

# Winter Recess Activities

## Social Studies, Grades 3-5



**Miami-Dade County Public Schools**  
**Department of Social Sciences**

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## **Winter Recess Activities Social Studies, Grades 3-5**

The student activities in this packet are designed to reinforce major social studies concepts and skills, while also being fun and interesting. The activities are differentiated by grade level: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. It is also hoped that these activities will encourage family interaction over the winter break. Please note that elementary-level activities will require greater parent/family supervision or assistance.

If you are in need of additional information about the Winter Recess Activities for Social Studies, please contact the Department of Social Sciences, at 305-995-1982.

**Winter Recess Activities**  
**Social Studies**  
**Elementary – Grades 3-5**

Objectives

- Use cardinal and intermediate directions to locate places on a map.
- Identify various types of maps and globes; e.g., political, relief, and pictorial.
- Identify the major bodies of water surrounding Florida.
- Evaluate the importance of citizen participation through community service.
- Identify examples of government services provided through tax dollars.
- Compare the economy of the United States to other selected countries.
- Research famous men and women, both past and present, who have contributed to Florida's development.
- Cite examples of endangered species of plants and animals found in Florida.
- Discuss the significance of being a politically active citizen; e.g., campaigning, voting, volunteering.
- Discuss current news events and locate the relevant places on maps and globes.

Activities

- Teach your children the cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west by using your home as a reference point. Show them the direction of the sun as it rises in the morning (east) and sets in the evening (west), in relation to your house. Play games that reinforce their knowledge of cardinal directions (N, S, E, and W) and intermediate directions (NE, NW, SE, SW). For example, you can hide objects around the house and yard and give them directions to their locations: "Two steps to the north, three steps west..."
- Have students draw a map of their neighborhood. Maps should include a key (legend) and significant symbols (e.g., parks, schools, stores, post office, houses, streets, fire station, and hospital) along with compass rose and cardinal directions. (A compass rose is the "direction finder" found on any map. It typically includes the cardinal directions of north, south, east and west, and sometimes includes the intermediate directions of northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest.)
- Have students research an environmental cause or issue in Florida such as preserving the Everglades, off shore drilling for oil, saving marine animals and habitats. Develop a poster urging citizens to support the issue. Older students may also write a letter on the issue to be mailed to an appropriate public official such as the city mayor, Governor, etc.
- Have students draw a free-hand Florida map which includes major lakes and rivers, the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, Tallahassee (Florida's capital), and neighboring states. Draw a compass rose on the map indicating north, south, east, and west.

- Many families take the opportunity to travel in the state during the holidays. Have your children plan an imaginary automobile trip to three or four major Florida cities and/or attractions, using a Florida highway map. They should include: the distance in miles to the city from Miami; the best highway route to get there; major lakes or rivers they see along the way; and the time the trip would take. Have them draw a freehand map of Florida and put all the information on the map.
- Have students analyze a U.S. weather map and write to explain how the weather in each region affects the activities and way of life in the area. Have students create a table of average high and low temperatures of important cities in the various regions in the U.S.
- Have students research what taxes are and what a government uses tax money for. Then, make a list of services that are provided to citizens using tax dollars. Discuss what services the community would lose without tax dollars (e.g. no police or fire services, no garbage collection, no road repair, no clean-up crews, no water treatment plants).
- The holidays are a time for family and friends to get together and celebrate. Unfortunately, not everyone has a place to go for the holidays and/or anyone with whom to spend the holidays. Plan visits with your children to nursing homes, hospitals, and other facilities where the sick and elderly may be housed. Most facilities have programs planned during the holidays that would be appropriate for children to attend with parents.
- The holiday season has become associated with buying and spending money on holiday presents. American consumers spend millions of dollars every year during the holiday period. Research the Internet to find what other countries in Europe, North America, and South America spend during the holidays in comparison with the United States. Draw a circle graph to show the pattern of spending for each of the economies listed above.
- Many men and women, past and present, have contributed to Florida's growth and development. Research the library or Internet on the lives of some of South Florida's pioneers (e.g., Julia Tuttle, Mary Brickell, Henry Flagler, George Merrick, Glenn Curtiss) Write a three-paragraph essay on the impact they had on South Florida's growth and development. You may want to take your children to the HistoryMiami (formerly the Historical Museum) to look at how the early pioneers in South Florida lived. Other local sites for family outings include the Barnacle and the Deering Estate.

- Have students interview people who have immigrated to the United States. Have them develop and make a list of the reasons why people come to the United States to live. Older students can also research the reasons early colonists and settlers gave for coming to North America. Discuss the similarities and differences that exist between early immigrant groups and recent arrivals.
- Knowing what happens around the world is important for children. They need to understand that they are part of a global community. Have your children watch the world news for a week and identify on a world map the location of the places discussed in the news. Ask them to summarize in their own words what the news stories were about. Have them track the different regions of the world identified in the news stories by drawing a circle graph to determine what region of the world received the most news coverage.

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