What to do with leftover Halloween candy

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Sort it with your kids first. Keep a few favorites for the coming weeks, give unopened candy to a troop program or a dentist's buyback, and use the rest up: bake it into cookies or bark, try a candy science experiment, or count, sort and graph it for math. Chocolate freezes well, too.

Where to donate Halloween candy

- Where: Troopathon's Halloween Candy Buyback · Who gets it: Troops serving overseas, in care packages. · When: Collect it in the first two weeks of November. Troopathon takes candy until 31 December. · How: Pack unopened candy in a box, bag or envelope with a note (your name, email and phone) and mail it or drop it at Troopathon's center in Sacramento, California. Kids' notes and drawings for the troops can go in the box too. No opened candy and nothing homemade.
- Where: Operation Shoebox · Who gets it: Service members, in care packages. · When: Says it takes candy all year. · How: Read its own page for where to send candy before you post anything.
- Where: Soldiers' Angels: Treats for Troops · Who gets it: Troops and veterans, through collection sites that are often dentist offices. · When: Collection sites take candy until Halloween and ship it by 30 November, so by 1 November most have stopped. Keep it in mind for next year. · How: Each October, find a site near you on its Candy Map.
- Where: A dentist's candy buyback · Who gets it: Usually troops, through a program like the ones above. · When: Often the first few days of November. · How: Many dentists and local shops buy candy back, some for a little money (often about a dollar a pound) and some for a prize. Ask your own dentist, or search your town's name with "candy buyback". Call before you go.
- Where: Food banks, shelters and Ronald McDonald Houses · Who gets it: Families near you. · When: It depends on the place. · How: Some take unopened, wrapped candy and some can't. Call first, and never bring opened candy.

Each program's page was read on 31 October 2026. Dates and addresses change, so read its own page before you post a box. Only unopened, wrapped candy, everywhere.

A job for kids: Veterans Day is 11 November. A note or a drawing for a service member can go in the box with the candy; Troopathon asks for them.

Sort the bag together first

1. Tip it all out on a clean table and check it together. Throw away anything opened, unwrapped or homemade.
2. Make piles: chocolate, fruity, chewy, hard candy, and not candy at all (stickers, pencils,

glow sticks).
3. Pull out the favorites to keep, and a pile to trade, give away or use up.
4. Little brothers and sisters under 4 don't get the hard candy, gum, gummies or anything with whole nuts. That pile goes to the grown-ups or the giving box.

The AAP's advice is to "wait until children are home to sort and check treats before eating them", and to throw away "spoiled, unwrapped or suspicious items" (AAP).

Make something with it

- Recipe: Candy trail mix · Heat: None · How: Mix pretzels, plain popcorn and a dry cereal, then stir in a small handful of chopped candy. Scoop it into little bags for lunch boxes.
- Recipe: Frozen yogurt bark · Heat: None · How: Spread thick yogurt on a tray lined with baking paper, scatter sliced fruit and a spoonful of chopped candy on top, and freeze it for two hours. Snap it into pieces.
- Recipe: Candy bugs on a log · Heat: None · How: A pretzel rod is the log. Dab on sunflower seed butter or peanut butter and stick on gummy or chocolate bugs, crawling all the way along. Give them googly faces with a dot of frosting. Mind nut allergies.
- Recipe: Candy-dusted fruit · Heat: None · How: Crush some candy in a zip bag with a rolling pin. Dip banana chunks or strawberries in yogurt, then roll them in the crumbs.
- Recipe: Candy bark · Heat: Microwave (a grown-up) · How: A grown-up melts chocolate chips in the microwave, 30 seconds at a time, stirring in between. Spread it on baking paper, press chopped candy into the top, chill for 30 minutes and snap it.
- Recipe: Chopped-candy cookies · Heat: Oven (a grown-up) · How: Make any drop-cookie dough and swap the chocolate chips for chopped candy bars. A grown-up does the oven.
- Recipe: Candy-topped brownies · Heat: Oven (a grown-up) · How: Press chopped candy into the top of a pan of brownie batter just before a grown-up puts it in the oven.

Crumb's no-bake recipes and the Spooky Kitchen walk you through more, step by step.

Candy science experiments

The 6 gentlest. All 12 candy science experiments adds a density tower, a candy rock cycle, a fizzy balloon and more, with a printable sheet to record each one.

The candy rainbow

Ages: 4 and up, with help. You need: Hard-shelled fruit candies or candy-coated chocolates, a white plate, warm water.

Lay the candies in a ring around the edge of the plate, mixing the colors. Gently pour warm water into the middle until it just touches every candy. Wait a minute and watch.

What's happening: The shells are sugar and food coloring, and both dissolve in water, so the colors run toward the middle. Where two colors meet, the water on each side is about as sugary as the other, so they don't push into each other much and the lines stay sharp for a while.

Floating letters

Ages: 5 and up. You need: Candy-coated chocolates with a letter printed on them, a shallow dish of water.

Set a few candies in the water, letter side up. Don't touch them for a few minutes, and watch the letters.

What's happening: The letter is printed in an edible ink that doesn't dissolve in water. The sugar shell under it does, so the letter comes loose and floats up as a thin film.

The chocolate melt race

Ages: 4 and up. You need: Four squares of chocolate, a small plate each.

Put one in a sunny window, one in the fridge and one on the counter. Hold the last one in a closed hand, on a napkin. Check every two minutes. Which melts first?

What's happening: Chocolate starts to melt a little below the temperature inside your body, so a warm hand beats the counter.

Sink or float?

Ages: 4 and up. You need: A bowl of water and one of each kind of candy, still in their wrappers.

