

## File Folder Activities: A Gateways Guide for Teachers

### *About File Folder Activities*

File folder activities can help your children review ideas and familiarize them with Jewish objects. Since they are so inexpensive and relatively easy to make, you can accumulate a large classroom library of file folder activities in no time! The visual nature of file folder activities takes advantage of the visual strengths of children with autism and many other developmental disabilities.

File folder activities have a clear beginning, goal, and ending point. For example, the task begins when the file folder is opened. The goal of each file folder activity, whether it is matching, sequencing, grouping, or completing a puzzle, should be self-evident through the activity's graphics. Therefore, students will need little or no verbal instructions. The ending point of a file folder activity is when the student has no more pieces left to match. Since the beginning, goal, and ending point of file folder activities are clear, after some practice students may be able to complete them with minimal adult assistance.

### *Tips for Using Shabbat File Folder Activities:*

1. **Make file folder activities a classroom center.** Many students enjoy completing file folder activities and look forward to this scheduled activity. You can assign students a certain number of activities to complete with an accompanying check-off list.

You may even assign students specific activities to do. You can give your students a check off list with thumbnail pictures of each file folder activity. An alternative to this that is more clear visually and uses less ink would be to paste large construction paper shapes onto each file folder, and give students a check-off list with the corresponding colored shapes.

In a file folder activity center there should be clearly designated “to-do” and “all finished” areas for file folder activities. These can be paper trays, small boxes, or tote bags. The to-do pile will help



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the students anticipate how much work is left because they will see how many file folder activities are left to do. Putting completed activities in the “all finished” area will give students a sense of accomplishment, and it will help keep your file folders center clean and uncluttered. Both of these areas will help students to do their work with less adult assistance; after some practice, they will learn to automatically take the next activity from the to do pile and put it away when they are finished.

**2. Use file folder activities for students who complete activities quickly.** Some students just fly through activities while the rest of the class is still working. Instead of giving these students unstructured time while the rest of the class catches up, make it a rule that students who finish early can complete file folder activities.

**3. Use file folder activities to calm students who are overly energetic or upset.** File folder activities are simple tasks that require little or no instructions. Their simplicity can be calming for a student with lots of energy or a student who is having a difficult moment. Completing file folder activities gives students a positive feeling of accomplishment and helps them get back into the rhythm of learning and completing tasks. Create a file folder activity area in a quiet corner of the classroom or outside in the hall. Make it clear that completing file folder activities is not a punishment, but rather a tool to help students re-join the class in a better state.

