

# Sharing Rosh Hashanah in the Classroom: A Resource for Caregivers and Educators



## Overview

Discover exciting, engaging, and relevant ways to share Rosh Hashanah in the classroom. This guide focuses on the traditions and customs surrounding the holiday of Rosh Hashanah—the Jewish New Year—and is part of a series of resources for parents, caregivers, and teachers for sharing Jewish traditions, holidays, and culture with K–5 students in secular classrooms.

Included inside: An overview of what Jewish means, background information on Rosh Hashanah, supply list, guided art project, Rosh Hashanah read-aloud (for grades K–2), music playlist, snack suggestions, closing, and additional resources.

## Sharing Rosh Hashanah in the Classroom

Judaism is both an ethnicity and religion. People may express their Jewish identity in a multitude of ways. Some people may think of their Jewish identity strictly as an expression of heritage; some may hold certain Jewish values central in their lives; some may eat Jewish foods or celebrate Jewish holidays; and some may identify religiously as Jewish and follow rules and teachings found in a book called the Torah. All of these are part of the diverse experiences of being Jewish today.

Jewish people have diverse origins and communities spanning across the world. This global diversity is expressed in Jewish life through distinct practices in cuisine, language, music, and more. Additionally, Jewish people are racially diverse and may also identify as Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latino, and more. While the largest populations of Jewish people are found in the United States and Israel, there are Jewish communities throughout the world.

## What is Rosh Hashanah?

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year, celebrated at the beginning of the Jewish month of Tishrai, which generally falls in September or October.

To familiarize yourself with the customs and traditions surrounding Rosh Hashanah, the video below by BimBam shares a great summary. Please note that we are recommending this video for adults, to help with preparation, as it has too much information for sharing in a classroom:

[\*What is Rosh Hashanah—BimBam\*](#)

## Pre-visit suggestions for parents

A good time to conduct this session is in the month leading up to Rosh Hashanah. Contact your child's teacher and share the dates of Rosh Hashanah and ask if there is a time prior when you may come in to share a 30-minute activity with the students, including an explanation of the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah, 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 share Jewish New Year traditions.

In addition, share this [Calendar of Jewish Holidays](#) with your school administration so they may avoid scheduling events, programs, and exams at times that conflict with observant Jewish holidays.

## Classroom Prep

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 napkins.

## Supply List

Ask the teacher beforehand if they can provide the following supplies:

- Glue sticks
- Markers

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

### Snack:

- Cut apples
- Jar of honey or honey sticks
- Paper plates
- Napkins

### Stamp Art Project:

- An assortment of fruits and vegetables, cut in half and dried well with a paper towel
  - Note: Fruits/vegetables that stamp well include lemons, apples, and mushrooms.
  - Note: Cutting the fruits or vegetables horizontally or vertically will change their appearance when stamped, so make a few different types of cuts to produce different results.
- Copies of “May you have a year filled with \_\_\_\_\_” labels (found at the end of the Resource Guide)
- [Watercolor paper](#)
- [Stamp pads](#) (one per every two students)
- Paper towels for wiping moisture from fruits/vegetables and for in-between stamping

### Shofar, Story, and Music:

- Shofar or shofar picture (found at end of Resource Guide)
- K-2 storybook
- [Spotify playlist](#)

## Introduce Yourself

Introduce yourself and share your connection to the classroom. Talk about why you wanted to come in. Explain that you are going to share a little about Jewish holiday traditions and culture, do some art together, eat a traditional Jewish New Year food, and hear a story.

## Explain the Holiday

Jewish people connect to being Jewish in many ways. Some might connect to their Jewish identity as a culture, a heritage, a religion, a connection to Jewish values, or some combination of these. Many Jewish people connect to Jewish culture through Jewish holidays and customs. Jewish religion is called Judaism, just like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism are religions.

Jewish people come from all over the globe and speak many different languages. Hebrew is the ancient language of the Jewish people. While not all Jewish people speak Hebrew, many prayers, holidays, and names of foods are in Hebrew, like the words Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. In Hebrew, *rosh* means “head,” and *hashanah* means “the year.” Rosh Hashanah is celebrated by Jewish communities all over the world. People may go to synagogue, the place where Jewish people meet to be together and pray, and hear the blowing of a special horn, made from the horn of a ram, called a shofar. Families and friends may also share a big meal where special foods are eaten.

### Hold up shofar or shofar photo

This is a shofar. It is a horn from a ram, that is then hollowed and sanded, so it can be blown through. The sound of the shofar blast is very unusual and loud, meant to awaken us to reflect on our actions.

