

# Sharing Passover in the Classroom: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers



## Overview

Discover exciting and engaging ways to share the magic of Passover and Jewish culture in your child's classroom! This guide is part of a series of Jewish holiday resources for parents and caregivers for sharing Jewish holiday traditions and culture in K–5 classrooms. Explore all the materials you'll need below.

This guide focuses on the Passover tradition of retelling stories from generation to generation.

In this guide, you will find: pre-visit instructions, classroom prep, parent introduction, supply list, instructions for explaining Passover to students and guiding the art project, Passover read-aloud (for grades K–2), music, snack, closing the session in the classroom, and recipes for Passover snacks.

## Introduction to Passover

Passover is a Jewish holiday celebrated every spring. The holiday lasts for eight days and nights. On the first and second nights of Passover, many Jewish families participate in a special meal called a seder. At the meal, the ancient story of the Jewish people being freed from slavery in Egypt is shared. During the seder people eat symbolic foods and sing songs that remind them of the Passover story.

Familiarize yourself with the story and traditions of Passover. You can use these short videos to get started.

- [Passover with Mayim Bialik](#)
- [PBS Kids Passover](#)
- [Everyday Jewish Mom](#)

## Pre-visit

Be proactive in your school community by introducing yourself as a Jewish family to your class teacher and sharing the calendar below. This calendar will help administrators and teachers avoid scheduling events, programs, and exams at times that conflict with Jewish holidays. [JCRC Calendar of Jewish Holidays and Traditions](#).

In the weeks leading up to Passover, contact your child's teacher and share when Passover will begin. Ask if there is a time prior to or over the course of the holiday when you may come in to share a 30- to 45-minute activity with the students that will include a quick explanation of the holiday, an art project, a story for younger grades, music, and a snack. You can share that being Jewish is an important part of your family's identity and you would like to provide a secular classroom activity that will not lead the children in any prayer and will share traditions and history.

## Materials

You will need to bring some of your own materials. These include:

- Kraft paper (can be purchased [here](#)) or paper grocery bags
- Yarn (can be purchased [here](#))
- Afikomen labels (Printable at end of resource)
- Passover story
- Paper plates and utensils
- Packages of matzah—enough for one piece for each student each for snacking plus small pieces to put in Afikomen bags for students to take home
- [Music playlist](#)

Ask teachers to provide:

- Scissors
- Hole punches
- Markers
- Glue sticks
- Staplers

## In the Classroom

If you are able, come early to set up.

We recommend doing the introduction on the floor (for grades K–2) and then asking students to move to their desks for the art project, story, and snack. If you are playing music, make sure it is cued up on your phone, or, if you are using the classroom speakers, that everything is set up prior to beginning. Gather all art materials and have them ready to be passed out by the teacher or another pre-assigned person. If you are providing a snack, ensure that it is ready to be served along with paper plates and utensils.

## Introducing Yourself

Introduce yourself and explain your connection to the classroom. Talk about why you wanted to come in and share today. You may want to share what being Jewish is (i.e. that it is a religion and culture with special holidays, foods, and languages) and that soon you will be celebrating the holiday of Passover. Today, you are going to share about Passover, do some art, eat some special Passover foods, and hear a story.

## Sharing Passover

### Explain Passover to the class

Passover is a Jewish holiday celebrated every spring. The holiday lasts for eight days and nights. On the first night and second nights of Passover, many Jewish families participate in a special meal called a seder. At the meal, the ancient story of the Jewish people being freed from slavery in Egypt is shared. During the seder people eat symbolic foods and sing songs that remind them of the Passover story.

Special foods are served at the seder and some are served on a special plate, called a seder plate. Each of these foods is symbolic—it reminds us of parts of the ancient story of the Jewish people leaving slavery in Egypt. One of the most important Passover foods is matzah, which is like a flat cracker. It is unleavened bread made from just flour and water and baked before it has a chance to rise. Matzah is eaten at the seder and (for some Jewish people who might observe this way) all throughout the eight days of Passover instead of bread. When the

## Sharing Passover Continued

Jewish people were granted their freedom, they left in a such a hurry that there was no time for the bread to rise, so they brought with them flat crackers, called matzah, instead. The matzah is used during Passover to tell this story.

### Matzah and the Afikomen

Introduce matzah to the class and let them know they will all have a chance to taste it in a few minutes, but first, we need to make a special pouch for it.

#### Hold up three matzahs in a stack and explain:

At the Passover seder table, three matzahs are placed in a stack. The middle matzah is broken in two, and the larger piece of this matzah is called the afikomen. It is saved to be eaten after the meal, after dessert.

In many families, someone takes the afikomen, puts it into a pouch, and hides it at the start of the seder meal. Following the seder meal, a great search begins. The person who finds it sometimes gets a prize!

