

# BACKPACK THE PARKS

Expeditions in Education



# Backpack the Parks!



At Expeditions in Education, we believe that learning extends far beyond the classroom walls. That's why we're thrilled to introduce our "Backpack the Parks" initiative, designed to ignite students' curiosity and love for the great outdoors while fostering a deeper understanding of our national parks.

With "Backpack the Parks," educators have the unique opportunity to curate and pack 8 engaging activities into backpacks, making it easier than ever for students to check out and explore the wonders of our national parks. From hands-on science experiments to wildlife scavenger hunts to historically accurate simulations, each activity is carefully crafted to immerse students in the beauty, history, and natural wonders of these treasured landscapes.

Join us in empowering the next generation of park enthusiasts and conservationists as they embark on unforgettable learning adventures in our nation's most cherished natural spaces. With "Backpack the Parks," the journey to discovery begins with the turn of a backpack strap, and the possibilities for educational exploration are endless.

# Backpack the Parks!



## ***Instruction***

### **Step 1: Ask for Donations of Backpacks and Clean Them Up**

- Reach out to parents, local businesses, or the school community to request donations of gently used backpacks.
- Inspect the donated backpacks for any damage or excessive wear.

### **Step 2: Print the Activity Cards and Laminate**

- Prepare activity cards that detail each of the educational activities you plan to include in the backpacks.
- Print these activity cards on durable cardstock paper.
- Laminate the activity cards to protect them from wear and tear during use.

### **Step 3: Put Cards on Rings**

- Hole punch each laminated activity card.
- Use rings or zip ties to secure the cards together, creating a set of instructions for each activity.

### **Step 4: Purchase or Collect the Materials Needed for the Activities**

- Create a list of materials required for each activity, as outlined in your activity plan.
- Gather all the necessary materials for each activity. This may include items such as magnifying glasses, sketchbooks, rocks, clay, flashlights, and more.

### **Step 5: Put Materials in Ziplock Bags**

- Organize the materials for each activity into separate ziplock bags.
- Ensure that each bag contains all the necessary materials, making it easy for students to access and use them.

### **Step 6: Attach the National Park Tag to the Outside of the Bag**

- Create or print a National Park-themed tag that identifies the backpack as part of the Backpack the Park program.
- Attach this tag securely to the outside of the ziplock bag or backpack.

## Activity 1: Build a Model Homestead Cabin

- Materials:
  - Craft sticks
  - Glue
  - Small cardboard pieces
  - Paint
  - Brushes
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Begin by researching the design of homestead cabins.
  - b. Take four craft sticks and lay them flat on a surface to form the base of the cabin. Secure them with glue to create a square.
  - c. Attach four craft sticks vertically at the corners of the square to form the cabin frame, using glue to secure them in place.
  - d. Cut small pieces of cardboard to fit the frame, creating walls and a roof. Glue them onto the frame.
  - e. Paint and decorate the cabin to resemble a historic homestead. Don't forget to add details like windows and a door.

## Activity 2: Create a Timeline of Westward Expansion

- Materials:
  - Poster board
  - Markers
  - Images or drawings
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Start by researching key events and dates related to westward expansion.
  - b. Draw a horizontal line on the poster board.
  - c. Add the researched dates along the line using markers.
  - d. Illustrate each event with images or drawings and write captions below them.

## Activity 3: Write a Diary Entry as a Homesteader

- Materials:
  - Paper
  - Pencils
  - Reference materials
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Imagine you are a homesteader living in the 1800s.
  - b. Write a diary entry that describes your daily life, including your chores, the challenges you face, and your hopes for the future.

## Activity 4: Build a Miniature Garden

- Materials:
  - Small pots
  - Soil
  - Seeds (e.g., wildflowers)
  - Watering cans
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Fill the small pots with soil.
  - b. Plant native wildflower seeds in each pot, following the instructions on the seed packet.
  - c. Water the pots gently and place them in a sunny spot to nurture your mini garden.



## Activity 5: Cook a Simple Pioneer Meal

- Materials:
  - Cornbread mix
  - Butter
  - Honey
  - Water
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Follow the instructions on the cornbread mix package to prepare the batter.
  - b. Bake the cornbread according to the package instructions.
  - c. Serve it with butter and honey, discussing pioneer food preparation as you enjoy your meal.

## Activity 6: Build a Model Railroad

- Materials:
  - Wooden train set
  - Tracks
  - Paint
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Assemble the wooden train set and tracks according to the included instructions.
  - b. Paint and decorate the surroundings to create a model railroad scene that reflects the importance of railroads in westward expansion.

