What to give out for Halloween

Peabody · checked 2026-10-29

Give out a mix: chocolate bars for most kids, one fruity candy, and a separate bowl of non-food treats like glow sticks, stickers or pencils, marked with a teal pumpkin, for kids with food allergies. Plan on two pieces a child, a few hundred for a busy street, and keep hard candy and small toys from toddlers.

Non-candy Halloween treats

- Treat: Glow sticks and bracelets · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: The treat that also helps drivers see a trick-or-treater. The liquid inside isn't for mouths, so not for chewers.
- Treat: Stickers · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: Cheap by the roll. The AAP counts stickers as a choking risk for babies and toddlers, so hand toddlers something else.
- Treat: Pencils and erasers · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: Halloween pencils are a school-day treat. Small novelty erasers are choking size, so 3 and up.
- Treat: Mini play-dough tubs · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: A favourite with the little ones who can have it. Most play-dough is made with wheat, so it is not a fit for a child with a wheat allergy.
- Treat: Temporary tattoos · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: Bats, pumpkins and ghosts. The AAP lists them with stickers as a choking risk for the very young.
- Treat: Bookmarks · Ages: All ages · Good to know: Flat, cheap and good all year. Pair one with a little book for a reader.
- Treat: Little books · Ages: All ages · Good to know: Thin paperbacks or used books from a sale. Sturdy board books suit toddlers.
- Treat: Bouncy balls · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: Small bouncy balls are marble size, which is choking size. Only for 3 and up.
- Treat: Spider rings · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: Plastic rings that fit a small finger. Small parts, so 3 and up.
- Treat: Mini bubbles · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: Party-size bottles. For blowing, not drinking.
- Treat: Crayons · Ages: 3+ · Good to know: A small pack of two or four, maybe with a coloring page.
- Treat: Mini notepads · Ages: All ages · Good to know: Pocket size, for lists and doodles. Any age that can hold a pencil.

Anything small enough to fit through a toilet-paper tube is choking size for a child under 3 or 4, so those treats say 3+. Give toddlers a bookmark, a little board book or a notepad instead.

Candy kids love most

Real names, as plain facts: what turns up in most trick-or-treat bags. No brand pays us, and we don't link to shops. Read every label, because what's in a candy can change.

Chocolate

What most trick-or-treaters reach for first. Bars and cups are the ones kids trade for.

- Reese's Peanut Butter Cups: A trading favourite: chocolate and peanut butter. Has peanuts.
- Kit Kat: Crunchy wafer, easy to snap and share.
- Snickers: Chocolate, caramel and peanuts. Has peanuts.
- Twix: Cookie and caramel, two sticks to a pack.
- M&M's (plain): Small packs. The peanut kind has peanuts, so read the bag.
- Hershey's milk chocolate bars: Plain chocolate, for the kid who likes it simple.
- Milky Way: Soft nougat and caramel.
- 3 Musketeers: Fluffy nougat, chocolate outside.

Fruity and sour

For the kids who don't like chocolate, and a lot of them don't. Have one fruity choice in the bowl.

- Skittles: The fruity favourite in a lot of bags.
- Starburst: Chewy squares. Too chewy for toddlers.
- Sour Patch Kids: Sour, then sweet. A gummy, so not for toddlers.
- Nerds: Tiny crunchy pieces in a little box.
- Airheads: Taffy in a flat strip. Too chewy for toddlers.
- Swedish Fish: Chewy fish. A gummy, so not for toddlers.

Something different

Lollipops and chewy candy round out the bowl. Keep these away from toddlers.

- Smarties (the US roll): Little sugar tablets in a paper roll. Hard, so not for toddlers.
- Dum Dums and other small lollipops: Cheap and cheerful. Hard candy, so not for babies and toddlers.
- Tootsie Rolls: Chewy chocolate taffy. Too chewy for toddlers.

Full-size or fun-size?

