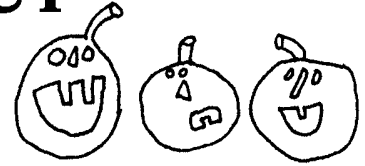


# BANANAS HANDOUT



## Dehorrifying Halloween



**Monsters & Other Imaginary Critters:** Fears of unusual, imaginary and strange creatures are common to many children. If you work with children or are a parent, you know this already. But, on Halloween there *really* are strange and wondrous beasts walking the streets and ringing our doorbells. Spend some time telling your child exactly what will happen and how people will be acting. Describe in detail what the child can expect. Remember, too, that some of the “Haunted Houses” created by neighbors or used by community groups as fundraisers are simply too scary for little ones. And, once inside, it isn’t always easy to exit gracefully. Talk to someone who has already been to the “House” you’re thinking about visiting before deciding whether your child can cope. Even with this kind of preparation, young children often become frightened, cry, withdraw, cling or refuse to participate. If your child becomes upset while out trick or treating, don’t force the issue. Going home to pass out treats may be just as fun! (Or, if you already know being outside at night with monsters and ghouls will be too much for your child, plan a party at home with a few friends.)



**Boos! & Other Scary Noises:** Loud or sudden noises and unexpected movements frighten many young children. Remember when your child was a baby? Tell your children (especially first-timers) that on Halloween people will not only be wearing strange costumes and masks, but will also be yelling and might be jumping at them and saying “boo!” There might be unpredictable sounds and crashes. These are all part of the holiday.

**Dark:** Many times a brave daytime child will be afraid of the dark. If you plan to take your child trick or treating in the dark, explain that Halloween is a *nighttime* event and that you will be nearby. If competent older children take your under-fives out, explain to them some of the feelings that younger children might be having. Ask them to try to be considerate, not to unduly frighten the younger children, and never to leave them behind. For some children, just taking a walk at dusk or after dusk is, in itself, a new experience.



**Costumes:** Plan a costume *with*, not for, your child. Let your child choose the costume, preferably made from odds and ends around the house. Any costume is good for Halloween, and no costume at all is also all right. Be sure the final outfit is comfortable and safe with no dragging hems or dangerous tangles. Also make sure it is clearly visible at night. (Attach strips of reflective tape to a dark outfit.)

**Masks:** If your child wants to wear a mask for trick or treating, have her try it out ahead of time – several days would be good. Make sure the child can see clearly and don’t hesitate to enlarge the eyeholes if necessary. (Make-up can be a safe alternative to a mask.) If you have very young children, or if this is a child’s first Halloween, help the child gain perspective by playing with the mask – taking it off and on, making sure the child knows who is behind the mask. You both can take turns playing peek-a-boo as you would with a baby. Use a mirror so that the child can see what his entire costume and mask looks like. Discussions and playing with masks before “the night” are good ideas even with older children.

**Treats:** Most adults have read the gruesome tales published in the newspapers each Halloween season (which often turn out to be hoaxes, by the way.) The solution usually offered is to throw away all items except wrapped candies, which sets you up for a fuss once the treats come home. As an alternative, see that children visit only neighbors and school friends whose delicious homemade are acceptable. Or, you can try to turn away from this candy conspiracy and recruit friends and neighbors to focus on small homemade gifts – finger puppets, rings, etc.

**Halloween Rings:** Cut designs of pumpkins, ghosts, witches, princesses, etc. about 1". Glue on a twist tie (plastic bag tie) and custom fit to special fingers.



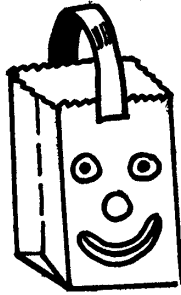
Other ideas for treats might be erasers, pencils, paper tablets, plastic whistles, chalk for sidewalk painting, popcorn or pretzels. Homemade finger puppets are another treat idea:



**Finger puppets:** Cut a paper bag about 2" by 2" and tape sides together. Decorate with a face, hair, etc.

### Trick or treat bag:

Materials: small paper bag  
construction paper  
scissors  
glue  
crayons  
stapler



Directions: Cut out pieces for face using construction paper and paste on paper bag. Decorate paper bag with crayons. Cut handle using construction paper and staple on decorated bag.

### For Halloween, BANANAS Gets Into Pumpkins

Your Halloween pumpkin can provide an interesting week of simple activities:

- Make a jack-o-lantern and save the pulp and seeds. Cook the pulp into pumpkin pudding made with eggs, milk and spices (or try pumpkin cookies, pie or bread).
- Use the jack-o-lantern cut-outs to print a pumpkin face on paper.
- Soak the seeds in salt water (1Tb. in 1-½ cups water), drain and spread on a cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees, stirring to help them dry. Show children how to split and eat the seeds.
- Plant some fresh (uncooked) seeds in a pot for growing.
- After Halloween, cut three large pieces of pumpkin for the "Moldy Pumpkin Experiment." Put two pieces on separate plates. Cover one with a clear, glass bowl. Leave the second piece open to the air. Put the third piece in a bowl of water. Watch the changes begin and show the children each day. Keep the experiment going as long as you can stand it! Good for discussing mold, decay, insects and dehydration.

**Have a safe and fun-filled Halloween!**

