

# Food for Winter



Have you ever looked around during autumn? You might see the leaves changing colors. You might also see squirrels or chipmunks working very quickly. These furry animals are getting ready for winter. They are collecting and eating lots of nuts, acorns, and seeds.

Squirrels eat a lot of these foods in the fall. When they eat a lot, their bodies get fatter. The **extra** fat helps them stay warm when winter comes. It also gives their bodies energy to live off of during the cold winter months. Plus, squirrels' fur gets thicker in the fall. In winter, it is sometimes **under zero** degrees outside. That's freezing! Extra fur keeps the squirrels warmer. It helps them live in the cold weather.

Squirrels don't just eat seeds, nuts, and acorns in the fall. They also store food. This means they gather a lot of food and hide it so that they know where to find it later. Squirrels take their seeds, nuts, and acorns and bury them in small holes in the ground. When they are hungry during the winter, they dig up the buried food and **remove** it from the ground. You might think the squirrels would forget where they put the food. But they can smell it in the ground. When they smell some food, they dig it up. Then they eat it!

Chipmunks also store food for winter. Their way of storing food is a little bit different than the squirrels' way. They look around for nuts and seeds. Then they fill their mouths with food. Their cheeks stretch out to hold the food. Soon the food is almost **overflowing** from their mouths. Finally, they bring the food back to their homes under the ground. They bring enough food to last all winter.

Chipmunks do not fatten up in the fall like squirrels do. They do not grow more fur, either. Instead, chipmunks stay underground in their homes. They sleep for most of the winter. They only wake up once in a while. When they wake up, they eat some of the food they stored in fall.

Squirrels and chipmunks are two animals that know how important it is to plan ahead. What can you learn from their habits?

**COMPREHENSION** What do chipmunks and squirrels do to get ready for winter? What words in the passage tell about too much or too little?



# The Acornball Game



Little Chip and the other chipmunk children loved to play acornball. The game was a lot like baseball. They used a stick for a bat, flat stones for bases, and an acorn for a ball.

One day, Little Chip was out in the woods searching for a good acorn to use for the game. It had to be big and round and smooth. After a few minutes of searching, he saw the perfect acorn beneath an oak tree. He **hurried** to get it, but he ran so fast that he **stumbled** over a rock and fell down.

When Little Chip looked up, he saw a big gray squirrel picking up the acorn he had found.

"Please don't take that acorn," said Little Chip. "The chipmunk children need it to play acornball."

"Well I found it first, so I'm going to eat it," said the squirrel.

"Please don't!" cried Little Chip. Then he had an idea. "What if you and your squirrel friends play against us chipmunks in a game of acornball? Whoever wins gets to keep the acorn! What do you think about that?"

"OK, but just one game," said the squirrel. "And you should know that my team is pretty good."

Little Chip wanted to play anyway. He felt good about the chipmunks' chances of winning the game. Soon the game began. The squirrels were much bigger than the chipmunks, and they took the lead very early on. Every time a chipmunk hit the acornball into the air, a squirrel reached out and **caught** it.

After a while, it was Little Chip's turn to bat. The big gray squirrel **tossed** the acornball. Little Chip watched closely as the ball moved from the squirrel's hand through the air. When it came closer to him, Little Chip swung the bat with all his might. He hit the acorn way up into a tree!

The chipmunk children **cheered** loudly. "Yay, Little Chip! You hit a home run!"

Little Chip was so excited. The chipmunks and squirrels played for a while longer, and the game ended in a tie.

Afterward, the gray squirrel said to Little Chip, "Acornball is so much fun! I think we should share the acorn and play again."

Little Chip agreed, happy to have made a new friend.

**COMPREHENSION** What words in this story tell about actions? What does the gray squirrel learn from sharing the acorn with the chipmunks?