Passover is about passing down stories. Each year at the seder, the story of Passover is told so that it may be learned by all present, even the youngest child. For thousands of years, Jewish people have held seders to tell the Passover story year after year.

**Ask the students: Is there a story that is passed down from your family? What is a story that your family retells—a story that's told and retold? Share with the person next to you. (It may also be helpful to model a story from your own family to get them started.)**

## Art Project

Explain to the class: We are now going to make our own afikomen pouch so everyone can take home some matzah. We are going to decorate it with pictures that remind you of your passed-down family story.

If possible, model the steps below before giving the students their materials. Then, once you give them the materials, model it again step-by-step, allowing time between each step.

Please give out the following materials:

- Kraft paper or paper grocery bag precut to be about 12" wide by 16.5" tall
- Scissors
- Markers
- Glue sticks
- Afikomen labels (at the end of this resource). Cut out each word beforehand so they can be attached as labels.
- Hole punches
- Yarn, pre-cut to 12"–14". Include enough yarn for each student to have two pieces.

**[Listen to this Passover playlist while making art!](#)**



## Instructions

1. Fold your paper in half. It should be about 12" wide and anywhere from 8"–10" tall once folded. You can use glue stick instead of yarn for the sides of the pouch. If you prefer this option skip to step 6.
2. Use your hole punch to punch through both layers of the pouch along the right and left edges, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the edges.
3. Starting on one side of the pouch, put your piece of yarn through the lowest hole from the back out to the front. Moving upward, thread the yarn through the next hole. Continue to lace the yarn until you get to the end. \*Note: this does not have to be perfect in any way and students can do it however they like—just have a stapler handy to reinforce.
4. When you have finished lacing one edge of the pouch, tie a knot at the end of the yarn. You can cut the tail if you wish.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 on the other edge of the pouch.
6. Hand out the precut afikomen labels. Affix to the pouch with a glue stick.
7. Decorate your pouch with symbols or images of your family story! You can use markers or collage paper. Make sure to write your name on the back.

## Sample project



## Snack and Story (K–2)

Read a Passover story out loud. Serve each student a small portion of matzah. Bring in cream cheese and/or nut-free charoset to spread on the matzah. You can also prepare matzah toffee bark and/or charoset (find recipes below) if you would like.

For third grade and up, continue listening to the music playlist as each student is served a small portion of matzah.

## Recommended Reading

For grades K–2:

- [\*Matzah Craze\*](#)
- [\*Matzah Belowstairs\*](#)
- [\*Passover Parrot\*](#)

For classroom library in older grades:

- [\*National Geographic Kids: Celebrate Passover with Matzah, Maror, and Memories\*](#) by Deborah Heiligman

## Closing

Thank everyone for giving you the opportunity to share about Jewish culture and the holiday of Passover. Remind everyone of the importance of retelling stories about yourself and your family. Acknowledge how special and wonderful each person's traditions are and that we have so much to learn from each other. Thank them for taking the time to learn about your family traditions. End by passing out a small piece of matzah for students to put into their afikomen bags to take home.

# Passover Snack Recipes

[Matzah Toffee Bark](#) from [TheKitchn.com](#)

## Ingredients

- 4 sheets of matzahs
- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups packed dark brown sugar
- 2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups bittersweet chocolate chips or chopped chocolate
- Flaky salt, for sprinkling

## Instructions

1. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil.
2. Arrange 4 sheets of matzah on the baking sheet, breaking them up and fitting them together to form a single layer.
3. Place 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups packed dark brown sugar and 2 sticks unsalted butter in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat and cook, whisking occasionally, until the butter melts and the mixture comes to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens, about 3 minutes.
4. Remove from the heat and whisk in 1 tablespoon vanilla extract and 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons kosher salt. Pour the mixture over the matzah, then spread into an even layer with an offset spatula.
5. Bake until the caramel darkens and is bubbly, about 15 minutes.
6. Remove the matzah bark from the oven and immediately sprinkle 1 to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups chopped bittersweet chocolate or chocolate chips over the caramel. Let sit for 5 minutes for the chocolate to melt.
7. Use the offset spatula to evenly spread the melted chocolate over the caramel. Sprinkle with the flaky sea salt. Let cool until the baking sheet is warm to the touch. Refrigerate until completely chilled, about 1 hour.
8. Cut or break into squares and serve cold. You may serve the bark at room temperature as well, but the chocolate can get a bit melty.

# Passover Snack Recipes (Continued)

## Nut-free Charoset

### Ingredients

- 3 red apples
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grape juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup honey
- 1 cup raisins
- Sprinkle of cinnamon

### Instructions

Mix in a large bowl and enjoy on matzah or your favorite cracker.



*A F I K O M E N*

AFIIKOMEN

AFIKOMEN

Afikomen

**Afikomen**