

SAMHAIN FIELD GUIDE 02

Family lantern night

A 35-minute, child-led seasonal ritual with a safe lantern craft, apple-star demonstration, exact host language, and a short version for tired evenings.

FOR	TIME	FORMAT
Families with children	35 minutes	5 US Letter pages

WHAT THIS GUIDE HELPS YOU DO

01 Make a real craft Draw a lantern sleeve and choose a battery light.	02 Lead the evening calmly Use the timed plan and ready-to-say words.	03 Adapt to age and energy Offer clear choices, truthful language, and an easy exit.
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HOW TO USE IT

Prepare the apple and test the battery light before children join. The craft works with a clean jar, a paper lantern, or the printed sleeve template.

Set up for a calm evening

The goal is a shared, low-pressure ritual. Children can join, watch, or leave with a trusted adult.

Gather the materials before the activity. Keep room lights available, avoid fragrance and smoke, and do not put an open flame inside or near paper. Use large supplies that suit the youngest child present.

STATION	SET OUT	ADULT CHECK
Lantern craft	Clean jar, paper sleeve, markers, crayons, stickers, or washi tape.	Avoid small loose pieces for children under 4. Use unbreakable containers around toddlers.
Apple star	One apple, cutting board, stable work surface, small plates.	Adult holds and cuts the apple crosswise. Slice thinly. Remove seeds from toddler portions.
Memory corner	Photo, drawing, or object linked to someone or a pet the family misses.	Choose a safe memory. Participation is optional. Do not require a story.
Closing circle	Battery tea lights, blanket, or another familiar comfort item.	Test lights. Keep paper away from the light source.

Decide these three things first

DECISION	DEFAULT THAT WORKS
How long?	Use the 20-minute short version if bedtime or energy is tight.
How dark?	Keep room lights on unless every child is comfortable with dimmer light.
What memory?	Choose one warm, truthful story. Avoid details a child is not ready to hear.

IF SOMEONE HAS DIED

Use clear words such as “Grandpa died. His body stopped working. We remember him by telling stories.” Avoid “went to sleep” or “went away,” which can confuse young children. Answer only the question asked.

A 35-minute lantern night

Use the same order each time. Shorten the plan by removing a step, not by rushing children.

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOST WORDS AND ACTION
0-3	Arrive	"You can join, watch, or pass. The room lights stay available."
3-15	Decorate lanterns	Invite each child to show something they want to remember from the brighter part of the year: a place, friend, garden, trip, or ordinary favorite. Say: "Your lantern can show anything you want to carry into winter."
15-19	Find the apple star	An adult cuts the apple across its middle and shows the seed pattern. Say: "The apple keeps a star inside. We can carry a little light through darker days too." Serve thin slices.
19-22	Switch on the lights	Turn on one battery light at a time. Say: "Our lights are here. We are here together." Keep the room bright if anyone prefers.
22-28	Share or listen	Tell one brief story about the person or pet in the photo. Invite children to share, draw, listen, or pass.
28-32	Say goodnight to summer	At a window or porch, say: "Goodnight, summer. Thank you for the light and growing things. Hello, winter. We will keep small lights close."
32-35	Choose a comfort	Each person may name or point to one cozy thing ahead. Close with a familiar snack, story, or bedtime routine.

The short version: 20 minutes

Decorate for 10 minutes, show the apple star, share one adult-led story, then say the goodnight words. Children can keep a lantern nearby if it is stable and battery-lit.

KEEP THE CLOSE PREDICTABLE

Name what happens next: "We are putting the markers away, then we will wash hands and read our bedtime story." A predictable close helps the ritual return to ordinary family life.

Decorate a lantern sleeve

Print at actual size. Use the open area as a drawing surface. The dashed guides mark optional folds only.

Draw a memory, color, pattern, or symbol that the child chooses. If wrapping paper around a jar, keep the paper on the outside and use a battery tea light only. The light must remain separate from paper.



Draw in the open area. Fold only on the dashed guide if making a paper sleeve.

Cut-out closing cards

GOODNIGHT, SUMMER	A STORY I WANT TO KEEP
Thank you for the light and growing things.	I remember: _____
HELLO, WINTER	A COZY THING AHEAD
We will keep small lights close.	I am looking forward to: _____

Cut around the outside border if useful. A child can choose a card, point to it, draw on it, or leave it blank.

Battery-light safety

Do not place an open flame in a jar, paper sleeve, bag, or lantern. Check battery lights before use. Keep small batteries secured away from children and pets. An adult handles the knife and cutting board.

Make room for every child

The best participation is the participation a child freely chooses.

AGE OR NEED	TRY THIS	SKIP THIS
Ages 3-5	Use short, concrete sentences. Let a child point, draw, listen, or pass.	Do not use “went to sleep” to explain death. Do not ask for a personal story.
Ages 6-8	Answer the question asked in a few honest sentences. “I do not know” is fine when true.	Do not promise that grief follows a timetable.
Ages 9-12	Invite them to choose the story, person remembered, or closing words.	Do not treat quietness as a problem to solve.
Sensory-sensitive child	Keep lights on, use familiar materials, preview the sounds, and set an exit option.	Avoid scent, surprise darkness, or touching without asking.
Child who opts out	Offer a nearby quiet activity and a trusted adult.	Do not bargain for participation or make it a test of love.

A sample story that stays gentle

ONE MEMORY, THEN STOP

“Aunt Mae liked to feed the birds from the kitchen window. She kept a little tin of seeds by the sink. I think of her when I hear birds outside. You can tell a story too, draw one, or just listen.”

Before you put the lantern away

ADULT CLOSE	DONE
Switch on the room lights and state the next ordinary activity.	☐
Put away cutting tools, loose batteries, and food safely.	☐
Check that each lantern light is battery-operated and stable.	☐
Let children keep, store, or discard their drawing by choice.	☐

PRINTING AND REUSE

US Letter, portrait. Print at actual size or fit to page. Page 3 is the reusable craft template. Page 4 contains optional cut-out cards. No other page needs to be cut.