Weekly preschool themes vs monthly: which to pick

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Weekly or monthly preschool themes? How each works in a real room, what to do when a theme runs long, and a month umbrella with a new theme each week.

Most rooms do well with a weekly theme inside a loose monthly season: one thing to talk about each week, and a month that hangs together. A week is long enough to read the same book three times and short enough that the twos haven't lost interest. If the children are still asking about bugs on Friday, run bugs again; nothing says a theme has to end. Peabody's theme planner plans by the week, and its month pages group the weeks. Peabody is free through the end of 2026.

This is a practice post, not a research one. What follows is how providers commonly run themes and how the planner fits each way of doing it.

How a weekly theme works

A weekly theme gives you one question, one craft, one song and a handful of books for five days. The planner lays it out like this:

- Monday: ask the theme question at circle time, read the first book, learn the song, show the craft materials, trace the letter.
- Tuesday: the second book, the craft's first two steps.
- Wednesday: the first book again, finish the craft, find the letter in the room.
- Thursday: a third book, show and tell, the snack.
- Friday: a fourth book, the song "for the families," color the letter page, take the craft home.

The same song is sung every day. The first book comes back on Wednesday and again in the week. That repetition is the point of a week: the second time the children notice the pictures, and by the end they say the words with you.

Where weekly fits best: twos and young threes, part-week rooms, and rooms where the children arrive and leave at different points in the year. A child who starts on a Wednesday has only missed half a theme.

The cost: you plan fifty-odd times a year. That is the job the planner does in a minute.

How a monthly theme works

A monthly theme picks one big idea, like "the farm" or "spring," and stays with it four or five weeks. Each week goes a little deeper or a little sideways.

Where monthly fits best: older fours, rooms with the same children every day, and providers who like to build a big project slowly, like a class garden or a cardboard town.

The cost: a month is long for a two-year-old. By week three you are often hunting for new books and new crafts to keep the same idea fresh, which is more planning, not less.

The middle way: a month umbrella, a new theme each week

This is what the planner's month pages are built for. Each month page lists the themes rooms usually run then. Pick a few for the month and you have an umbrella with a fresh theme each week.

November's page, for example, lists apples, pumpkins, farm, leaves, scarecrows and harvest, thankful, families, and food and cooking. A November could run:

- Week: 1 · Theme: Leaves · Song: Pease Porridge Hot
- Week: 2 · Theme: Scarecrows and harvest · Song: Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary
- Week: 3 · Theme: Thankful · Song: Polly Put the Kettle On
- Week: 4 · Theme: Food and cooking · Song: Old Mother Hubbard

The month holds together (outside, the harvest, what we eat and share), and each week still has its own song and craft. The November themes post goes further into that month.

March works the same way: its page lists themes like weather, seeds and growing, rain and rainbows, birds and nests and spring. Put seeds and growing next to rain and rainbows, and the bean the children plant in a cup in one week is still growing the next.

When a theme runs long

Sometimes a week is not enough. The children found a real snail on the fence, and now everything is bugs. Follow them.

In the planner, pick the next week and choose the same theme. Each week is kept separately, with its own notes. The parts will be the same as the first week, so use the day notes to change what's new: a different book from your shelf, a second outside game, the snail's new home. The notes print in that day's box on the wall sheet.

A second week also suits the books. The planner puts the levels next to each book: levels 0 to 3 are ones a child follows along with, and anything above 3 is a read-aloud. A second week is a good time for the longer read-aloud you didn't get to. Peabody's free stories are all there to read on a tablet or projector.

When a theme runs short

Sometimes it's the other way. Monday's question fell flat and nobody cares about trains. You don't have to finish it. Pick a different theme for the same week and the plan changes; anything you print from then on is the new theme. The themes that fit any month, like colors, shapes, feelings and counting, are good for a mid-week switch because they need nothing seasonal.

Try this week

Plan the next four weeks as one month.

1. Open the month page for the month ahead.
2. Pick four themes that connect. A good test: could Friday's talk lead into next Monday's question?
3. In the planner, pick each Monday and its theme. The planner keeps the last twelve weeks in your browser.
4. Print each week's family note so families can see the month coming. The newsletter maker has a "What's coming" block for exactly that.
5. Leave the fourth week loose. If a theme catches, give it the extra week.

For the reasoning behind the order of the year, the year of themes guide lists all 52 by season, and the year of themes post does the same here.

Three things providers ask

How long should a preschool theme last?

A week is the common choice for twos to fours, with a second week when the children are still asking questions. Older fours with the same children every day can often hold a theme longer. Watch the room, not the calendar.

Can I plan a whole month at once?

Yes. Pick each Monday in the planner and give it a theme. It keeps the last twelve weeks, so a month, or even a season, fits. Your plans stay in your browser, so print what you want to keep.

Is there a monthly version of the plan?

No. The plan is always a week, so the wall sheet stays readable. The month pages are where a month comes together.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/weekly-vs-monthly-preschool-themes