



# Falling Leaves



## Exploring Seasonal Changes

Watching leaves fall and playing with them is one of autumn's joys. In this activity, children explore nature's cycles as they re-create the path of a leaf.

### Materials

- \* taped music with a slow, floating quality (see Resources, page 94) or drum
- \* real or construction paper autumn leaves
- \* photograph or picture of an autumn tree

### Warm-Up

Talk with children about how autumn affects the leaves in the trees—how they change colors and then fall. Suggest that they mimic the ways a leaf twists and floats as it falls. Invite a few students to demonstrate some of these motions with their hands; for instance, reaching up high and slowly swaying down using both hands as if they were floating to the floor.



## Creative Movement

**1** Create a “woods in autumn” atmosphere by bringing in colorful leaves (or cutting them out of paper). Hold each one up, then let it drop while children brainstorm words to describe its path: *rocks* back and forth, *floats*, *spins*, *tumbles*, *twirls*. Chart these words and suggest a few that have not been mentioned: *sway*, *swirl*, and *drift*, for instance.

**2** Ask children to lift up their hands and copy the path of a floating, tumbling, twirling leaf. Then choose a space for them to re-create the path of a leaf with their bodies. Indicate the path by posting or drawing a picture of a tree at one end of the room and placing a leaf (for the leaf pile) at the other end.

**3** Group students at the “tree” end of the room. Tell them that in their roles as falling leaves they should start with their hands reaching up high into the tree branches to indicate they are still attached to the tree, and then spin, sway, and float all the way to the designated leaf pile. Suggest that they start on tiptoe and gradually get lower and lower, crouching as they drift and twirl, until they are gently rolling along the floor toward the leaf pile.

**4** Put on the music and send the leaves on their way, one by one, with a tap for each. When all children have reached the leaf pile, ask them to relax and listen to the music. Repeat the game, tapping each resting leaf when it’s time to walk slowly back to the tree area and attach to the branches to begin again.





## Resources

### BOOKS

*Autumn Leaves* by Ken Robbins. Scholastic, 1998.

*Why Do Leaves Change Color?* by Betsy Maestro. HarperCollins, 1994.

### MUSIC

Adagio molto, "The Autumn," *The Four Seasons*. Antonio Vivaldi. Musical Heritage Society, Inc.

*Canon in D*. Pachelbel. London: Weekend Classics.



## Extending the Lesson

Children also learn by watching each other. Have half the group watch the other half travel the leaf pathway. Add interest by asking the leaves to freeze their positions. Then ask the audience to notice and comment on the leaf shapes and locations in their fall. Switch groups and repeat. Encourage students to try out any new movements they observed.

## Assessment Checklist

Creative movement such as imitating falling leaves helps children make connections between the world around them and their imagination, and stimulates their expressive capacity. Here's what to watch for:

- ✱ Can children re-create the twisting, turning, swirling path of the leaf?
- ✱ To what extent can students express their observations through movement qualities such as floating, swaying, and other smooth, slow motions?
- ✱ Do children expand their vocabulary in describing the falling leaves?