

Frontier Fun: An Activity Collection
From
The Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia



Foreword

Looking for activities to do at home? Want to keep the fun of visiting the Frontier Culture Museum alive? Just want a few extra-curricular educational ideas?

Then look no further! This booklet has everything from school activities to crafts to games to further reading suggestions that will bring a little Frontier Culture fun right into your home.

We've also got great online content, including numerous videos showcasing the buildings at the Museum as well as historical tidbits you may not have heard of before. Check out our [website](#); Facebook pages, @FrontierCultureMuseum and @EducationatFCM; Instagram @frontierculturemuseum; TikTok @frontiermuseum; and our [Youtube channel](#).

You can find our podcast, Banjo Strings and Drinking Gourds: How American Culture Came to Be, anywhere podcasts can be found. It has episodes covering a wide-range of any-age appropriate topics.

Enjoy!

Contents

Games	4
Ringline	4
Bowl Toss	4
Blind Man's Bluff	5
Hunt the Slipper	6
Pick-Up Sticks	6
Duck, Duck, Goose	7
Charades	8
Crafts	9
Silhouettes	9
Adinkra	10
Clippings Book	10
Soap Making	11
Rag Doll	12
Punched Tin	13
Woven Paper Placemat	14
School Days	15
Elocution	15
Spelling Bee	16
Reading	17
Penmanship	18
Arithmetic	19
Sentences	19
Manners and Etiquette	20
Daily Life	22
Write a Letter	22
Singing	23

	3
Baking	24
Nature Journal	25
Riddles	26
Dance	26
Laundry	28
Activities	30
Tea Party	30
Gardening	31
Parlor Theatricals	31
Board Game Night	32
Dyeing Eggs	33
Picnic	35
Write a Newspaper Article	35
Hyperlinks	37

Games

Ringline

Let's start off with a game you may have played on our 18th century German farm. Ringline is a game that might look a little familiar if you've played hot potato before!

You'll need a small pillow or stuffed animal. This will be the "ring".

To play:

2 or more people

Sit in a circle or across from the other player. As you sing the ringline song, pass the ring back and forth, making sure to fully take and pass the ring. No throwing! You can sing the song through just once, or sing it a few times through. Make up a melody! But when you get to the word "stop", whoever has the ring is out! The last one with the pillow is crowned king.



Ringline, ringline, you must wander from one to another. Ringline, ringline, STOP!



Bowl Toss

Bowl Toss is an Indian game that can be played inside or outside. The original game of Bowl Toss used pinecones, but any small object will do. Large or small groups can play this game!

To play:

Find a hoop, or make a circle out of string or rope. Each player needs three objects, pinecones or balled socks or whatever you wish.

Make a throwing line four feet away from the circle.

Starting with the youngest first, each player throws their objects toward the circle, one at a time, using an underhanded throw. The goal is to get all of your objects in the circle. Each object in the circle gets three points. If an object bounces out of the circle, that is one point. Tally the points once everyone has had a turn.

Now, move the starting line back five feet from the circle. Continue to play rounds, moving further away from the circle until no objects make it inside. Tally the points. The player with the most points wins!

Blind Man's Bluff

Here's a game you may have played in the parlor of our 1820 farm: blind man's bluff. Blind man's bluff or buff is an old game that is like Marco Polo, only without the Marco and Polo part. The Bowman family who built the 1820 house would most likely have played a parlor game like this.



George Moreland, *Blind Man's Buff*, ca. 1788 Detroit Institute of Arts

To play:

2 or more people

Find something that works as a blindfold. A teeshirt or towel will do. Make sure your playing field is clear of things anyone could trip over or run into.

The Rules:

No leaving the room. No pushing or tripping the one with the blindfold. No yelling. (Being excited is totally cool). Stop the blindfolded person from running into walls or objects. No bruises please!

Next:

Someone needs to be blindfolded. That person, "it", starts in the middle of the room. Their job is to move around the room with zombie arms out, trying to tag somebody.

Everyone else moves around the room, making noise, but trying not to get tagged.

If someone is tagged, the person playing "it" must guess who they've caught. (This is waived if playing with fewer than three people.) If they're right, the one who was caught becomes the searcher and play starts over.

Hunt the Slipper

Hunt the Slipper is another parlor game popular in the 19th century. Pass the Slipper or Hunt the Slipper is another game similar to Hot Potato. This involves a lot more trickery, though!



Hunt the Slipper, 1803, The British Museum

To play:

3 or more players

Find an object that fits easily in your hand. A slipper, shoe, or marble would have been used in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Sit in a circle. One person is 'it' and sits in the middle and closes their eyes. Everyone else passes the object behind their backs, keeping it moving.

The 'it' person randomly opens their eyes and all movement has to stop. The person in the middle must guess who has the object. Try not to give it away! If correct, the person in the middle switches places with the person who had the object and play continues. If incorrect, they must stay in the middle for another round.

Pick-Up Sticks

This is a game you may have seen on TV or read about. Pick-up sticks is a very old game. It's also been called spillikins or jackstraws. Traditionally, the game was played with a specific set of long sticks, sometimes with different colors painted on the ends. Children could also play with long pieces of straw or matches.



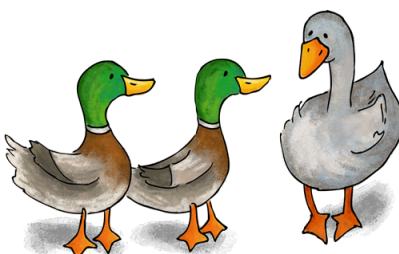
To play:

To start the game, hold 20 to 50 sticks or straws upright on the table in one hand. Let them drop to make a messy pile.

Each player attempts to move a stick without moving any other stick. If no other stick is moved, the same player may continue. Once another stick has been moved, the next player may begin their turn. Once all or most of the sticks have been collected, the player with the most sticks wins!

Duck, Duck, Goose

Here's a game most of you probably know! Duck, Duck, Goose (or Duck, Duck, Grey Duck for those of us from Minnesota) is an old game, although no one is quite certain about its origins. It involves listening, anticipation, and chasing, so it has something for everyone!