## Activity 7: Create a Homestead Act Poster

- Materials:
  - Poster board
  - Markers
  - Reference materials
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Research the Homestead Act, its benefits, and drawbacks.
  - b. Design an informative poster with text, illustrations, and graphics that effectively communicate the key aspects of the Homestead Act.

## Activity 8: Grow Your Own Prairie Grass

- Materials:
  - Grass seeds
  - Soil
  - Small pots
- Activity Instructions:
  - a. Fill the small pots with soil.
  - b. Plant prairie grass seeds in each pot, following the planting instructions.
  - c. Water the pots lightly
  - d. Discuss the significance of native plants on the Great Plains.

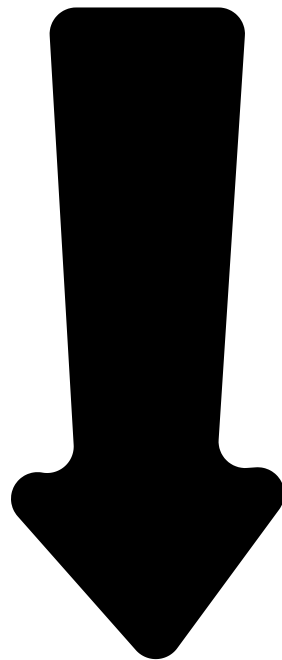
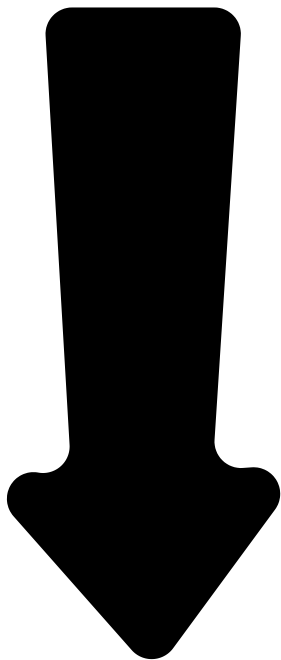


# Activity Cards

Print on cardstock

Laminate

Put on rings



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**BAG TAG BELOW!**



**Homestead National  
Historical Park**

**Backpack the Parks!**

**#ExploreTheParksWithUs**

**"Pack Your Curiosity,  
Explore Nature's Beauty!"**

**[www.expeditionsineducation.org](http://www.expeditionsineducation.org)**

# Homestead Cabin Build

## Building a Model Homestead Cabin

Building a model homestead cabin is an engaging hands-on activity that allows you to step back in time and experience the pioneering spirit of the 19th century. Whether you're a student working on a history project or simply looking for a creative craft, constructing a miniature homestead cabin can be both educational and fun. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you create your own model homestead cabin:

### Materials You'll Need:

- Craft sticks
- Glue
- Small cardboard pieces
- Paint
- Brushes

**Step 1: Research and Planning** Before you begin, take some time to research the design and structure of homestead cabins from the 1800s. Look for reference images and information online or in books to get a clear idea of what your model should look like. Decide on the scale and size of your cabin, keeping in mind the materials you have on hand.

### Step 2: Base and Frame

1. Lay four craft sticks on a flat surface to form the base of your cabin. These sticks will create the foundation.
2. Secure the craft sticks together by applying glue along their edges. Make sure they form a square.

### Step 3: Creating the Frame

1. Take four more craft sticks and attach them vertically at each corner of the base square. These sticks will serve as the frame of your cabin.
2. Apply glue to the ends of the craft sticks and press them firmly onto the base sticks to form the walls of the cabin.

### Step 4: Adding Walls and Roof

1. Cut small pieces of cardboard to fit the frame you've created. These cardboard pieces will become the walls and roof of your cabin.
2. Apply glue to the edges of the cardboard pieces and attach them to the frame. The cardboard on the top will form the roof.
3. Ensure that your cabin has a sloped roof by positioning the top piece slightly higher on one side.

### Step 5: Painting and Decorating

1. Now comes the creative part! Paint your model cabin to resemble a historic homestead. You can choose traditional earthy tones or get creative with colors.
2. Add details like windows, doors, and other features using paint and a fine brush. You can also use small pieces of cardboard for these details.
3. Allow your cabin to dry completely before handling it.

**Step 6: Display and Enjoy** Once your model homestead cabin is dry and the paint has set, find a suitable place to display it. You can create a diorama with other miniature items to set the scene or simply showcase your cabin on a shelf or table.