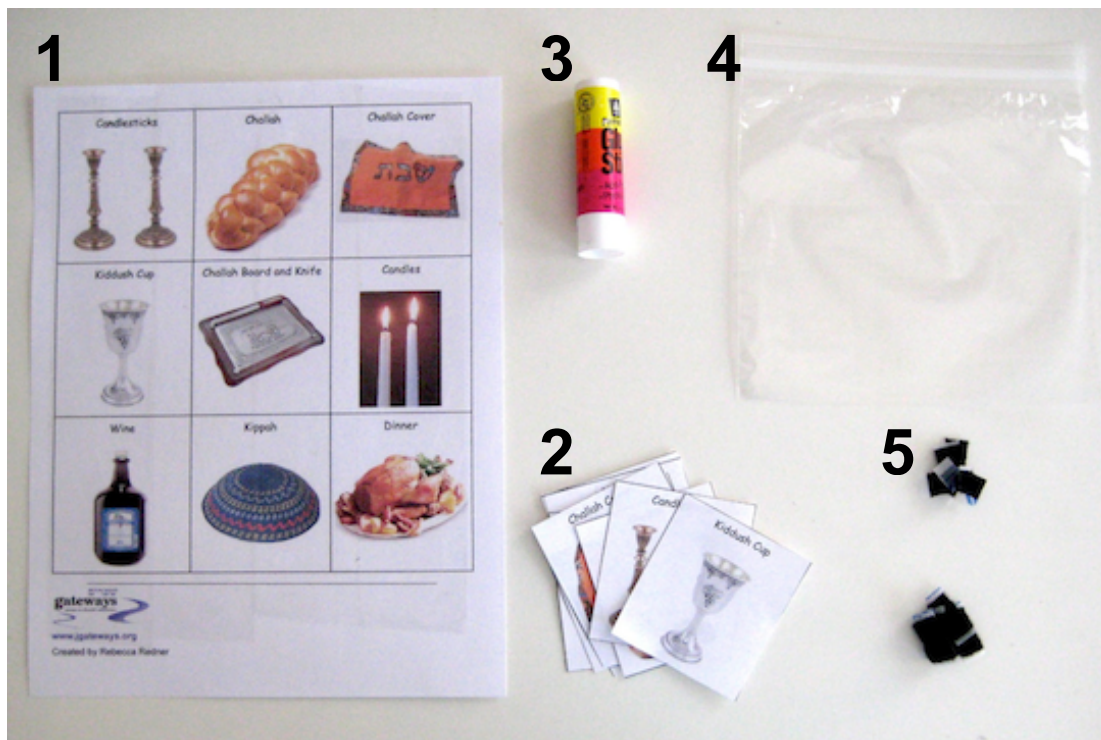
**4. Make file folder activities as a classroom arts and crafts activity.** Making file folder activities takes some advance preparation and a bit of scrambling, but it is a lot of fun for many students. The students take a lot of pride in their file folder creations! The activities they make can go into your classroom library or be brought home.

Read the Gateways Guide to Making File Folder Activities for easy-to-follow directions. However, these directions will need to be adapted slightly for classroom use. In order for file folder activity making to go smoothly you should assemble in advance:



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1. Paper and pre-laminated cardstock activity pieces.

*or*

2. For students who have fine motor difficulties, pre-cut these pieces for them.

3. A glue stick

4. A sandwich bag

5. The correct quantity of pre-cut velcro pieces.



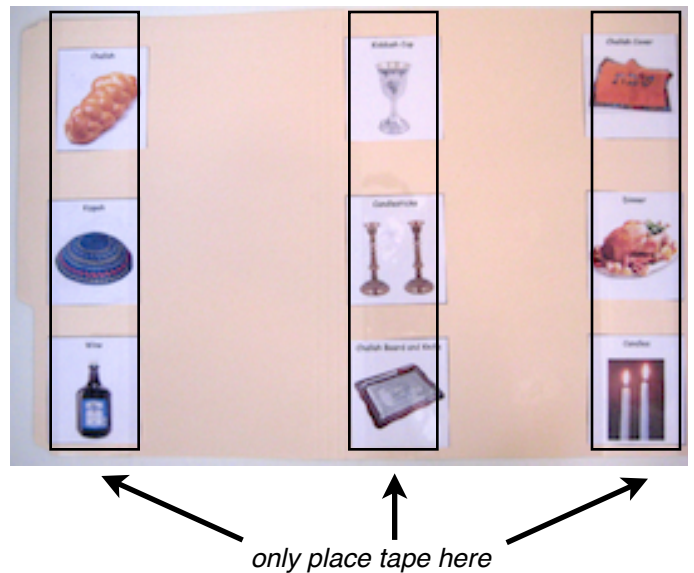
All of these pieces fit into the sandwich bag to make a neat little kit!

You should also prepare the file folder by creating visual targets so students will know where to glue their paper pieces. In this example, star stickers are used. Another option which is slightly more time consuming is to trace an outline of each piece.



