Home Sweet Sukkah
Sharing isn’t always easy, as Auntie Sanyu finds out when her friends come to visit for Sukkot, the fall harvest festival. But sharing and Sukkot go hand in hand, as hospitality is an important part of the holiday. Enter the sukkah, a booth or hut modeled after the temporary wilderness dwellings that the ancient Israelites lived in thousands of years ago, traveling from the slavery of Egypt toward the freedom of Israel. For seven days, the sukkah is the place to be. People eat, sleep, and enjoy time with family and friends under its sparsely thatched roof. The impermanent, sometimes shaky sukkah is also a great reality check. When we set aside our attachment to our homes (and the stuff they hold), we can focus on what’s most important: our loved ones, our community, and the world surrounding us.

The Four Species
Warthog won’t let go of the etrog, and that’s a problem. Along with the willow, palm, and myrtle branches that make up a lulav, the etrog is one of the Four Species, which are important Sukkot ritual objects. During Sukkot, it’s customary to hold the etrog and lulav together and wave them to the north, south, east, and west, as well as up and down, symbolizing joy in the holiday, thankfulness for the harvest, and God’s presence everywhere. Warthog simply has to share that etrog! Learn more at pjlibrary.org/whosgottheetrog.

Good manners – De-rech e-retz – דרך ארץ

Who’s Got the Etrog?

The literal translation of derech eretz is “the way of the land” or “the right path.” In other words, proper behavior. Rabbinic sages say that derech eretz comes even before Torah (Leviticus Rabbah 9:3), implying that the first step in creating a Jewish life is treating others with decency and respect. Good manners are important enough to warrant the focus of two books in the Talmud, an authoritative collection of Jewish laws and custom. The books describe various rules of conduct on ways to dress, how to eat and drink, proper speech, and how we treat others.

Optional storytelling technique
Read this book while sitting in a sukkah or around a table in your classroom. Tell the children they will help Warthog learn to share. Bring a stuffed etrog or ball for the children to hold and pass. Each time Warthog refuses to share, all can exclaim, “Please pass the etrog.” The toy passes to the next child. Read the book as many times as it takes for all to have a turn holding and passing the etrog.

BIG QUESTION
What does it mean to share?

READ
the book for Jewish values

DISCUSS
Jewish values with one another

For the teacher’s consideration
• Which manners do you believe children should develop? How do you encourage good manners among your students?
• How do you intentionally model good manners with your co-workers and staff?
• What makes it difficult for children to learn good manners?

Questions for children
• In this story Auntie Sonya’s guests act very politely. For example, Parrot chatters brightly and Camel sips precisely. Which other animals show good manners? Who has difficulties with manners?
• When you visit someone, what are examples of good manners that you can use?
• Why is it important to use good manners?
How will your environment reflect good manners?

**Art and literacy**
Create a manners book for your classroom library by snapping photos of children performing good manners. Ask your students to help make a list of poses needed for the book, such as holding the door for others, sharing a toy, cleaning up snacks, etc.

**Math**
Add up the number of good manners in your list. Keep a running count of the good manners your students think of and exhibit.

**Gross motor**
Create a derech etz path to follow with arrows or footprints. One week the students can follow the derech from the sink to the snack table, because it is good manners to wash your hands before you serve and eat food. Another day the derech may lead from the art table to the trash can, because it is good manners to clean up after yourself.

**Game**
Play good manners version of Simon Says, called Derech Eretz says.

**Dramatic play**
Prepare an overly-polite tea party for snack time or as part of your dramatic play center. Show children how to hold the chair for a friend, gently dab your mouth with a napkin, and to “please pass the biscuits.” “Thank you.” “Oh, no, thank you.” Who can hold their pinky out while drinking?

**Advanced planning**
It is easier to follow rules and behave respectfully when you know your routine in advance. Families can help prepare their children for the day ahead if they have a visual schedule to share with their child, such as the one shown here. This kind of home-school connection makes transitions less challenging for all.

**Tea time**
Set a table for high tea in the lobby, so families can share in the very polite fun you started in the classroom. Suggest families try a fancy dinner or tea time at home. Ask families to share their experiences and some pictures with the class.

**ENGAGE FAMILIES**
in conversations about values

**How can you deepen home-school relationships?**

**Advanced planning**
It is easier to follow rules and behave respectfully when you know your routine in advance. Families can help prepare their children for the day ahead if they have a visual schedule to share with their child, such as the one shown here. This kind of home-school connection makes transitions less challenging for all.

**PJ LIBRARY BOOKS**
*Estie the Mensch* by Jane Kohuth

*The Littlest Mountain* by Barb Rosenstock

**WEB ARTICLE**
Social & Emotional Foundations for Early Learning [csefel.vanderbilt.edu](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu)

---

*What does it mean to share?*