To Play:

Sit in a circle. One player stands outside the circle and is 'it'. That player goes around the circle, tapping lightly on the heads of the sitting players. Each tap is accompanied by the word "duck", until 'it' decides to say "goose". The chosen "goose" gets up and chases 'it' back to their original spot.

If 'it' sits down before the "goose" catches them, they are safe and the "goose" becomes 'it'. If they get caught, the "goose" gets to reclaim their seat and play continues with the same 'it'.

There are many variations, including the modern addition of a 'soup pot' in the middle of the circle for those that get tagged. The version known as Duck, Duck, Grey Duck involves trickery by each duck getting a color, like Red Duck, Blue Duck, Gre...en Duck. Play however you like!

Charades

Charades is a game we still play. There are many references to the game in period diaries, letters, and books.



Edward Matthew Ward, *A Game of Charades*, circa 1840, The Rhode Island School of Design Museum

Charades is an old game that can produce hours of fun and creativity. This would definitely have been played in the parlors of 1820 and 1850.

To play:

2 or more players

You can either invent your own topics, or use the ones listed here. Just copy them out onto pieces of paper for the pantomimer to grab. Make sure only one person sees them! That person can't play, but can be the timer.

The person pantomiming, or charading, takes a topic slip. They get a minute to look at it and decide how they want to act it out. Once they begin acting it out, the audience gets three minutes to guess what the topic is supposed to be. For younger players, sounds are okay.

Play continues until everyone has had a chance to pantomime or all the topics are performed.

Frontier charade topics: sheep, cow, school, butter churning, chopping wood, planting seeds, cooking, cat, blacksmith, bow and arrow (hunting), sewing clothes

Crafts

Silhouettes

One of the most popular activities and decorations from around 1790 to 1840 was the silhouette. The silhouette was a precursor to the photograph and a whole lot cheaper than commissioning a portrait to remember your loved ones by.



You'll need a bit of equipment for this.

- A light source
- A chair
- Masking tape
- Two pieces of white paper
- A piece of black paper
- A pencil
- White chalk
- Scissors
- Glue stick

Directions:

Tape one piece of white paper to the wall. (This is why masking tape is better than Scotch tape)

Place the chair and the silhouette subject between the wall and the light so that the whole head and shoulders are in shadow on the paper. Carefully trace the shadow.

Once all the subjects have been traced, carefully cut out the outline.

Place the outlines on the black paper and trace with white chalk. (You can skip a step and just cut around the white outline, but this can get messy!) Cut along the white line on the black paper.

Mount the black silhouettes on white paper using the glue stick.

Adinkra

An activity you may have seen on the Frontier Culture Museum's West African farm is the art of Adinkra. Historically used for royalty of the Asante people, these symbols can be found on wooden objects, jewelry, or cloth. Here's a [link](#) to a video from the Open University about the making of Adinkra in Ghana. Today, you can make your own adinkra symbols by using a potato and some tempera paint or food coloring.

Historic adinkra ascribed a meaning to every symbol. Some were more complex; some were very simple. Make your own! Design a symbol on a piece of paper before beginning. It can have meaning, or just be pretty!

You'll need:

- A potato
- A spoon or plastic knife
- Food coloring and water OR tempera paint
- Clean white paper
- A drop cloth

Directions:

Put the drop cloth across the work surface. This can get messy!

Cut the potato in half. Take one half and use tools to carve out the design you prepared in relief. This means cut away the parts of the potato that are not included in the design. When finished, the design should be slightly raised from the part of the potato you will hold.

Prepare your colored material. Make sure you have enough room to dip the potato into the color.

Dip the potato in the color and carefully press the design onto the white paper. Print your design all over the paper! Change color! Let your paper fully dry and enjoy the artwork you just made!

Clippings Book

Children in the nineteenth century often made scrapbooks or cuttings/clippings books by taking clippings of newspaper or magazine articles or pictures and pasting them in to small books. Sherlock Holmes is a famous example of someone with a book of newspaper cuttings, although all of his interesting articles were about crimes!

You can make your own cuttings book. It doesn't have to be on any one subject; if you like animals, fashion, and video games, go ahead and mix it up!

You'll need:

- Pieces of paper
- A hole punch
- Ribbon, twine, yarn, or thick string
- Magazines/newspapers

Scissors
Glue stick

Directions:

Cut two pieces of paper into fourths. Line up the 8 pieces and punch two holes, one toward the top and one toward the bottom. Use ribbon, etc. to tie the pages together through the holes.

Take magazines or newspapers, after asking first, and carefully cut out pictures or articles that you find interesting. Use a glue stick to paste the cut items into your clippings book!

Soap Making

Chores were a large part of daily life for the children of all the farms at the Museum. Gardening, cleaning, chopping wood...the list is endless.

Soap is something very important in the current climate. Making soap would have been part of those chores. We're turning to Mary Randolph's 1824 *The Virginia Housewife* to give us the directions to make your own soft soap at home.



John Simeon Chardin, *Soap Bubbles*, ca. 1733-1734, Metropolitan Museum of Art

You'll need:

A bar of hard soap
Water
Essential oils or extracts, like lemon or vanilla
Corn meal (if necessary)

Directions:

Take your bar of soap and scrape it with a spoon or butter knife into small pieces.

Put it in a saucepan with a little water and heat it on low, stirring constantly, until it turns into a smooth paste.

Pour the mixture in a bowl and let cool. When cool, add essential oil or extract in small amounts.

Beat the mixture until well mixed. If too liquid, add a little corn meal until appropriate texture is reached.

Put the finished soap in Tupperware with a lid. If exposed to air, the soap will harden, which is also fine. If you would like to make a hard bar of soap, shape the mixture and place out on wax paper to dry.

Rag Doll

Toys were a bit different in the periods covered by the Frontier Culture Museum. For one, most toys were handmade. For another, each child may only have one or two toys. Farmers' kids would either have made their own from scraps of material or would have gotten a special gift made by a parent during a rare bit of spare time.



Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Girl with a Doll*, ca. 1750s, Hermitage Museum

Rag dolls were a popular toy for children. Every mother had a scrap bag of left-over pieces of fabric, either from remaking old garments or bits left from buying a length of fabric at the general store. Laura Ingalls had a rag doll named Charlotte that accompanied her everywhere! Rag dolls were made differently by every loving hand. Some had hair, some didn't. Some had faces, some didn't. Some were complicated, some weren't.

You'll need:

12"x12" square of plain cotton or muslin for the body

3"x3" square of pretty fabric for the bonnet

3"x6" strip of different fabric for the apron

Twine or string

A cotton ball for the head

Directions:

Lay out the big square of cotton or muslin. Put the cotton ball right in the middle.

Fold the fabric over the cotton ball on the diagonal, so the two opposite corners meet. Tie a piece of twine under the cotton ball to make the head. The doll should look like a ghost right now.

Take the 'arm' sections, the left and right corners, and tie a knot on each side between the head and the corners. This is the body of your doll!

Get ready to dress your doll. Take your apron fabric and cut short, narrow slits on each side, making ties for the apron. Tie the apron on using the ties under the arms of your doll.

Fold the remaining piece of fabric in half like a kerchief. Tie under the chin to make your bonnet.

Have fun with your doll!

Punched Tin

Have you been lucky enough to visit the Frontier Culture Museum when our tinsmith is in? If so, you've gotten to see one of the most delicate and difficult trades. Tinsmiths made everything from dinnerware to lanterns to cookware, making them extremely important to frontier societies.



You can try your own hand at tinsmithing and recycle at the same time! We'll use an empty, cleaned tin can to make a punched tin candle holder. You may have seen a punched tin barn lantern lit at the Museum on rainy days. This activity requires adult supervision!

You'll need:

- A piece of cardboard for under your work
- An empty, washed tin of any size, filled with water and frozen
- A nail, at least two inches (6d) long
- A hammer
- A magic marker

Directions:

Take your piece of cardboard and put it on your work surface. This will protect against any stray hammer blows.

With the magic marker, draw out an image you'd like your candle holder to show on the side of the can. Traditional pictures would be a star or simple dots. The can will be cold!

Put your can on the cardboard. Using the hammer and nail, carefully punch holes in the can every inch or so along your drawing.

When you're finished, put a candle inside and watch your picture glow. Be careful, though, because the inside will be sharp!

Woven Paper Placemat

Weaving has been an important part of daily life for centuries. Not only did weaving provide a source of income, but was essential to the production of clothes! You may have seen an interpreter demonstrating the weaving process on the loom on the Irish farm at the Frontier Culture Museum. Clothing didn't come from a big factory; there were many steps involved to make both cloth and then clothing. Weaving was the final step to produce the raw cloth that people could then turn into items of clothing like a petticoat or jacket.

We can't share our loom with you, but we can share this neat trick with paper to demonstrate the weaving process. The loom has threads that run two different directions: up and down, left and right. The up and down, or vertical thread, tied onto the loom is called the warp thread. That stays stationary. The left and right, or horizontal thread, is the weft thread that is thrown through the warp with a piece of wood called a shuttle and helps make the over/under pattern that holds the cloth together.

You'll need:

At least two pieces of colored construction paper
Scissors
Tape

Directions:

Fold one piece of construction paper in half, matching the top and bottom.

Keeping it folded, cut slits from the middle fold to within an inch of the edge. Unfold.

Take the other piece of paper and cut 1 inch strips for weaving.

Take a strip and tape the end to the long side of the other piece at the far left of the cut slits.

Weave the strip over and under the slits until you get to the other long side. Cut down the strip if necessary and secure the end with tape.

Continue doing the same with each strip, alternating if you start on top or underneath the paper with slits. Experiment with multiple colors and patterns! Use your mat as a placemat for dinner.

School Days

Elocution

Because things can't be all fun and games, this section is all about activities from our 1840 schoolhouse. Some of you may have done this particular exercise on a field trip, so hopefully this is a fun reminder of the museum.



Elocution was a very important part of school. Learning to speak clearly and carefully was considered a mark of being educated.

Here's the lesson. Make sure to sit up very straight with your feet on the floor to support your diaphragm. Try to recite without twisting your tongue, but if you do, just start over! Students would have had to recite these in unison until everyone could say it perfectly. Let us know in the comments how many times you started over!

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
A peck of pickled peppers, Peter Piper picked.
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.

One One was a racehorse.
Two Two was one too.
When One One won one race,
Two Two won one too.

She sells seashells by the seashore.
The shells she sells are seashells, I'm sure.
So if she sells seashells on the seashore,
Then I'm sure she sells seashore shells.

Spelling Bee



Norman Rockwell, *Cousin Reginald Spells Peloponnesus (Spelling Bee)*, 1918, Norman Rockwell Museum

School in the 1840s was a full day like schools today. This meant lots of time for different subjects. We've already covered elocution. Our next subject is spelling. Spelling was very important; before standardized spelling, a single word could be spelled four different ways in the same letter, by the same author! This made it sometimes difficult for the reader to understand the author's intent, especially if they hadn't read anything from them before. It wasn't until the 17th century that spelling of most words the way we know it was agreed upon.

Try a spelling bee! Spelling bees, or matches, were important events for the whole community. Ben Franklin highly recommended spelling matches as part of the curriculum, but they quickly became entertainment for adults as well.

Grab a grown-up to present the words. When each word is given, try to spell it (without looking!). Each person gets a turn with a different word. When someone misspells a word, they join the audience cheering on the rest. See how far in the list you can get! These words, from *The Modern Spelling Book* 1883, are in order of difficulty.

Rat	Wet	Tin	Box	Mud	Clap	Rake
Mail	Wild	Rope	Grow	Price	Quill	Barn
Tool	Wool	Share	Grasp	Earth	Breathe	Voice
Loom	Slates	Chimney	Blackberry	Stockings	Thimble	Goslings
Variety	Emulate	Astonishment	Preservation	Etiquette		

Reading

Do you like to read? Reading was a very important part of the curriculum at our 1840 schoolhouse. Students learned to read sharing school books, sometimes only one or two per reading level!