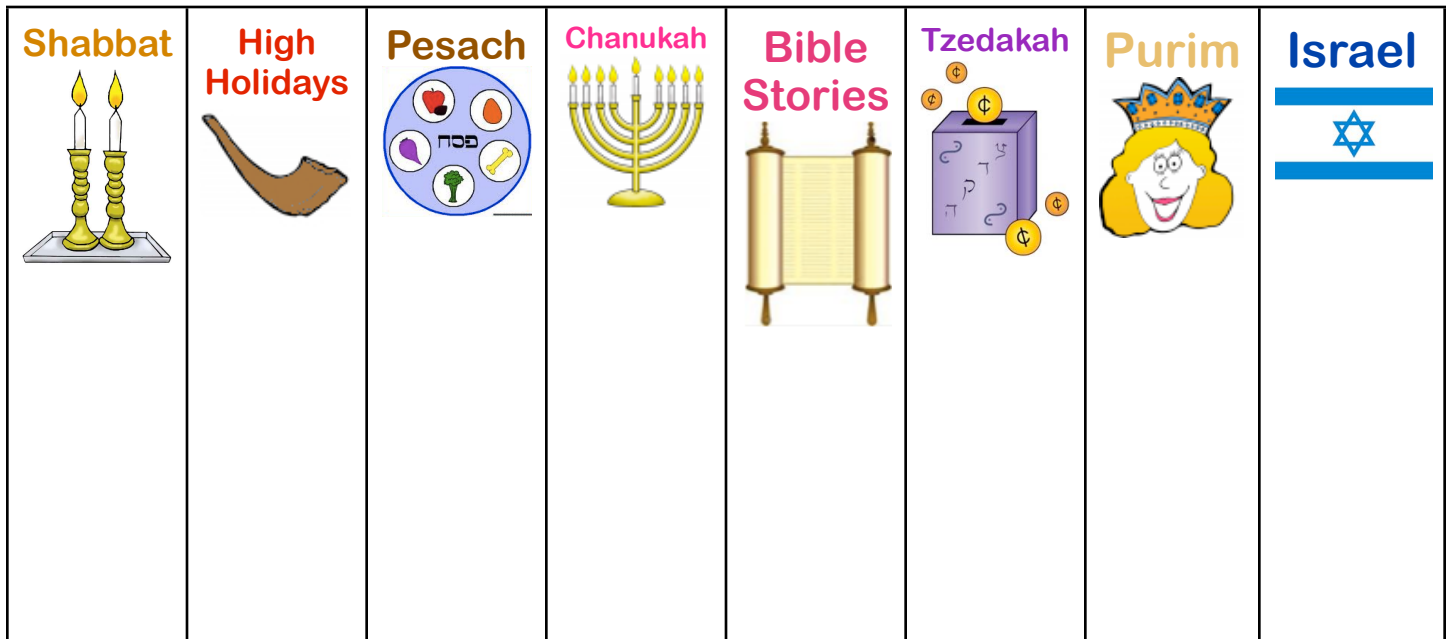
Once students glue on the paper pieces, the most difficult part of making file folder tasks in class is laminating them. It is very helpful to have an extra pair of hands, such as an assistant teacher or an aide, to help you. In order to make this process easier and take less time, do not laminate the entire file folder. Instead, place one strip of packing tape over each column of pictures. This will prevent the pictures from ripping or peeling off once the velcro is applied.

To prevent students from getting impatient while you are laminating their folders, instruct them to apply the velcro to their cardstock pieces while they are waiting.



*Other Tips:*

1. **Organize your classroom library of file folder activities!** If you do not clearly label and store your file folder activities, they can quickly become a disorganized mess. At Gateways, we store our file folder activities in hanging file storage box. We label our file folders by topic with cardstock tabs and group them together in hanging file folders. This way, teachers can easily grab the file folders that they need and then put them back at the end of the day. Here are some examples of tabs:



2. **Put the pieces away in the bag taped to the back of each file folder activity when you are finished!** When pieces are left in the file folders after they are completed, the pieces often fall out and get lost. They can also get badly bent. Teach students that the pieces go away before the file folder activity goes in the finished pile.