of the animal that might eat each particular kind of nut.

## Curriculum Connections

### Guide Theme

*Classifying:* Arranging or distributing objects, events, or information according to some method or skill.

*Creating Models:* Displaying information, using multi-sensory representations.

*Generalizing:* Drawing general conclusion from particulars.

*Observing:* Becoming aware of an object or event by using any of the senses (or extensions of the senses) to identify properties.

*Predicting:* Making a forecast of future events or conditions expected to exist.

*Animal Diversity:* How do variations in form and function help animals meet their needs?

### Book List

*Nuts to You!* – By Lois Ehlert

*Squirrels* – Brian Wildsmith

*Earl the Squirrel* – Don Freeman

### Vocabulary List

- Acorn
- Nut
- Sprout
- Squirrel

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