- Size: Fun-size (mini bars and packs) · Good for: Cheap, fits more kids, easy to give two. · Mind: Mixed bags let you offer chocolate and fruity from one buy.
- Size: Full-size bars · Good for: The house kids talk about the next day. · Mind: Costs several times as much a kid. Many houses do full-size for the first few, then fun-size.

• Size: Bulk lollipops and rolls · Good for: The lowest cost a kid. · Mind: Hard candy: keep a different treat for toddlers.

How much Halloween candy to buy

A rule of thumb, not a count: on a quiet street maybe 15 trick-or-treaters knock in an hour, on an in-between street about 35, and on a busy street 75 or more at the peak, which is the first hour or two after dark. At two pieces each:

• Street: Quiet street · Knocks an hour: About 15 · 1 hour: 30 (1 bag) · 2 hours: 60 (1 bag) · 3 hours: 90 (1 bag)
• Street: In-between · Knocks an hour: About 35 · 1 hour: 70 (1 bag) · 2 hours: 140 (2 bags) · 3 hours: 210 (3 bags)
• Street: Busy street · Knocks an hour: About 75 · 1 hour: 150 (2 bags) · 2 hours: 300 (3 bags) · 3 hours: 450 (5 bags)

Bags are counted at 100 pieces; the front of the bag says its own count. A busy street can need a few hundred pieces. Buy one bag more than you think, or plan to turn the porch light off when the bowl is empty. The counter at the top of the page works it out for your street.

Unusual and memorable ideas

• A choose-your-treat tray. Set out candy on one side and non-food treats on the other, and let each trick-or-treater pick one. Kids love choosing, and a child with an allergy picks safely without asking.
• A mini book swap box. A box of used picture books and chapter books with a sign: take one, and leave one next year if you like.
• A costume compliment card with each treat. Little cards that say things like "Best wings on the street!" or "That's the bravest knight I've seen." Write a stack ahead of time and pick the right one at the door.
• A "tell a joke, get a treat" bowl. A sign on the bowl: tell us a joke and take a treat. Shy kids can read one from a card taped to the bowl.
• A glow-in-the-dark path to the door. Glow sticks or battery fairy lights along the walk, so little feet can see the steps. LED lights only, nothing with a flame.
• A printable "best costume" award. Print a few award slips (funniest, spookiest, most homemade, best team) and hand them out as the night goes. Everyone at the door gets a treat either way.
• Full-size bars for the first 20. Twenty full-size bars, then fun-size for everyone after. A small budget that still feels big.
• A dog-treat jar for costumed dogs. Dogs come trick-or-treating too. Keep a jar of dog treats by the door and ask the owner before giving one.
• A "trick" option. Do a silly dance (or a monster roar, or a spin) for a second treat. Always

optional: one treat each, no trick needed.

Want games to play at the door and on the walk? The trick-or-treat games page has a joke-for-a-treat sign, a costume tally and Trick-or-Treat Bingo to print.

Allergy-friendly: the teal pumpkin

- A teal pumpkin on the porch means this house has non-food treats, for kids with food allergies and anyone else who can't have candy. (FARE)
- Keep teal treats in their own bowl, apart from the candy, so nothing gets on them. (FARE)
- Add your house to the Teal Pumpkin Project map on FARE's site so families can find you. (FARE)
- Even a candy without the allergen in it can be made where the allergen is, so a non-food treat is the safe choice. (AAP)
- Candy with nuts goes in the candy bowl only, never next to the non-food treats.

Print the teal pumpkin sign at the top of this page and tape it by the door: "We have non-food treats here too!" The Teal Pumpkin Project is run by FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education).