Often, either the teacher or a fellow student would read a section from a book, called a reader, and the other students would answer questions about the content. This is a selection from *McGuffey's Third Reader*, printed in 1879. Take turns reading each numbered paragraph. Think of a question to ask at the end about the paragraph you read! And keep in mind, this was written over 100 years ago. Are there any words or phrases that we don't use or that don't mean the same thing today?

The Beaver.

1. The beaver is found chiefly in North America. It is about three and a half feet long, including the flat, paddle-shaped tail, which is a foot in length.
2. The long, shining hair on the back is chestnut-colored, while the fine, soft fur that lies next the skin, is grayish brown.
3. Beavers build themselves most curious huts to live in, and quite frequently a great number of these huts are placed close together, like the buildings in a town.
4. They always build their huts on the banks of rivers or lakes, for they swim much more easily than they walk, and prefer moving about in the water.
5. When they build on the bank of a running stream, they make a dam across the stream for the purpose of keeping the water at the height they wish.
6. These dams are made chiefly of mud, and stones, and the branches of trees. They are sometimes six or seven hundred feet in length, and are so constructed that they look more like the work of man than of little dumb beasts.
7. Their huts are made of the same material as the dams, and are round in shape. The walls are very thick, and the roofs are finished off with a thick layer of mud, sticks, and leaves.
8. They commence building their houses late in the summer, but do not get them finished before the early frosts. The freezing makes them tighter and stronger.
9. They obtain the wood for their dams and huts by gnawing through the branches of trees, and even through the trunks of small ones, with their sharp front teeth. They peel off the bark, and lay it up in store for winter food.

Penmanship

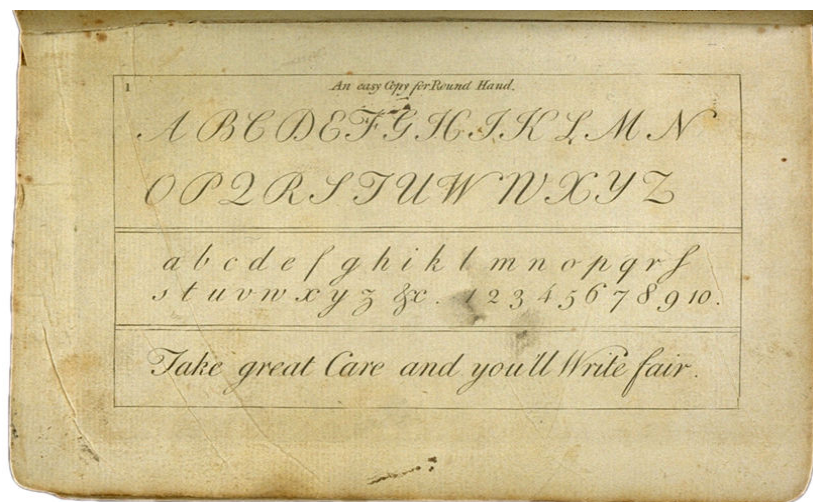
We've practiced our spelling and reading, so now it's time to practice our writing! Whether writing with a quill pen made from a feather or using a slate pencil on a slate board, clear handwriting is important!



Albert Anker, *Writing Girl*, 1830, Private Collection

Today, we all know a basic style or hand of writing, meaning we shape our letters in a similar way. Before the 1660s, there were many different styles, which meant trying to read the same word by three authors could mean three very different looking words!

This is a copy of a Round Hand, where all the letters are rounded, from *The Instructor, or American Young Man's Best Companion Containing Spelling, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetick* by George Fisher, published 1786.



Find a good piece of paper and a well-sharpened pencil (or pen if you're brave) and try to copy the alphabet. Don't worry about mistakes! Penmanship would have been part of school and you wouldn't be expected to get it perfect right away!

Arithmetic



A Secola, *Arithmetic Lesson*, Late 19th century

Time for everyone's favorite subject: Arithmetic, also known as mathematics. Math was difficult in our 1840 schoolhouse. No calculators here! But also, no whiteboard to write the problem on. Pupils would have to listen carefully as the teacher read out a word problem, writing down the information on their slates before solving the problem.

Here are just a few problems. Get a clean sheet of paper and a well-sharpened pencil. Have a grownup read the problems aloud, twice. Try to answer the problems without reading them. Good luck!

1. Amy had 3 pencils in her pencil box. This morning she bought 1 new pencil. When she put it into her pencil box, how many pencils did she have in the box?
2. Leo is 7 years old and his brother is 12. How much younger is Leo?
3. Mrs. Bow took a plate of 15 cookies to some boys playing near her house. Each boy took one cookie and then there were 8 cookies left on the plate. Was there another cookie for each boy?
4. Mr. Barger bought 6 sheep for \$26. After shearing them, he sold the wool for \$12 and all the sheep for \$17. How much profit did he make?

Answers: 4 pencils, 5 years, Yes, \$3

Sentences

Now that we know how to read, spell, and how to make our letters, we need to know how to put words into sentences that everyone can understand.

This exercise comes from *Lessons in Language* by Horace S. Tarbell, printed in 1894.

Arrange the words so that each group makes a sentence or question with appropriate punctuation. (And no, reading these in your best Yoda voice doesn't count!)

1. think rain long it will before i
2. is where companion published youth's the
3. is beautiful how rose that

4. my aches how oh head
5. letter morning we to glad receive were your this
6. Detroit from far Lansing is how to it
7. to-day time seemed how short has the lesson our for
8. is how moving train the fast
9. school excused earlier we to-day than were usual from
10. are we have to lesson going singing now a

Manners and Etiquette

Ever been told to mind your Ps and Qs? While nobody is quite sure where the expression comes from, it's generally agreed upon that it means to mind your manners.



Gillis van Tilborgh, *Portrait of a Family*, circa 1655-1670

Manners and etiquette were very important aspects of life for children to learn. In fact, they still are today! But it went beyond simple please and thank you. Each of the cultures presented at the Frontier Culture Museum had their own ideas of what polite behavior meant. For example, at one point, certain groups of in Germany thought the fork was uncivilized!

Many books or pamphlets were written on the subject, even as far back as the 15th century! Even George Washington himself wrote a treatise called *Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation*.