# Homestead Timeline

The Homestead Act, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on May 20, 1862, played a pivotal role in the westward expansion of the United States. This one-page timeline provides a concise overview of the key events in the history of the Homestead Act.

## 1862: The Birth of the Homestead Act

- **May 20, 1862:** President Abraham Lincoln signs the Homestead Act into law.
- **Requirements:** The Act offered 160 acres of public land to settlers, provided they improved the land by building a dwelling and cultivating crops within five years.

## 1863: First Homestead Claim

- **January 1, 1863:** Daniel Freeman, a Union Army scout, makes the first homestead claim near Beatrice, Nebraska.

## 1866: Amendment to the Homestead Act

- **June 21, 1866:** An amendment to the Act, known as the Southern Homestead Act, is enacted, offering land to freed slaves and southern loyalists.

## 1868: The Act Extended

- **July 22, 1868:** The Homestead Act is extended to include 160 additional acres to those who planted trees.

## 1889: The Oklahoma Land Rush

- **April 22, 1889:** The Oklahoma Land Rush occurs, as thousands of settlers race to claim land in Oklahoma Territory, which had been opened for settlement under the Homestead Act.

## 1904: Desert Land Act

- **March 3, 1904:** The Desert Land Act is passed, allowing settlers to acquire up to 640 acres of desert land for a fee, provided they irrigate and improve it within three years.

## 1934: Homestead Act Repealed

- **December 29, 1934:** The Homestead Act is officially repealed by the Taylor Grazing Act, marking the end of the free land distribution era.

# Pioneer Recipes

## 1. Cornbread

### • Ingredients:

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 large egg

### • Instructions:

- a. Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C). Grease a baking pan.
- b. In a mixing bowl, combine cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
- c. In another bowl, whisk together milk, vegetable oil, and egg.
- d. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix until just combined.
- e. Pour the batter into the greased baking pan and bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown.

## 2. Stew

### • Ingredients:

- 1 pound stewing meat (beef or pork), cut into cubes
- 4-5 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2-3 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 onion, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Water

### • Instructions:

- a. In a large pot, add the stewing meat and enough water to cover it.
- b. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 1-2 hours until the meat is tender.
- c. Add potatoes, carrots, and onions to the pot.
- d. Season with salt and pepper.
- e. Continue simmering until the vegetables are soft and the flavors meld together.

## 3. Beans and Bacon

### • Ingredients:

- 1 pound dried beans (pinto, navy, or black-eyed peas)
- 4 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

### • Instructions:

- a. Soak dried beans in water overnight.
- b. Drain and rinse the beans, then place them in a large pot with enough water to cover.
- c. Add chopped bacon and onion.
- d. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 1-2 hours until the beans are tender.
- e. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

# Homestead Act

The Homestead Act, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on May 20, 1862, stands as one of the most influential and enduring pieces of legislation in American history. This one-page overview explains what the Homestead Act is and its profound impact on the nation.

**What Was the Homestead Act?** The Homestead Act was a federal law that offered 160 acres of public land to settlers willing to improve the land by building a dwelling and cultivating crops. It aimed to encourage westward expansion, promote agriculture, and provide opportunities for land ownership to a broader segment of the population.

## Key Provisions:

- **Land Allocation:** Under the Act, individuals, families, and immigrants, including freed slaves, were eligible to claim land in the western United States. Each homesteader received 160 acres of land.
- **Conditions:** Homesteaders had to meet specific requirements, including residing on the land, building a home, and cultivating crops for a period of five years. After successfully meeting these conditions, they could apply for a land patent, granting them ownership.

## Impact on American History:

- **Westward Expansion:** The Homestead Act played a significant role in the westward expansion of the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It led to the settlement of vast areas of the Great Plains, Rocky Mountains, and Pacific Northwest.
- **Agricultural Growth:** The Act encouraged farming and agricultural development in the newly settled regions, contributing to the nation's food production and economic growth.
- **Diverse Settlers:** The Act attracted a diverse group of settlers, including European immigrants, African Americans, and women, who sought to secure their future and build new lives on the frontier.
- **Challenges and Displacement:** While the Homestead Act offered opportunities, it also presented challenges, including harsh environmental conditions, conflicts with indigenous peoples, and displacement of Native American communities from their ancestral lands.

**Legacy:** The Homestead Act left a lasting legacy in the United States. Its impact on the nation's geography, demographics, and culture is still evident today. It symbolizes the American spirit of opportunity and the enduring desire for land ownership.

Although the Act was officially repealed in 1934, its legacy lives on in the stories and histories of countless families who staked their claim and built a future on the American frontier.