

Kid Inventors' Day

Actual Holiday: January 17

First Celebrated: Unknown

January



Introduction

It is no accident that Kid Inventors' Day is celebrated on January 17—that was the date famous inventor Ben Franklin was born! Ben Franklin was a kid inventor as well. When he was 11, he invented something that was the precursor to swimming fins. Although he found that these fins made his wrists hurt, he had begun his career as an inventor. Celebrate this holiday in your classroom by celebrating the creative abilities unique to kids and having your students come up with inventions of their own.

Materials

- *My Invention* activity sheet (page 7)
- pencils
- art supplies
- scrap paper

The Activity

- Ask students if they have ever heard of Ben Franklin. If any students do not know who he is, tell them that he was a Founding Father of the United States and that one thing he is famous for is being a great inventor. Among his many inventions were the lightning rod and bifocal glasses. And he started inventing things when he was young. At the age of 11, he invented something that would be the precursor to swimming fins. Ben Franklin's invention consisted of two oval pieces of wood. These would be held in a swimmer's hands to help them swim faster. Ben Franklin found that these made him go faster, but they also hurt his wrists. Nevertheless, his desire to invent things had been born, and he would be an inventor all his life.
- Tell students that today they will be celebrating Kid Inventors' Day. Share with them that many kids have come up with famous inventions over the years. Here are some examples:

- In 1905, an 11 year old mixed some water with a fruit-flavored powdered soda mixture, which was a popular way to make a drink back then. He accidentally left it outside with a stirring stick still in it. After a cold night, he found that the drink had frozen around the stick. And the Popsicle was born!
- In 1930, a 16-year-old gymnast attended the circus and watched the acrobats and trapeze artists land with a gentle bounce in their safety nets. That gave him the idea of creating a device that would allow a person to keep on bouncing. He became the inventor of the trampoline.
- In 2000, a 17 year old saw a group of people with hearing loss using a translator to order food at a restaurant. He thought there must be a way for people with hearing loss to be able to gain independence and not have to rely on others to communicate. He invented a glove that was connected to a computer that could quickly translate the sign language alphabet into the written and eventually spoken word.

- Tell students that inventions do not have to change the world. Sometimes, they might be something simple that turns out to be very helpful to others. A 15 year old invented earmuffs because his ears were cold when he wanted to go ice skating. An 11 year old created crayon holders because she hated it when her crayons wore down too much and she couldn't draw with them.
- Distribute the *My Invention* activity sheet to students. Have them start thinking of inventions that they would like to create. They can use scrap paper to sketch out some ideas. If they are having trouble coming up with ideas, have them think of things that they or their loved ones do every day that could be made easier. Or, they can think of inventions that would make their lives more fun.
- Have students draw pictures of their inventions in the box on the page. In the "This is what it's made of" section, have them list the parts they would use to make up their inventions. In the "This is what it does" section, have them write about what the invention would do and how it would help people.
- Ask student volunteers to describe their inventions to the class. Ask students if they are inspired to be kid inventors after taking part in this activity.