Table manners were by far the most talked about type of behavior. For this exercise, why don't you pretend to be a yeoman farmer in 17th century England?

At lunch or dinner, set out your place-settings with your fork on the left of your plate and your knife on the left. By the end of the century, hosts were required to supply utensils- before that, guests had to bring their own!

As you eat, make sure to follow these rules:

- Do not eat with your fingers if the food is greasy.
- Pinky extended to keep clean for dipping in spices.
- Use napkin for mouth, lips, fingers only. No blowing your nose!
- The upper classes washed their hands, but everyone should!
- Read this poem from *Stans Puer ad Mensam* 1476:

With soup, do not use bread to sop it up,
Or suck it loudly – that is to transgress,
Or put your dirty mouth to a clean cup,
Or pass drinks while your hands are in a mess,
Or stain your napkin out of carelessness.
Also, beware at meals of causing strife,
And do not make a tooth-pick of your knife.

Have fun and mind your manners!

Daily Life

Write a Letter



From Left to Right: Pietro Antonio Rotari, *Young Girl Writing a Love Letter*, circa 1755, Norton Simon Art Foundation
 Henriette Brown, *A Girl Writing; The Pet Goldfinch*, circa 1870, The Victoria and Albert Museum
 Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier, *Young Man Writing*, 1852, Musée du Louvre

This activity puts all of our writing and spelling skills together to practice a very important part of history: letter writing.

Before the internet and cell phones, people had to write out letters by hand and wait for the mail to deliver them. Responses could take a month to come back! Letters could be personal, like telling your friend in a different city about your summer vacation, or they could be for business, like a farmer writing to order seed from a catalog.

You'll need paper, lined or unlined, and a well-sharpened pencil with an eraser. Pick one of the prompts below. Make sure to use your very best writing and spelling skills! Decide who you would like to write to and make sure to address it appropriately!

1. Write a letter describing the last walk you took. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you smell?
2. Write a letter to whomever gave you your favorite birthday present. Thank them and tell them why it's your favorite.
3. Write a letter to describe your room to someone who has never seen it. What do you like? What do you not like?
4. Write a letter describing your pet or favorite stuffed animal. What does it look like? Does it do anything silly?

If you like the letter, have a grownup put it in the mail for you and see if you get a response!

Singing



Music! Music is an important part of human life, and has been for as long as we've written things down. Do you like to sing? The people who lived in all the houses at the Frontier Culture Museum had songs to help them do their work and to enjoy being together. What's your favorite song? If you or someone at home is musically-inclined, the [Library of Congress](#) has a very nice collection of sheet music from 1800-1922.

To get you started, here are the lyrics to "Oh! Susanna", written in 1848 by Stephen Foster. He was an extremely popular American songwriter, with hits such as "Camptown Races", "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair", and "Beautiful Dreamer." Even though the songs were written over 150 years ago, we still know them today! Click this [link](#) to have music to sing to.

Oh Susanna:

I come from Alabama with my Banjo on my knee—
 I'm goin' to Louisiana my true love for to see.
 It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry;
 The sun so hot I froze to death—Susanna, don't you cry.

Oh! Susanna, don't you cry for me;
 I come from Alabama, with my Banjo on my knee.
 I had a dream the other night, when everything was still;
 I thought I saw Susanna dear, a comin' down the hill.
 The buckwheat cake was in her mouth, a tear was in her eye,
 I says, "I'm coming from the South"—Susanna, don't you cry.

Oh! Susanna, don't you cry for me;
 I come from Alabama, with my Banjo on my knee.

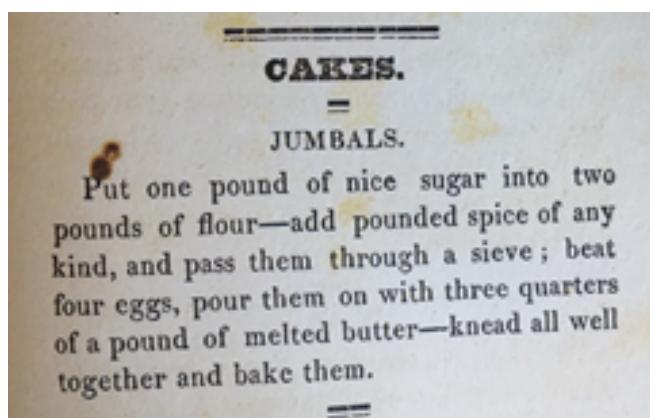
Baking

Cooking was an all-day task for frontier families. Children would start helping as soon as they were able to hold a spoon. Of course, some of the things we find in historic cookbooks don't sound particularly tasty to modern palates. *The Virginia Housewife* by Mary Randolph was first published in 1824 and includes such taste treats as "To Bake a Calf's Head" or "To Boil Eels".



Today's idea is a recipe, called a receipt in the nineteenth century, for Jumbals. You may have seen these being made on our 1820 farm or even helped out! These cookies can be rolled or cut into any shape you choose.

The original receipt doesn't include many specific measurements. Lots of receipts didn't, but instead used instructions such as "a piece of butter the size of an egg" (*The Virginia Housewife*, Mary Randolph, 1824). Not very helpful! Today, we've re-written the receipt into an easy-to-use modern recipe.



