

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Growing brains. Not only is your baby's body growing, so is their brain. When you hold, cuddle and talk to your baby, you're providing a very healthy meal for their brain.

What do you have there? Naming body parts not only helps young children learn, but also contributes to emotional closeness. Start by touching your child's mouth, say "baby's mouth" then your own, saying "Mommy's mouth." Do the same with other body parts. Add harder and fancier parts – elbows, eyelashes, ankles, wrists. You've got it!

Tuesday

Learning to talk. Your baby learns to talk by listening to you. Be a "sportscaster" and tell them what you are doing!

Getting messy. Babies and young children love to get messy! You can use a variety of things at home to be messy. You can use non-toxic paint, bubbles, shaving cream or anything else you have at home. Stay close as young children may want to explore by putting things in their mouth.

Wednesday

Have some fun! Making funny faces or noises, imitating your baby, talking and laughing are all great food for a fast-growing brain.

Turn on some music. Encourage your child to make sounds (la la) and "sing" along. Help them to clap or pat something like your hand. Rock your child to the rhythm of the music. Ask your child simple questions: Does this music make you happy? Is this music fast or slow, loud or soft? Let your child make music with sticks and stones, pots, pans, plastic containers and a wooden spoon.

Thursday

Walk and talk. Take a walk with your baby and talk about all the things you see, hear and smell. Talking to your child teaches new words. Ask questions like: What color is it? How does it feel? Is it smooth, rough, bumpy, hard, soft, etc.? What shape is this? Listen! What is that sound?

Independence day. Toddlers love to do things independently. Think about ways your child can help you – for example, stir while you're cooking, help sort mail, put napkins out for dinner. Giving them a sense of independence encourages problem solving skills in growing brains!

Friday

Splish, splash! Playing in the bath is perfect for learning new things. Splashing, feeling the warm water, hearing you talk, and seeing you smile builds brain connections.

Bath songs. Make up a song about taking a bath! Describe what you or your child is doing. Pro tip: Use a familiar song like "Wheels on the Bus" and make your own words: the water in the bath goes splash, splash, splash!

MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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DAILY DISCOVERIES

What is your child doing? Reaching out for a toy? Hitting two blocks together to make a sound? As they discover their world, pay attention, smile and use words that they will learn someday: "You reached out your fingers and got your toy." Suggested age: 0-1 year.

Brainy Background

When you pay attention to what your child does and share their delight in doing and learning, you start them on the path to become a lifelong learner.

SHARE A STARE

As you hold your child and look into each other's eyes, make a silly face or sound. How do they respond? With twinkly eyes? A smile? A laugh? Try it again, but do something different. This is the beginning of a lifetime of laughs to share together. Suggested age: 0-1 year

Brainy Background

This back and forth game of sharing a laugh is anything but silly. It is an important building block in your child's ability to enjoy and communicate with other people. It also deepens your relationship with one another – and it's fun!

SOUND SEARCHES

Pay attention to the sounds you're hearing and talk about them with your child. "I hear a bird tweeting. Do you?" Try to find the bird. Do this with fire trucks or cars going "vroom!" Pay attention to what they're listening to and ask them, "What do you hear?" Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

Children learn through their senses and through games like Sound Searchers. Using words about the sounds you're hearing helps your child begin to listen to the differences in sounds and the words that describe them.

SONG TRADITIONS

Sing the same songs daily to explain what you're doing with your child (for example, leaving the rooming, shutting the lights, finishing eating, wiping faces and washing hands, changing diapers or counting fingers and toes). Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

Children love traditions. Singing about their daily activities provides the comfort of a known routine. In addition, it helps your child make connections between their experiences and new words. They learn language from your sing-song voice.

SKIN SENSATIONS

Talk to your child about how things feel on their skin: "Your shirt is soft." "The wind is cold." "The ice cube is slippery." See how they react and continue the conversation: "You like the warm water in your bath!" Suggested age: 0-1 year.

Brainy Background

When you talk back and forth with your child about how things feel on their skin, you're introducing them to new words and feelings. This helps make new connections, which are the foundation for learning to use these words themselves in the future.

STAIR COUNT

When your child is learning to walk up and down stairs, hold their hand, and count each step you take. This will help them become familiar with their numbers and think it's a fun game at the same time. Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

Making connections between numbers and what they stand for (such as the steps your child climbs or the fingers on their hands), helps them see that numbers aren't just words they memorize, but they actually stand for quantities of things. It's the beginning of learning math.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Letter hunting. Hunt for letters your child is learning! You might find letters in magazines, in recipes, on food boxes/cans, on clothing and on toys. Keep 1 letter in mind for the week. Try to find it in new places as you go about your day.

Writing practice. When practicing writing letters or a child's name, it can be helpful to write in a yellow crayon or marker or light pencil. This makes it easy for your child to trace independently!

Tuesday

Colorful laundry. When folding laundry or putting laundry away, talk about colors. Match colors together, and ask your child to hand you the yellow shirt. Have your child name the colors of clothing.