Guess first: sink or float? Write the guesses down. Drop them in one at a time. Then try a few with the wrapper off.

What's happening: It's about how much stuff is packed into the space a candy takes up. A fluffy, whipped bar has air in it and can float. A hard candy is packed tight and sinks. Wrappers can trap air, so the same candy may do something different unwrapped.

Peppermint stars

Ages: 4 and up, with help. You need: Striped peppermint candies, a white plate, warm water.

Put one peppermint in the middle of the plate. Pour in warm water until it comes about halfway up the candy. Keep the plate still and watch the stripes.

What's happening: The red is a thin coat of coloring on the outside of the sugar. As the sugar dissolves, the colored, sugary water spreads out across the plate in lines, like the points of a star. Mind: Hard candy is a choking risk for children under 4. This one is for looking at.

The dissolving race

Ages: 5 and up. You need: Five of the same candy, five cups: cold water, warm water, vinegar, milk and cooking oil.

Guess which cup wins first. Drop one candy in each. Look every five minutes and write down what you see.

What's happening: Water, vinegar and milk are mostly water, and sugar dissolves in water, faster when it's warm because the tiny bits of water move faster. Sugar hardly dissolves in oil at all.

Hard candy, gum, gummies and popping candy are choking risks for babies and toddlers. Keep the experiments with the big kids.

Candy math

- Game: Guess, then count by tens · Grades: K to 2 · How: Guess how many pieces are in the bag. Count them out in piles of ten, then count the piles: 10, 20, 30… How close was the guess?
- Game: Sort and graph · Grades: K to 3 · How: Sort by kind or by color, tally each pile and draw a bar graph. Which pile is tallest? How many more chocolate than fruity?
- Game: Fair shares · Grades: 1 to 3 · How: Share 24 pieces between 2, 3, 4 and then 5 people. When does some candy get left over?
- Game: Fraction of the bag · Grades: 3 to 5 · How: What fraction of your bag is chocolate? What fraction is red? Write each one, then put them in order from smallest to biggest.
- Game: Whose street was best? · Grades: 4 to 6 · How: Brothers, sisters or friends each count their haul. Work out the mean, the median and the range.
- Game: The weigh-in · Grades: 2 to 5 · How: Use a kitchen scale. Does one full-size bar weigh more than five fun-size ones? How much does the whole bag weigh?

Halloween candy math has all of it by grade, K to 5, with problems and answers on one made-up bag, a candy shop price menu, and a sort mat, a blank graph, a fractions sheet and an answer key to print.

The trick-or-treat games page has more games to play with the candy.

Crafts and building

- Gumdrop towers and bridges. Toothpicks and gumdrops (or soft jelly sweets) are building blocks. Who can build the tallest tower in five minutes? Can a bridge reach between two books and hold a pencil?
- Wrapper mosaic. Wipe and flatten the shiny wrappers, cut them into squares and glue them onto card to make a picture: a pumpkin, a rainbow, your initial.

• Wrapper bookmark. Lay flattened wrappers on a strip of card and cover both sides with clear tape. A shiny bookmark for the next library book.
• The guessing jar. Fill a clear jar with candy for a class or a party. Everyone writes a guess; the closest wins the jar, or a share of it.

How to keep it

• Most wrapped candy has a best-by date on the wrapper or the bag. Keep it somewhere cool and dark, away from the stove and sunny windows.
• Chocolate sometimes gets a whitish, dusty look. That's fat or sugar coming up to the top. It's safe to eat; it just looks odd.
• Chocolate bars freeze well. Put them in a sealed bag, and let them thaw in the bag so drops of water don't form on the chocolate.
• Brushing at bedtime matters more than ever this week.

For the days and weeks after Halloween, the AAP says to "ration treats", keep "candy rules realistic, consistent and positive" and "make a plan together so everyone knows what to expect" (AAP). A jar on a high shelf and one or two pieces with lunch works for a lot of families.

More from Peabody

• Halloween HQ: every Halloween thing at Peabody, still open.
• Thanksgiving games: table games and after-dinner games for 26 November.
• Science games: more experiments and science play.

Questions grown-ups ask

What can I do with leftover Halloween candy?

Sort it with your kids, keep some favorites for the coming weeks, give unopened candy to a troop program or a dentist's buyback, and use the rest: bake it into cookies or bark, try a candy science experiment, or count, sort and graph it.

Where can I donate Halloween candy?

Troopathon takes unopened candy by mail until 31 December and sends it to troops overseas. Operation Shoebox says it takes candy all year. Many dentists run buybacks in early November. Some food banks and shelters take wrapped candy, so call first.

How much Halloween candy should a child eat a day?

There's no official number. The AAP's advice is to spread treats over the days and weeks after Halloween, and to keep candy rules realistic, consistent and positive. Plenty of families pick one or two pieces a day, with a meal, and make that plan together.

Can you freeze Halloween candy?

Chocolate freezes well for baking later. Seal it in a bag and let it thaw inside the bag. Hard candy and gummies keep fine in a cupboard, so they don't need the freezer.

How long does Halloween candy last?

Look for the best-by date on the wrapper or bag. Kept cool, dry and dark, most wrapped candy lasts for months. Throw away anything opened, unwrapped or homemade from someone you don't know.

Do food banks take Halloween candy?

Some do and some can't. Call your local food bank or shelter first, and only bring unopened, wrapped candy.

Does this page cost anything?

No. Peabody is free through the end of 2026, with no sign-up and no ads. We don't sell candy or link to shops, and nobody here pays us to be listed.

Free at peabody.kids/what-to-do-with-leftover-halloween-candy