Ingredients:

- Two cups flour
- One cup white sugar
- ½ tbs cinnamon
- ½ tsp nutmeg
- Two eggs, beaten

¼ cup, or half stick of butter, melted

Directions:

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

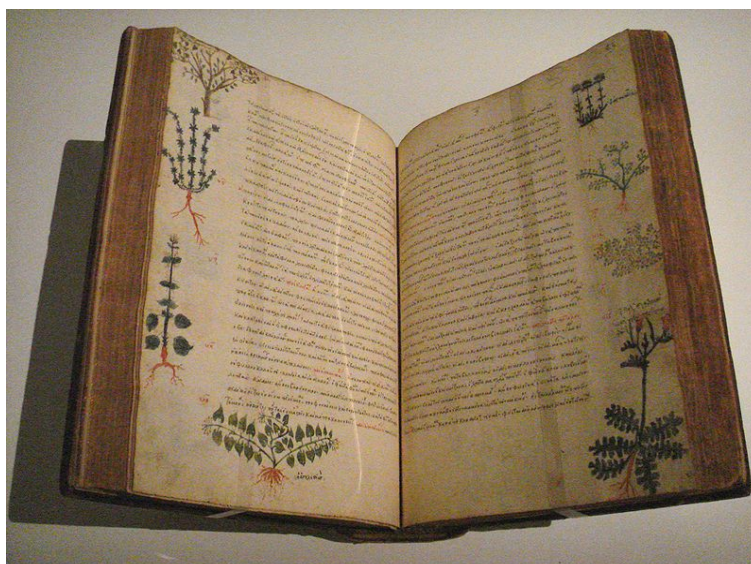
Mix the flour, sugar, and spices together. Add the beaten eggs and melted butter. Stir well until fully mixed. If necessary, add water or milk until dough-like.

Take small pieces of dough and shape them any way you like. Roll them like snakes between two hands or roll the dough about ¼ inch thick and cut with shapes.

Place cookies on ungreased baking sheet and bake for 8-10 minutes or until the cookies begin to turn brown.

Nature Journal

Nature journaling was a very important part of eighteenth and nineteenth century science. Some botany journals, or herbals, go back to 3000 BCE! China, Egypt, Greece, and Rome had a long tradition of observing the world and recording images for future generations.



Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica*, 15th century, Musée de Cluny

Today, you can make your own observations. Whether you can go outside or not, a nature journal can help you look at your surroundings in more detail.

To begin:

You can either make a small journal of your own or use a notebook. Whether it has lines or not is up to you. To make a journal, cut two pieces of full-sized paper into fourths. Line up the 8 pieces and punch two holes, one toward the top and one toward the bottom. Use ribbon, twine, yarn, or thick string to tie the pages together through the holes.

Give your journal a name. Make sure to put your name on it and the date!

Directions:

Start observing what's around you. If you can go outside or look out the window, is there an interesting tree, flower, leaf, or rock? Draw it as best you can. You can use a pencil or give it color with crayons or colored pencils. Write down anything in particular you observe about your object.

If you can't go outside, is there anything interesting around you? Do you have a pet or stuffed animal you can observe? How about a pretty or interesting cup? Draw the object and write down your observations.

Share your journal with someone at home!

Riddles

Time to stretch your brains! Riddles are logic problems that can really make you think, but they were historical go-to for entertainment. Families might gather after dinner to try to outdo each other with tricky riddles.

Try to answer the riddles below. It's okay if you don't get them; quite a few of the interpreters here at the museum had problems too!

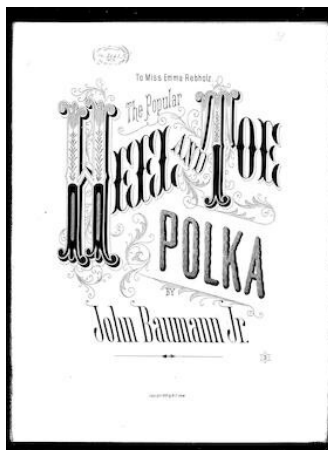
1. Two fathers and two sons caught three rabbits. They each got one. How does that happen?
2. We are little airy creatures, All of diff'rent voice and features; One of us in glass is set, One of us you'll find in jet, One of us is set in tin, And the fourth a box within; If the last you should pursue, They can never fly from you.
3. What is the difference between a big black cloud and a lion with a toothache?
4. The more you take, the more you leave behind. What am I?

Answers: 1. They were a grandfather, father, and son. 2. The vowels. 3. One pours with rain the other roars with pain. 4. Footsteps.

Dance

With all the Frontier Fun we've been having, we haven't done one of the most common pastimes: Dance!

Dance, along with music, is found all over the world and all throughout history. You may have seen some of our John Lewis Society members dancing around the Maypole last year, or watched a Lantern Tour cast perform a Christmas dance. This dance is one of the easiest and most fun dances field trips can experience at our 1820 farm. The Heel-Toe Polka is a very American style of dance, with lots of energy! It can be performed to many songs, including the Heel-Toe Polka or Little Brown Jug Polka.



Dancers wouldn't have to memorize all the steps. A caller, someone not dancing, would shout out the steps along with the music. Let's give this one a try, following the steps below.

To dance:

2 or more people

Grab a partner. If you have more than four dancers, or two sets of partners, make a circle while facing your partner and holding both hands.

Take the foot inside the circle and plant your heel, then point your toe. Repeat.

Take four small steps toward the middle of the circle.

Take the foot outside the circle and plant your heel, then point your toe. Repeat.

Take four small steps back to your starting point.

Drop hands. Start a patty cake in counts of four:

Clap once, high five right hands three times.

Clap once, high five left hands three times.

Clap once, high five both hands three times.

Clap once, slap your knees three times.

Immediately start the dance over. Try getting faster and faster each time!

To get an idea of how a caller would tell you the steps, [here's one of our interpreters](#) instructing a field trip in the Heel-Toe Polka.

Laundry

Chores, chores, chores. A child's life in the past revolved around chores. Even today, kids can be responsible for helping with the laundry! Laundry has definitely changed over time. Today's washing machines do all the work for you, but even 70 years ago, laundry involved a lot more work. Hand scrubbing or even using your feet was the only way to get your clothes, sheets, and towels clean.



Of course, this meant that people weren't doing laundry as much as we do today. Definitely not every few days! That meant people didn't always smell so nice. Due to the massive amount of work, the Great Wash in 17th century England would probably only occur two times a year! Water for laundry had to be heated over a fire in an enormous copper kettle. Lye soap didn't always remove stains and they didn't have any Clorox, Shout, or OxyClean, so to remove stains, they would soak the garments in urine, straight from the chamberpot! That must have been a smelly job. The ammonia from the urine, chemically the same as the stuff you can buy in the store today, did a good job.

To wash your own laundry in a historic fashion, you'll need a few things. (Don't worry, no urine necessary!)

