# 🧼 The Germs Don't Stand a Chance

Classroom Guide

*For tiny hands with mighty soap*

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| **CASEL Competency:** | Self-Management |
| **Grade Level:** | Pre-K–1 |
| **Duration:** | 40–50 minutes |
| **Category:** | Health & Self-Care |

## Learning Objectives

- Understand that germs are microscopic characters that set up camp on unwashed hands
- Learn the 20-second handwashing technique as a hero countdown
- Identify the key moments for handwashing: before eating, after bathroom, after playing outside
- Discover that soap is the ultimate weapon against the ridiculous Germ army

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## Overview & Preparation

### Key Vocabulary

Germs • Microscopic • Soap • Lather • Scrub • Rinse • Bacteria • Handwashing • Hygiene • Countdown

### Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- Glitter (to represent germs)
- Soap and water station
- Paper and crayons
- Optional: magnifying glasses, timer

## Before Reading

### Connection Question

> *If you could see everything on your hands right now — every tiny invisible thing — what do you think you'd find?*

### Background Building

Your hands go on a LOT of adventures every day — touching, building, petting, playing. But after every adventure, tiny ridiculous Germ characters try to set up camp on your fingers! They wear hard hats. They draw battle plans in crayon. They build forts out of playground dirt. And they are ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED of one thing: SOAP. The 20-second wash isn't boring — it's the most satisfying action-hero countdown of the day!

## During Reading — Pause Points

- **When the hero discovers the microscopic Germ camp on their hands** — Tiny germs with hard hats building forts on your fingers! What do you think they're building with? Where's their favorite hiding spot?
- **When the Germs see SOAP and panic** — The Germs are TERRIFIED of soap! It's like a comet to them! Why is soap the ultimate superhero weapon?
- **When the 20-second countdown begins** — The hero is counting down: 20, 19, 18... This is the VICTORY countdown! How does it feel to be the hero defeating an entire army in 20 seconds?

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## Discussion Questions

**1.** The Germs in this story are ridiculous and pathetic — they draw battle plans in crayon! Why did the story make them funny instead of scary?

↳ Is it easier to fight something silly or something terrifying?

**2.** The hero washes hands before eating, after the bathroom, and after playing. Why are THOSE the most important moments?

↳ What other moments might be good handwashing times?

**3.** Soap is described as a "comet" to the Germs. What actually happens to germs when you use soap and water?

↳ Why doesn't water alone do the job?

**4.** The story makes handwashing feel like a hero moment. What other everyday routines could feel heroic if we thought about them differently?

↳ What's YOUR everyday superpower?

## Facilitation Tips

This lesson works best with a hands-on demonstration. The glitter experiment (coat hands in glitter, try to remove with just water, then use soap) is unforgettable. Keep the Germ characters silly, not scary — the goal is empowerment and humor, not anxiety. For children with sensory sensitivities to soap or water, offer alternatives (foam soap, warm water) and never force.

## Emotional Payoff

*The child goes from seeing handwashing as a boring interruption to experiencing it as a 20-second hero moment. They're not just cleaning hands — they're defeating a ridiculous army that was plotting world domination with crayon battle plans. The satisfaction of watching the Germ army swirl down the drain is visceral and repeatable.*

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## After Reading Activities

### The Glitter Germ Experiment

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Glitter, soap, water, paper towels

Coat each child's hands in glitter ("These are your germs!"). First, try rinsing with just water — the glitter stays. Then use soap and scrub for 20 seconds — the glitter washes away! Discuss: why did water alone fail? Where did the glitter hide longest? (Between fingers, under nails, on thumbs — just like real germs.)

### Draw the Germ Army

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Paper, crayons, markers

Each child draws their own Germ character — the silliest, most pathetic invader they can imagine. Give them names, hard hats, tiny battle plans drawn in crayon. Then draw SOAP arriving like a comet. Caption: "My Germ is named _____ and their biggest weakness is _____."

### 20-Second Hero Countdown

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Soap, water, timer or countdown song

Practice the full 20-second handwashing technique together. Create a class countdown song (or use the alphabet song, which takes roughly 20 seconds). Emphasize: fronts, backs, between fingers, thumbs, under nails. Make it a performance — the Germ Defeat Dance.

## Writing Prompts

- Draw the inside of a Germ's fort on your hand. What are they building? What are they planning? Why should they be terrified of soap?
- Write a diary entry from a Germ's perspective: "Day 1 on the kid's hand. Everything was going great until..."
- Design a "WANTED" poster for the most ridiculous Germ in your Germ Army. Include their name, crimes, and weakness.

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## Home Connection

### Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we read "The Germs Don't Stand a Chance," where children discovered that tiny, ridiculous Germ characters try to set up camp on their hands after every adventure! We learned that SOAP is the Germs' greatest fear, and practiced the 20-second hero countdown handwashing technique. We even did the Glitter Germ Experiment to see why soap works and water alone doesn't.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Practice the 20-second hero countdown together at the sink — sing the countdown song from class
- Try the glitter germ experiment at home so the whole family can see it
- Post a "WANTED" poster (drawn by your child) near the bathroom sink as a fun handwashing reminder

With warmth,
Your Child's Teacher

## Related Books

- Germs Are Not for Sharing by Elizabeth Verdick
- Those Mean Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting but... Invisible Germs by Judith Rice
- Wash Your Hands! by Tony Ross
- Give Me Back My Germs by Joan Axelrod-Contrada

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