

Making mischief in **March**

It's that time of year when it feels like spring should be making an appearance soon, but somehow it seems a long way off. Valentine's Day is long gone and Easter is too far away to think about. What can you do to snap your family out of the winter doldrums? Whether or not you have Irish blood in your family, Saint Patrick's Day (March 17) is the perfect day to bring some excitement to this difficult month.

LEPRECHAUN FUN

By Brette McWhorter Sember

Share the History

Start by telling your children about Saint Patrick's Day in advance. Explain that the day is a celebration of the Irish people and their history. Drum up some excitement by telling them stories about leprechauns, the magical little people of Ireland, who play pranks and try to guard their pots of gold. Mention that the gold can often be found at the end of a rainbow. Talk about four leaf clovers and the luck they bring. Mention how the color green symbolizes the beauty of Ireland. Tell your kids you will have a special celebration on St. Pat's Day which will include some prizes and special food.

Prankster Plans

The night before St. Patrick's Day, after the kids are in bed, go through the house and play some harmless pranks. Switch people's shoes, put stuffed animals on their heads, place toys in places they don't belong (such as on the toilet seat or on kitchen chairs). Set the table for breakfast with the plates and cups upside down. Hide the TV remote. Put the pajamas in the sock drawer and the underwear on hangers in the closet. Use your imagination!

Then write a note to each child from the leprechaun and place them on their pillows or dressers. "Dear Lindsay, Happy Saint Patrick's Day! I've had some leprechaun fun in your house. See if you can figure out what I've done. Love, The Leprechaun". Write the note on green paper or with green ink. You can also place it in an envelope with some green sparkles or green confetti.

Gold at the End of the Rainbow

Wrap a few small prizes or gifts in gold paper and place them in a pot from the kitchen. You can create a pot for each child if that is easier and avoids a sibling dispute. Write down the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet) and think of items in your home that are each color. You can cheat and consider indigo and violet to be purple if that makes it easier.

Starting with the red item, write a little note that gives a clue as to what the orange item is. Do this at each item, leaving a clue so the children can find the next item that matches the next color in the rainbow. You can also buy colored paper and hide the notes anywhere, giving clues as to where to find the next color. Hide the pot at the purple item. Draw and color a big rainbow and hang it up somewhere in the house. Attach a note to the back of saying from the leprechaun saying he has hidden his pot of gold somewhere and if you follow the rainbow you might find it.



Your Day of Fun

When the children wake up, help them enjoy and then fix all the tricks the leprechaun has played on them. Have Lucky Charms® cereal for breakfast. Make sure everyone wears something green when they get dressed. Then tell them that the leprechaun might have left his pot of gold somewhere in the house. Remind them that pots of gold are usually at the end of the rainbow. Help them find the rainbow and read the clue on the back of it and hint that perhaps they should look for something that is the first the color in the rainbow. Help them find the clues until they get to the pot of gold.

Plan some activities for the rest of the day such as making four leaf clover placemats, looking at books about Ireland, or playing a memory game with four leaf clover cards you make yourselves with words about St. Patrick's Day on them. You can also make bingo cards in the shape of black pots and write words about the day on them. Use small gold foil wrapped candies as bingo chips.

Saint Patrick's Day can bring a breath of spring from Ireland into your winter weary home!

♦ Brette Sember is the author of over 30 books including "Your Plus-Size Pregnancy," "Your Practical Pregnancy Planner" and "The Divorce Organizer & Planner." Her web site is www.BretteSember.com.