Little-kid safety: choking risks under 4

- Keep from babies and toddlers: Hard candy and lollipops · Why: Small and slippery, the right size to block a small throat.
- Keep from babies and toddlers: Gum · Why: Easy to swallow by accident.
- Keep from babies and toddlers: Nuts, and anything with whole nuts · Why: Choking size, and a top food allergy.
- Keep from babies and toddlers: Gummies, caramels and taffy · Why: Chewy pieces stick and are hard for small mouths.
- Keep from babies and toddlers: Popcorn and small candies like jellybeans · Why: Little pieces go down the wrong way.
- Keep from babies and toddlers: Small toys, spider rings and marble-size bouncy balls · Why: Small parts. Keep them for 3 and up.
- Keep from babies and toddlers: Stickers, temporary tattoos and candy wrappers · Why: The AAP counts these as choking risks too.

- Babies and toddlers should not have hard candy, gum, popcorn, caramel apples, small candies or anything with whole nuts. (AAP)
- A grown-up checks every treat before it is eaten, and anything opened or homemade from a stranger goes in the bin. (AAP)
- Light the porch with a flashlight, a glow stick or a battery (LED) pumpkin light, never an open flame. (AAP)
- LED tea lights hold button batteries. A grown-up checks the battery door is screwed shut,

and never uses one a child can open. For the youngest, use a small flashlight that takes AA or AAA batteries.

From the American Academy of Pediatrics' Halloween safety tips on healthychildren.org.

Ways to hand out treats

- The porch-light rule. Porch light on means treats here. When the candy runs out or you are done for the night, switch it off, and trick-or-treaters walk on by.
- A no-touch tray. Set treats out one or two apart on a tray or a muffin tin, so each kid takes their own without reaching into a shared bowl.
- Two bowls, one teal. Candy in one, non-food treats in a teal bowl or by a teal pumpkin. Ask "candy or a toy?" at the door.
- Sit out front. A chair at the end of the walk means kids don't climb steps in the dark, and you see the costumes.
- A clear, lit path. Move hoses, toys and pumpkins off the walk, and light it with LED lights. Nothing with a flame near costumes.
- Say what you see. Name each costume ("A dragon! Hello, dragon!"). Kids remember the house that noticed.

More for Halloween

- Halloween HQ: every Halloween thing at Peabody in one place, with a countdown.
- Trick-or-treat games: things to say and play at the door, on the walk and with the candy after.
- Halloween treats to make: easy recipes for a party.

Questions grown-ups ask

What is the best candy to give out for Halloween?

Chocolate bars and peanut butter cups are what most kids reach for, with Kit Kat, Twix, M&M's and Reese's among the usual picks. Add one fruity choice, like Skittles or Starburst, for kids who don't like chocolate, and a bowl of non-food treats for kids with allergies.

What can I give out instead of candy?

Glow sticks, stickers, pencils and erasers, mini play-dough, temporary tattoos, bookmarks, little books, bouncy balls, spider rings, bubbles, crayons or mini notepads. Glow sticks, bouncy balls, spider rings and other small things are for kids 3 and up.

How much candy do I need for Halloween?

A rule of thumb, not a count: plan on about 15 trick-or-treaters an hour on a quiet street and 75 an hour on a busy one at the peak, and two pieces each. Two busy hours is about 300 pieces, or three bags of 100. Keep a tally this year and you'll know for next year.

What does a teal pumpkin mean?

A teal pumpkin means the house has non-food treats, so kids with food allergies can trick-or-treat there too. It comes from FARE's Teal Pumpkin Project. Keep the teal treats in their own bowl, apart from the candy.

Is it okay to give out homemade treats?

Most families are told to eat only treats still in the wrapper, so homemade cookies tend to go in the bin. Save homemade treats for neighbours and friends who know you, and give wrapped candy or a toy at the door.

What do I do when I run out of candy?

Turn the porch light off. That's the signal that a house is done for the night, and trick-or-treaters walk on by.

Does it cost anything to print the sign?

No. The page and the sign are free through the end of 2026, with no sign-up and no ads, and the page keeps nothing about who prints.

Free at peabody.kids/what-to-give-out-for-halloween