



Story Play at Home

Children remember what they do far better than what they hear. These ten activities turn our favourite stories into play, using things you probably already have at home.

1. Krishna's Govardhan umbrella

You need: An umbrella, soft toys, a sheet of paper torn into strips

Tell the story of Krishna lifting Govardhan hill. Put the soft toys (the villagers and cows of Gokul) on the floor. Your child holds the open umbrella over them with "just one little finger" while you sprinkle paper "rain" from above. Count to seven for the seven days, then cheer!

2. Hanuman's great leap

You need: A blue towel or blue tape, a cushion, a tape measure

Lay the towel down as the ocean and put the cushion on the far side as Lanka. Your child takes a run-up and leaps across, just like Hanuman. Measure each jump and make the ocean a little wider each time.

3. Rama's Floating stones

You need: A bowl of water, pebbles, small pieces of cork or foam, a marker pen

Write "Rama" on the cork pieces. Ask your child to guess which will float, the pebbles or the "Rama stones". Test them one by one. Talk about how the vanaras built a bridge to Lanka. It is a little science lesson and a story at the same time.

4. Playdough modaks for Ganesha

You need: Playdough (or real rice-flour dough with a grown-up), a toothpick

Roll small balls, pinch the tops into a point and draw lines with the toothpick to make pleats. Arrange them on a plate as an offering for Ganesha, then count them together. Older children can make real modaks for Ganesh Chaturthi.

5. Spoon puppet theatre

You need: Wooden spoons, felt pens, wool, a cardboard box

Draw faces on the spoons: Ganesha, Kartikeya, Shiva and Parvati. Cut a window in the box for a stage. Act out the race around the world, with Ganesha walking around his parents. Let your child direct the show.

6. Coloured rice rangoli

You need: Uncooked rice, food colouring, a little vinegar, zip bags, a tray

Put rice in a bag with a few drops of colour and vinegar, shake, then spread on a tray to dry for an hour. Make a rangoli on a tray or at the door, starting from a small circle in the middle and working outwards. Perfect before Diwali.



7. The story bag

You need: A cloth bag and small objects: a toy flute, a feather, a little pot, a toy mouse, a bow made from a stick and string

Your child pulls out one object without looking. Whatever comes out decides tonight's story: the flute for Krishna, the mouse for Ganesha, the bow for Rama. Add new objects as you learn new stories.

8. Churning the ocean

You need: A rope or long scarf, a box filled with shredded paper, small "treasures" (a lotus picture, a shiny coin, a toy cow)

Two players hold the rope ends and gently pull back and forth around a chair "mountain" while chanting. After ten pulls, your child digs in the box to find the treasures, just as Lakshmi Maa rose from the ocean of milk.

9. Naren's question jar

You need: A clean jar, paper slips, a pen

Swami Vivekananda was a boy full of questions. Every time your child asks a big question ("Where does the sun go?", "Why does Ganesha have an elephant head?"), write it on a slip and pop it in the jar. Once a week, pull one out at dinner and explore it together.

10. Seva Saturday

You need: Bird seed, a pine cone, peanut butter (if no allergies) or lard, string

Neem Karoli Baba made sure everyone was fed. Make a bird feeder: spread the pine cone, roll it in seed and hang it outside. Each Saturday, choose one small kind act, like helping a neighbour, tidying up or making a card for a grandparent.

Please supervise water, small objects and cooking. Small items such as rice, pebbles and beads are choking hazards for children under three.