- A bucket, plastic tub that will hold water or even the tub in your bathroom!
- Enough water to cover the laundry
- Laundry (make sure it's okay with your adult and only use cotton or natural fibers)
- A hard bar of soap

Directions:

If not using your bathroom tub, find an area that can get wet. It's probably best to do it outside if you can!

Fill your container with water. Cold water is okay, because most people can't keep a fire going all day to boil the clothes first!

Put your soap in the water and swish it around to help dissolve. Once the water turns a little cloudy, you're ready for your laundry!

Put the clothes in the tub. Now comes the fun part: take your shoes off and get stomping and swishing! Keep moving your feet in the tub and make sure that the clothes are getting exposed

to the soap. This would typically take hours for each batch, but keep going until you're ready to stop.

Check your laundry. Does it smell fresh?

Make sure you wash or rinse the clothes in an actual washing machine afterward, just to make sure you get all the soap out! Historically, clothing would be taken to a nearby stream or river and scrubbed on a rock to get all the soap out.

Activities

Tea Party

Have you seen a movie set in the early 19th century where the characters have tea? Have you read *Pride and Prejudice* or any other Jane Austen novels? Tea has played a very important part throughout the history of America. The Boston Tea Party of December 1773 showcases the importance of tea, or actually refusing to use tea, in Revolutionary America. Patriotic Americans, seeing how important tea was to the English, began drinking coffee in protest. By the 19th century, however, well-to-do Americans wanted to copy the tea drinking habits of upper-class English society and invite guests to 'take tea'.



Richard Collins, *The Tea Party*, ca. 1727, The Goldsmith's Hall

You'll need:

- Paper and markers or colored pencils for invitations
- Mugs for everyone invited to your tea party
- Tea, loose or bagged, or milk, lemonade, juice, etc.
- Hot water for tea
- Milk, honey, lemon juice, sugar to add to tea
- Cookies or cake

Directions:

Make invitations to your tea party, giving a date, time, and location

If you're having tea, have an adult help heat the water and pour it over your tea. Let the tea steep according to the directions. Set out the milk, honey, sugar, and lemon juice, if you are using it. Make sure to add spoons for stirring!

Put out your tasty treats. Small servings before dinner!

Enjoy your tea and treats. Have conversation with your guests or sing a song together.

Gardening

Gardens were critical aspects to all the farms at the Frontier Culture Museum. They provided food for the family, as well as the medicinal herbs needed to help keep them healthy. Children were often responsible for the garden, helping plant, weed, and harvest. You may have seen people working in the gardens at the Museum or cooking the bounty.



You'll need:

- A paper cup
- Enough dirt to fill the cup
- Any type of seed

Directions:

Fill your cup with dirt. You may want to put a few small rocks or stones in the bottom to help drain the soil.

Following the directions on the seed packet, plant your seed.

Place it in a sunny location. Make sure to water it!

Watch your plant grow!

Parlor Theatricals

One of the most entertaining past activities that has recently become popular again is the parlor theatrical, or putting on a play in your own living room! If you've ever read or watched *Little Women*, the March sisters perform a play for their mother, using everyday items for props and costumes. Parlor theatricals were a great way for people who couldn't afford theater tickets or travel to experience plays.

You can write your own script, find one online, or even act out your favorite book or movie. It's up to you! Get everyone in the family involved as actors or audience. Make popcorn, add music, do whatever helps you tell the story.

You'll need:

A notebook if writing your own script (even if you're planning to retell a book or movie, it helps to write down the major plot points you want to act out!)

Props that will help with your story (for example, a wooden spoon works well as a pirate sword)

Costumes (ask permission before raiding your parents' closet)

Directions:

Once you've settled on your story, make sure everyone knows their character and lines.

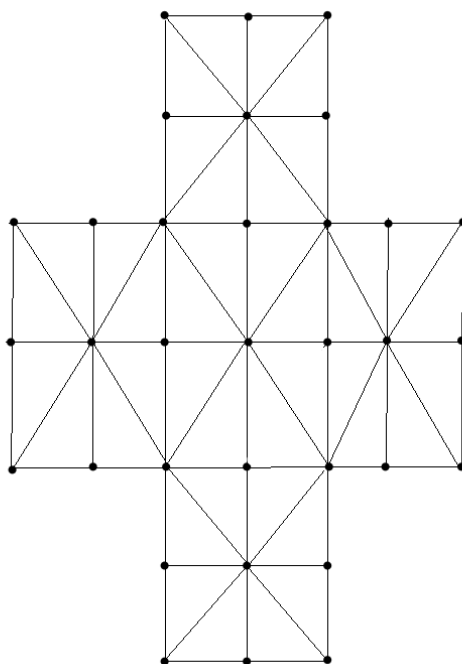
Rehearse! If you're using a script, have everyone read through it once or twice so everyone knows what to expect. This will help your show go smoothly.

Perform! When you're ready, sit the audience down (even if it's the family pet or stuffed animals, the audience needs to be in place before the curtain rises)

Board Game Night

Board games have been popular for a very long time. Have you ever played mancala on our West African farm or checkers on the porch of the 1850s American farm? Board games are a fun and relaxing pastime. Do you have a favorite board game?

For this activity, you'll need to pull out all of your favorite games. Bring the whole family together to play as many games as you'd like. Make sure to grab snacks and drinks!



If you like, you can follow the directions below to make a Fox and Geese game board to try your hand at an old English game as well.

You'll need:

A regular sized piece of paper or cardboard

Markers

Checkers or something to serve as game pieces in different colors

Directions:

Take your piece of paper and a marker and mark out a square that has three dots on each side and one in the middle. Add two dots going from each dot on the square, ending up with a t-shape of five total squares. Take your marker and connect the dots, making straight and diagonal lines. These will be your available moves.

To play, you'll need one black or red game piece to be the fox and fifteen white pieces to be the geese. The fox starts in the middle of the board. The geese are placed on all the dots of one arm, plus the outside lines of the neighboring arms.

The geese move first. They can only move forward or sideways along the lines. The geese attempt to keep the fox from capturing the geese by surrounding the fox. The geese cannot jump the fox.

Like in checkers, the fox can jump the geese if there is a goose next to the fox with an empty dot behind it. The fox can move in any direction.

