

We kept playing. At the end of the game, Emily had a total of fourteen points—a decisive victory.

It was a victory for me, too, given that Emily had just spent over fifteen minutes working as hard as she could to spell words correctly.

POOH PICNIC PARTY

GRADES

kindergarten, first, and second

MATERIALS

stuffed animals, food, party decorations

SKILLS

listening to the first sounds in words, understanding the importance of writing


In the last chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Christopher Robin gives an outdoor party in honor of Pooh. Everyone has a wonderful time. Even gloomy Eeyore enjoys himself, at least as much as he is able. You and your child might want to throw a party in honor of Pooh, too. You don't need to wait until you've read about Pooh's party. You can have yours anytime you want. It won't be an ordinary party, since Pooh is not an ordinary bear. It will be a POOH PICNIC PARTY.

How is a POOH PICNIC PARTY different from other social events? First, it should be a very small affair. You might invite only a single child, and I do not advise including more than three. Second, to attend, guests and host must be accompanied by a favorite stuffed animal. Third, in homage to Pooh, your party menu must consist solely of foods that begin with the *p* sound. You can serve pizza, pasta, peanut butter cookies, pink lemonade, and a fruit salad made with pears, pineapples, plums, and peaches. It is impossible to imagine a POOH PICNIC PARTY without honey, and so honey will be an exception to the *p*-sound rule. In fact, consider giving each human guest a plastic bear filled with honey—the kind you can get at most supermarkets. Then partygoers can drip honey on peach ice cream, on pieces of pita bread, or even on potato chips and pretzels. Honey on pretzels sounds awful to me, but I know six- and seven-year-olds who feel differently.

Traditionally, picnics are outdoor events. If that is impractical, though, you can spread a tablecloth on the floor and have

an indoor picnic. You might decorate the picnic area with pink ribbons and purple balloons. After the children finish eating, play a few games—pick up sticks or Parcheesi, for instance.

Include your child in all the preparations for the party. Let him help write the invitations. Maybe he can only scrawl a

wobbly  on each one. That is fine. Maybe he can also write the date, time, and request for a stuffed animal. That is fine, too. Any writing your child does, a lot or a little, is a good thing, for it will let him see how important writing is in life. After all, how can you send party invitations if you cannot write? Your child should also help select the menu. Call on him to evaluate each food for its *p* sound. It might take considerable thought to arrive at a good combination of treats. Your child can join you in putting up decorations before the party begins and cleaning up after everyone leaves. In other words, do everything possible to make this his event, his party, his Pooh picnic.

If your POOH PICNIC PARTY is a big success, you might want to plan other special meals. These can be strictly family affairs. Tell your child that you will allow him to bring a stuffed animal to dinner or to lunch. If he brings a small animal, it can sit on top of the table. A larger animal can sit on a chair at the table. Then your child can prepare a plate of food for his guest. But he can only give his animal foods that begin with a letter you select. To pick that letter, think about your meal and think about the food you have in your kitchen. If you are serving chicken with rice and rolls and you know that there is a box of raisins in your cupboard, you will probably pick the letter *r*. Then your child can place a snip of roll, a spoonful of rice, and few raisins on a plate and present it to his stuffed friend. If you are having a cream cheese and tomato sandwich on toast, then *t* is your letter. And when the meal is over, you, your child, and his stuffed animal can snuggle up with *Winnie-the-Pooh* and enjoy a chapter or two.