

Preschool Teacher Guide

Pre-K • Ages 3–5



THE BIG IDEA FOR THIS AGE

“Everyone is different, and everyone belongs.”

Young children don’t need medical details. They need simple, joyful ideas: friends come in all kinds, differences are good, and everyone gets to play. This guide keeps things hands-on, full of movement, and short enough for circle time.

1 Teacher background & key facts

3 Lesson plan (20–25 min • Circle time)

5 Whole-class activities

7 Family note

2 Words that work

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Before you teach

Five minutes of background so you can teach this with confidence. You don't need to be an expert. Curiosity and kindness go a long way.

KEY FACTS

3.21

World Down Syndrome Day is March 21. The date stands for **three** copies of chromosome **21**.

46 → 47

Most people have 46 chromosomes (23 pairs). People with Down syndrome have 47, with an extra copy of chromosome 21.

#1

Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal condition in the U.S. About 5,700 babies are born with it each year (CDC).

~60

Average life expectancy today, up from 25 in 1983 (NDSS). Better health care and inclusion changed lives.

Not contagious

Down syndrome isn't an illness and can't be caught. It happens naturally, in every race and kind of family.

2012

The first official World Down Syndrome Day. The United Nations declared it a global observance in 2011.

WORDS THAT WORK

SAY	INSTEAD OF
a person with Down syndrome	a-Down's-kid, a-Down syndrome-person
has Down syndrome	suffers from, is afflicted by, is a-victim-of
Down syndrome	Down's-syndrome (U.S.-usage drops the "s")
typically developing / peers	normal-kids, regular-kids
intellectual disability	the r-word, or "slow"
their name!	a-label, or "the student with Down-syndrome"

TALKING ABOUT IT WITH 3- TO 5-YEAR-OLDS

- Keep it concrete: socks, pairs, friends, feelings. The word "chromosome" is optional.
- Focus on sameness first (we all play, laugh, and have feelings), then celebrate differences.
- If a child asks "What's wrong with ____?", answer calmly: "Nothing is wrong. Everybody's body is a little different."
- Repeat one line all week: **"Different is good. Everyone belongs."**

IF A STUDENT IN YOUR CLASS HAS DOWN SYNDROME

- Talk with the family first. Ask how they'd like WDSD handled and whether their child wants a role.
- Let the student lead, or not. Some love to share, and others would rather just celebrate with everyone.
- Don't make one child the lesson. Keep the focus on the whole class belonging together.
- Keep health and IEP details private. Share only what the family and student have okayed.

Lesson: Socks Come in Pairs

20-25 MIN · CIRCLE TIME

A basket of socks turns into a gentle first lesson about Down syndrome, differences, and being a good friend.

STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO...

- Say that March 21 is a special day to celebrate people with Down syndrome.
- Notice ways people are the same and ways they are different.
- Name one way to be a kind friend.

MATERIALS

Basket of socks (include **ONE** set of three matching socks)

Chart paper & marker

Picture book (optional)

Music for a sock dance

VOCABULARY

Same / different: alike, or not alike

Pair: two things that go together

Belong: you are part of the group

Celebrate: a happy time to cheer for someone

1

5 min

Hook: the sock basket

Sit in a circle. Pull socks out one at a time and have children help find the pairs. Save the set of three for last and act surprised.

SAY

Whoa! This sock has **three**, not two! Is that okay? Yes! It's still a great sock. Different socks are fun.

2

5 min

Teach: what is Down syndrome?

Keep it to a few sentences. Hold up the three matching socks as you talk.

SAY

Inside our bodies are teeny-tiny pieces that tell us how to grow. Most people have them in pairs, like socks. Some people have one extra. When someone has an extra, it's called **Down syndrome**. People with Down syndrome like to play, laugh, and have friends, just like you!

3

5 min

Stand up if...

Call out prompts: "Stand up if you like pizza... if you have a pet... if you like to dance." Point out that some kids stand and some sit, and everyone is still in our class.

SAY

See? We like some of the same things and some different things. We are all different, and we **ALL** belong here.

LESSON, CONTINUED

4

5 min

Why March 21?

Hold up 3 fingers, then write “3.21” big on chart paper. Children can trace it in the air.

SAY

March 21 is World Down Syndrome Day. The 3 is for the three socks! On that day we wear fun socks that don’t match to celebrate.

5

3–5 min

Close: sock dance & chant

Play music and let kids wiggle their feet. Teach the chant with claps.

SAY

“Red sock, blue sock, one, two, three! Everybody’s different, and that’s okay with me!”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes YOU special?
2. Is it okay if our socks don’t match? Why?
3. What can we do if a friend is playing alone?
4. How do you feel when someone asks you to play?

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Ask a few children: “What do we celebrate on March 21?” and “What’s one way to be a good friend?” Any answer about friends, socks, or being kind is a win.

DIFFERENTIATE

- Use picture cards (sock, friends, heart) for children who are pre-verbal or learning English.
- Let children who need movement pass socks around the circle or sort them by color.
- Keep the teaching part short. Two or three sentences is plenty at this age.

MAKE IT STICK ALL WEEK



Leave the sock basket out at a center with one set of three hidden inside. Kids will keep “discovering” it and retelling the story to each other, and that retelling is the learning.