Crab walk! Have your child sit on the floor, leaning back on his or her arms. Bend knees in place with feet flat on the floor. Have your child lift their bottom and support their weight on hands and feet. Try "walking" in all directions in that position. Have crab races to see who is fastest!

Wednesday

Category fun. Many things can be put into categories; big books and small books, things we eat and things we drink, cups and bowls. How many categories can you make?

Name that shape. Notice shapes throughout your day. Have your child name the shapes they see: circle, square, triangle. Add new shapes they may not have heard of before: rectangle, oval, diamond, pentagon, rhombus, octagon, pentagon and more!

Thursday

Beginning to end. After reading a story or watching a familiar video together, talk about the beginning, middle and end of the story. Help your child say things in the right order. Draw a picture about the book or video.

Art showcase. When children have created art from a project you do together, or they do some writing/drawing on their own, hang it in a place they can see it. It gives you the opportunity to notice their art. Talk about how creative they are!

Friday

Letters are everywhere! Draw letters with fingers in sand, dirt or flour. Ask your child to find letters you draw and/or have them practice drawing and naming letters.

Early mathing. 1:1 correspondence is an early math skill. Support this by counting items with your child throughout the day. Count snack items, clothing items, books, etc.

MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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CATEGORY CONVOS

Tell your child about a favorite food. Ask them to name a food they like that's in the same category, like fruit, but different. Keep count of how many different things you both like in the same category. Play the same game with something else, like clothes! Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

This game is teaching your child about categories; things that are the same in important ways, though different in others. They're also learning about your likes and dislikes compared to theirs, helping them learn about other people.

SMILE AND WINK GAME

Smile at your child, wink at them and encourage them to try to copy you. When they can do this, change the order – wink first and then smile. You can make it even more complicated by smiling and winking two times. It's a fun game that will make you laugh. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Playing this game helps your child learn to pay attention to what you're doing, remember the rules, and copy what you're doing. These are important skills for school and life.

SHUT EYE

Try getting dressed for bed in a new way. Ask your child, "What if we closed our eyes while we put on our pajamas for bed tonight?" Stay close by them to make sure it's safe. Afterward, share what it feels like to get dressed "in the dark!" Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

When your child is challenged to not use their eyes, they're using different senses and different parts of their brains.



SMILES AND WINKS

Smile at your child and wink at them. Repeat it several times, then encourage them to try to copy you. The smile is easy, and their wink, which may be just crinkling their eyes, will make you smile again! Take turns. Count how many smiles and winks you share. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

Playing Smiles and Winks may seem simple, but it takes a great deal of skill for your child to pay attention to what you're doing, remember the rules (first you smile, then you wink), and copy what you're doing. These are important skills for school and life.

LAUNDRY DELIVERY

After folding the laundry, ask your child to help you with Laundry Delivery. "Where do the towels go? That's right, in the bathroom! What about your pajamas? Yes! In your room. Which drawer?" Switch and let them pick the items and ask you where they go. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

When your children learn to group things into categories, they learn how to organize and make sense of their experience. Just think about how important "matching" is to reading, math, science and many other subjects.

IN THE RIGHT ORDER

Have your child look for letters or numbers in a specific order on signs and license plates. You can say, "Can you find a one and a two next to each other?" or "Can you find an A and an E next to each other? Take turns and see who can find the most. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Your child must pay close attention to their surroundings to find letters or numbers and keep track of what they have seen and how many times. They're also using their working memory to remember the correct order to look for.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

For pregnant parents. Attachment to babies starts well before they are born. You may be starting to feel your baby moving. Touching your baby when they move and talking and singing supports their development in the womb.

For parents with infants and toddlers. Having your child more at home with you or in your workspace can be stressful, because you're now juggling multiple needs at once. You may also be feeling worried or frustrated because your young child doesn't yet have the cognitive skills to fully understand what's going on – why you may not always be available to spend time with them or why schedules have been turned upside down. We understand. Please know that your feelings are normal in what are not normal times – and try the breathing exercise below!

For parents with preschoolers. Now that you've been more at home with your children, some worry may have set in about whether or not your children are sufficiently learning. You may be asking yourself whether you're devoting enough time to your child's development or whether your child will be ready for kindergarten. We understand you, and we feel for you. Your worries are normal, as we're all doing our best to navigate such tense, uncertain times. And, no, you are not a bad parent or caregiver! But guess what? You were always first and foremost your child's educator – and you still are! You can still be there for them now in small or large ways to support their learning and developmental skills. Preschoolers are still very much at the age of imagination and play, so encourage independent play! Also, schedule periods of time during the day when you can reconnect with your child. Go outside, discover, do art projects, dance, or do whatever may support your child's connection and learning with you!

For everyone! To help ease stress, try taking five minutes in the morning or evening to do some slow, deep breathing. You can even practice this with your child! Try the following: Stand up, as you raise your hands above your head, breathe in, and say to yourself (and to your child), "Let's reach for the sky!" Then, breathe out, bend over, bring your arms to the floor, and say, "Reach for the earth, the flowers, the grass..." Repeat 5 to 6 times. You'll find that your mind is more centered and your breathing is more controlled. Remember, we're in this together!