One of the most important themes of Rosh Hashanah is the opportunity to reflect on personal actions of the past year and set intentions about how to be kind to each other and the earth in the year ahead.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated every year in the fall on different dates in the standard calendar, usually in September or October. During this time friends and family wish one another a “Shana Tova,” or “good year.”

### Symbolic foods

On Rosh Hashanah many people eat a meal which includes dipping apples in honey. The apples are part of the fall harvest, and the honey represents a wish for a sweet year.

#### Ask Students:

- In your family, do you eat any special foods on holidays?

Jewish families—particularly those with heritage from Spain, the Middle East, or North Africa—eat not only apples and honey at the Jewish New Year’s meal, but many other foods that have special meanings. Eating dates, grapes, pomegranates, carrots, beets, or pumpkins—foods all harvested in the fall—and then sending out good wishes for the new year is a fun tradition in many Jewish families.

Some families may use a word connected to the name of a fruit or vegetable to make a specific wish for the new year. For example, if I eat a grape, I may say before eating it, “I hope you have a really grape year!” Or before eating a carrot, I may wish everyone a bright, sweet year.

As this is the beginning of the school year, we are now going to create wishes for ourselves and our classmates, using fruits and vegetables.

## Art Project

### Pass Out Supplies

- Array of fruits and vegetables from supermarket, cut into pieces (or in half) and dried with a paper towel
- Stamp Pads (one for every two students)
- Markers
- Glue sticks
- Watercolor paper
- Copies of “May you have a year filled with \_\_\_\_\_” labels (found at end of the Resource Guide)
- Paper towels for wiping moisture from fruits/vegetables and for in between stamping

### Directions

1. Choose one of the fruits or vegetables from the table.
2. Stamp the fruit or vegetable onto the stamp pad and then onto watercolor paper. Stamp as many times as you would like. Make sure to instruct the students to wipe off their fruits/vegetables between stamps if using different colors.
3. Take the pre-made “May you have a year filled with \_\_\_\_\_” labels found at the end of the Resource Guide, and, using the fruit or vegetable for inspiration, write down a wish for your classmates for the coming school year.
4. Using the glue stick, glue the label onto the watercolor paper.

Note: Pre-readers may draw a picture of their wish for their classmates onto the label.

**See page 8 for step-by-step photos of a sample project.**

## Music Playlist

Listen to this Rosh Hashanah [playlist](#) while making your new year wishes.

## GRADES K–2

### Snack and Read Aloud

Read a Rosh Hashanah story out loud. Serve each student a plate of apples and honey (and a napkin!).

## Recommended Reading

For Grades K–2:

- [Two New Years](#) by Richard Ho  
With bright, joyful prose and luminous illustrations, Richard Ho and Lynn Scurfield invite readers of all backgrounds to experience the beauty of two New Year traditions, Rosh Hashanah and Lunar New Year, paying homage to the practices that make each unique, while illuminating the values of abundance, family, and hope that they share.
- [Measuring a Year](#) by Linda Elovitz Marshall  
Happy New Year! Shana Tova! Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur mark the beginning of the Jewish New Year. This sweet and thoughtful picture book, perfect for reading aloud, invites young readers and their families to

take stock of the happy times and the occasional regrets, as well as the new friends made and new skills gained over the year. This book offers a chance to think about the present and the past, to “measure” a year and ourselves.

GRADES 3+

### **Snack and Music**

Continue listening to the music [playlist](#) as each student is served a portion of challah and grape juice.

### **Turn and Talk**

Jewish people around the world wish each other a sweet new year, “Shana Tova,” during Rosh Hashanah. As you are all beginning a new school year, turn to your neighbors and read your wish to them.

### **Closing**

Thank everyone for giving you the opportunity to share about Jewish culture. Acknowledge how special and wonderful every single 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’s culture.

### **Additional Resources**

For more resources on celebrating Rosh Hashanah, please see [PJ Library Web Resource](#).



Shofar by [Maurice Kamins](#), San Francisco shofar maker, 2023

Photo Credit: Cara Buchalter

## Sample Project Step-by-Step Photos



1. Cut fruits and vegetables. Dry well with a paper towel.



2. Pass out stamp pads, watercolor paper, and paper towels.



3. After drying off fruits and vegetables well with a paper towel, get lots of ink onto your fruit or vegetable and stamp onto watercolor paper. Make sure to ink up each time you stamp and clean off stamp with a paper towel, if changing stamp colors.



4. Pass out labels, glue sticks, and markers. Write out a wish for classmates, using your fruit or vegetable as inspiration, onto your label. Using glue stick, glue it on to your watercolor paper.



**Labels**

May you have a year filled with:

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May you have a year filled with:

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May you have a year filled with:

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May you have a year filled with:

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