

Halloween Bounty

October 29, 2009



All through October, anticipation builds for that one night when our kids can dress up in costumes and go trick-or-treating.

Trick-or-treating is a big part of the traditional celebration for most kids on Halloween. Kids dressed in costume wander from house to house, asking for treats such as candy with the question, "Trick or treat?" The "trick" part refers to a now mostly unused threat to perform mischief on the homeowners or their property if no treat is given. In some places kids still are asked to perform some sort of show — sing a song or tell a ghost story — to earn their treats.



Most parents at the end of the evening face tired, sugar-jazzed kids who marvel at their acquired bounty. And what is to be done with all the candy collected during All Hallows Eve? How much should we let our kids eat? How much should we let them keep, and what can we do with the rest?

Creating ways for kids to feel good about parting with some of their Halloween bounty, or at least not devouring it nonstop, can actually be fun and easy — and your kids can feel good in a way that has nothing to do with a sugar rush.

When To Do It

Weekend day after Halloween

What To Do

The trick here is to let your kids indulge their sweet tooth until you first see their sugar interest flag. That's your cue to call a time-out on more dipping into that seemingly bottomless pillowcase. When your kids are feeling stuffed, they'll be more likely to agree to donate the candy they don't like, and they may even be willing to part with extra pieces of the kinds they enjoy.

Home Activities

1. Use the extra candy for gifts to people who serve you and your family during the year. You can fill coffee mugs, stockings, gift boxes, and such and give them to teachers, the mail carrier, the UPS or FedEx deliveryman, or pet-sitters. Your kids can make a fun card to attach to each gift.
2. Save the candy that will work well in holiday craft projects — kisses and candy corn are great for making gingerbread houses.
3. Stash the candy around your home and make finding it a game with your kids, giving clues and improving language skills as you get your little detectives searching.
4. Help your kids learn new math concepts, matching candy size to number value. For example, you can use chocolate kisses as ones, M&Ms as 10s and miniature candy bars as 100s. Add, subtract, and exchange as part of fun math homework assignments.
5. Make the candy into a piece of art. Have your kids glue some on paper for a colorful mosaic, create a candy bouquet, or build a town of sweet houses, stores, and schools.

Donation Ideas

1. Ask around your town to find opportunities for donating the candies to a charitable cause. Some groups collect candy to send to troops overseas; the local food bank may like to offer something sweet to struggling families. If possible, take your kids along to make the donations.
2. Check with your kids' school to see if they will be hosting a candy drive for local charities.
3. Consider gathering the extra goodies and making them part of a care package for a relative in a nursing home or a cousin away at college.
4. Let your kids come up with ideas for who would love to receive their extra candy and sweets.

A final note:

Consider having scary goblins zoom in on Halloween night to gobble down all the leftover candy, leaving a trail of crinkled wrappers and a small gift in its place.

What You Will Need

- Gift tags
- Paper
- Pen, pencils
- Scissors
- Tape
- Wrapping paper
- Gift containers

Talk About It

Ask your kids if they think they would enjoy eating that much candy every day of the year. (This is best asked after you've seen them reach their natural limit.) Ask what they think about all the holidays that feature sweets, like Easter and Valentine's Day. Are these days more exciting because they don't ordinarily eat like that?