More messages to teach

Short ideas to come back to during the week at circle time, snack, or transitions. Each one takes about two minutes.

Everybody looks different

Hair, eyes, height, skin, and smiles are all different, and that's what makes us us.

Try: Pass a mirror around. Each child says one thing they see.

Everybody has feelings

People with Down syndrome feel happy, sad, silly, and mad, just like everyone.

Try: Make feeling faces together and name each one.

Everybody learns

Some friends learn fast and some take more time. We all keep trying, and that's okay.

Try: Share something that was hard for you to learn at first, like tying shoes.

Friends include friends

A good friend asks, "Do you want to play?"

Try: Practice the words together, then use them at center time.

Kind words

Our words can make someone feel happy or sad. We choose kind ones.

Try: Pass a "kind words" sock around. Whoever holds it says something nice.

Different is good

The world would be boring if we were all the same!

Try: Look at everyone's socks today. Count how many are different.

READ-ALOUD IDEAS (PREVIEW FIRST)

Ask your librarian for picture books featuring a child with Down syndrome. Titles teachers often use include *My Friend Isabelle* (Eliza Woloson) and *We'll Paint the Octopus Red* (Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen). Always preview a book first to make sure it fits your class.

SAY IT ALL WEEK: POST THESE IN YOUR ROOM

Different is good.

Everyone belongs.

Do you want to play?

Red sock, blue sock, one, two, three!

We use kind words.

Whole-class activities

Pick one or two. They all work with a mixed group of preschoolers and very little prep.

Sock Match Relay

10 MIN **PILE OF SOCKS • 2 BASKETS**

Mix socks in a pile across the room. Children take turns walking, hopping, or crawling to grab a sock and bring it back to find its match. Hide one set of three for a fun surprise.

Our Class Sock Garland

15–20 MIN

PAPER SOCK CUTOUTS • CRAYONS • STRING • CLOTHESPINS

Each child decorates a paper sock however they like. Clip them all on a string across the room under a sign: **“Different Looks Good Here.”** Point out that no two socks match, and it looks amazing.

Rock Your Socks Parade

10 MIN • ON 3.21 **FUN SOCKS • MUSIC**

On March 21, invite everyone (teachers too!) to wear fun or mismatched socks. Have a sock parade down the hall and take a class photo of everyone’s feet (follow your school’s photo policy).

Sensory Sock Bin

CENTER TIME

BIN • SOCKS OF MANY TEXTURES • CLOTHESPINS

Fill a bin with fuzzy, stripy, bumpy, and silky socks. Children sort by feel, color, or size, match pairs, and clip them on a line. Great for fine motor skills and language (“This one is soft!”).

Friendship Circle Song

5 MIN • DAILY **NONE**

Sit in a circle and sing each child’s name to a familiar tune: “___ is our friend, our friend, our friend... we’re glad that you are here!” Everyone gets a turn, and everyone is celebrated.

Same & Different Graph

10 MIN

CHART PAPER • STICKERS OR PICTURE CARDS

Make a simple picture graph: favorite fruit, pets, or sock colors. Count together. Some columns are tall and some are short, and every answer belongs on the chart.

SAMPLE 3.21 WEEK

Mon

Lesson: Socks Come in Pairs

Tue

Sensory Sock Bin & Friendship Circle Song

Wed

Class Sock Garland

Thu

Same & Different Graph

Fri

Rock Your Socks Parade!

Heads up: March 21, 2027 falls on a **Sunday**, so most schools will celebrate on **Friday, March 19**.

Individual & take-home activities

For quiet work time, early finishers, or sending home so families can celebrate too.

Create Your Own Fun Sock

INDIVIDUAL OR TAKE-HOME

Send home the free Celebrate 3.21 coloring page. Kids design their dream sock and families can share it with #Celebrate321.

Sock Matching Game

TAKE-HOME

The Celebrate 3.21 Sock Matching Game printable walks families through a sock-sorting race with an “extra sock” twist and simple talking points.

My Sock Friends page

INDIVIDUAL

The reproducible student page (last page) has a sock match and a “draw you and a friend” space. It’s great for centers or quiet time.

Family sock photo

TAKE-HOME

Invite families to wear fun socks together on 3.21, snap a photo of everyone’s feet, and share it with #Celebrate321.

✂ CUT & SEND HOME

Dear Families,

This week our class is celebrating **World Down Syndrome Day** (March 21) with Celebrate 3.21. We played with socks and learned that some people have a little something extra: people with Down syndrome! We talked about how everyone is different and everyone belongs.

Ask your child: “Why was the sock with three special?” On our **Rock Your Socks day** (_____), send your child in fun, mismatched socks! Share a family sock photo with **#Celebrate321**. Free family activities are at [Celebrate321.org](https://celebrate321.org).

— _____

✂ OPTIONAL RETURN SLIP

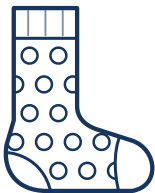
Our family celebrated 3.21 by...

Student: _____ Grown-up: _____

My Sock Friends

Draw a line to match each sock with its partner.

Name: _____



Draw you and a friend in your fun socks!

Friends can be the same AND different. Everybody belongs!