Play is finished when the fox cannot move or there are only two geese left on the board. Try to play both the fox and the geese!

Dyeing Eggs

You may have been lucky enough to see an interpreter dyeing wool at the Frontier Culture Museum. Wool straight from the sheep is white, grey, brown, or even black, but how do we get the colorful clothing you've seen around the Museum? There certainly aren't any orange or green or blue sheep! Instead, people in the past used things easily found in their environment to add color to their clothing and blankets. Plants, nuts, roots, spices, flowers, even insects were used to dye cloth.

Have you ever heard the expression, dyed in the wool? We use it to describe a person with very specific traits, but it comes from the practice of dyeing the whole fleece before processing the wool. Dyed in the skein meant dyeing already spun skeins (a specific length) of yarn.



You'll need:

- An easily cleaned surface
- A few hardboiled eggs
- Easily cleaned bowls
- Dyestuffs: turmeric, blackberries, blueberries, onion skins, dandelions (the whole plant with roots)
- Hot water
- Vinegar

Directions:

Decide on the dyestuff you want to use. Turmeric can make colors from yellow to deep orange. Blueberries are a silvery blue-grey. Blackberries can range from black to purple to red. Onion skins will dye yellow. Dandelions, and you'll need a lot of them, can dye green.

Bring water to a boil in a saucepan. Add the dyestuffs (only one per pot!) and let simmer for about half an hour. Berries should be smashed and can be added straight to the pot or tied in cheesecloth to avoid a mess. The more dyestuffs, the darker the color.

Pour your dye in an easy to clean bowl. Turmeric and blackberries can leave stains on everything, including you!

Add a little vinegar. The vinegar will act as a mordant, or fixative, allowing the color to bond with the eggshell.

Place the egg in the dyestuff and let it sit while the dye cools. The longer the egg sits, the darker the color.

Take your egg out and look at the changes!

Experiment! Adding more eggs after the first will make lighter colors as the dye is soaked into the eggshells. If you have permission, try a scrap of white cotton fabric.

Picnic

With nice weather in summer and fall, lots of people will eat outside, having a very American picnic. The word picnic actually comes from a 17th century French word, *pique nique*, which meant bringing your own food or drink when eating out. English adopted the word around the turn of the 19th century, using it to describe packing food and relocating somewhere outside to eat it. Late Victorians even had picnics in cemeteries! A picnic is a relaxing way to enjoy nature, and was mostly done by city folks. Eating food outside on the frontier was also done, but more as a celebration. Barn raisings, or communities gathering to help each other build barns, were often accompanied by a picnic-like dinner or luncheon.

You'll need:

- A box, bag, or basket to carry your food
- A blanket to sit on
- Napkins, plates, utensils if necessary
- Drinks
- Sandwiches, grapes, cheese, etc- foods easy to carry and eat outside

Directions:

Invite your guests.

Decide on a location. If it's a nice day, maybe a park would work. If it's raining, try having a picnic on the living room floor!

Make your food. Make sure you have things for everyone to enjoy!

Pack your things carefully. Make sure nothing can tip, spill, or break. Victorian picnics often used specially purchased, expensive ceramic plates, cloth napkins, and real silverware, but paper plates and plastic silverware are okay.

Enjoy your picnic! Maybe bring a ball, a kite, or play a lawn game like tag or duck, duck, goose.

Write a Newspaper Article

Newspapers were often the only reliable way to get news on the frontier. Mail was slow and letters could take weeks or months to get from one end of the country to another. The news would then have to spread by word of mouth.



Newspapers, on the other hand, could collate reports of events, sent by letter, and disseminate them to a broad audience. In the early 19th century, Staunton had a series of newspapers, *The Weekly Western Star*, *The Republican Farmer*, and *The Staunton Spectator*. People would often save newspaper sheets or

specific articles that talked about significant events, which help historians today by being able to actually read about important historical events through the eyes of people living at the time. Can you imagine the excitement of going through an old trunk in someone's attic and finding a clipping of a newspaper article about the Boston Tea Party? Take a look at this paper from *The Staunton Spectator*, dating to April 13, 1827. Is this style of newspaper very different from ours?

We're living in a very interesting period that will be recorded in history, so your assignment is to write a newspaper article reporting on events that can be saved for future generations.

You'll need:

- A piece of paper (can be large like a newspaper or regular paper sized)
- A pencil, pen, or computer (decide if you would like to write or type your article)
- A newspaper or online news source

Directions:

Research your topic. You can write about anything that has happened in current events. Find something that interests you about news from this year and make a list of all the facts you want to include in your article.

Write your article. Try to use formal language. Look at other articles for inspiration about reporting the facts. Make a couple drafts if you need to.

If you would like to, write an editorial or opinion piece on the same topic, but write about how you feel about the topic. Editorials or letters to the editor were ways for the public to react and share their feelings before Facebook, Twitter, or blogs.

Share your articles with someone. Have them react to your reporting as if it's the first time they've ever read the information. Did you get your points across?

Find somewhere safe to store your articles. You may want them sometime in the future! Keep copies of your sources with your articles.

Hyperlinks

Frontier Culture Museum Website: www.frontiermuseum.org

Donate Page:

<https://www.paypal.com/donate/?token=XJ2p2Ghz4jNo22GN1eYegLb1Kf-egHoMR5Tggz-VWvb7XyqHnfZ8HZxSchiJNZplID3ksm&country.x=US&locale.x=US>

Frontier Culture Museum YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8LRcG9nhjum3syFYg1v6Eg/featured>

Making Adinkra Cloth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1x2iULmPikU>

Oh Susanna Music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIOr5LZXwP4>

Library of Congress Historic Sheet Music Collection:

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/historic-sheet-music/>

Little Brown Jug Polka Music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hkGPICRyaY>

Heel-Toe Polka Calling: <https://youtu.be/qmezsHnOJ4I>

Parlor Theatricals Free History Plays:

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Browse/PreK-12-Subject-Area/Social-Studies-History/Type-of-Resource/Scripts/Price-Range/Free>

Write a Newspaper Article: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85026864/1827-04-13/ed-1/>