

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

My little scientist.

What's going on outside your window today? Exploring what young children see outside can be a fun way to introduce them to science. Talk about the animals or people that pass by. Count the trees or cars you see. Talk about the weather.

Bring the outside in!

Gather a few items from nature to bring into your home. Let your baby explore the textures with your close supervision. Talk about how the rock is smooth and the branch is rough.

Tuesday

Peek-a-boo. This is a game your baby will love to play over and over again. Hide your face with your hands, then remove them and say, "peek-a-boo!" Peek around the corners or put a scarf or hat over your face or your baby's face and say, "peek-a-boo" when you pull it off!

What is it? Teach your child the names of food, in and out of their containers. Talk about the texture, consistency and smell. Introduce more exotic foods like vinegar, cinnamon and baking soda.

Wednesday

Rock-a-bye baby. Rocking helps develop parts of your baby's brain associated with balance and even language. As you rock, cuddle and talk to your baby. Tell stories about your life and the dreams you have for the future. Play soft music and sing.

Drawer tour. Take your child on a tour of a drawer. Describe and name clothing, textures, colors, designs and sizes. Point out buttons, zippers, snaps and more. Throw the item you name in the air – and then put it back where it belongs.

Thursday

Tummy time. Babies need time on their tummies to build the muscles they need to lift their heavy heads, scoot around and eventually crawl. If your baby fusses, gently roll between back and tummy. Lie on the floor and talk or sing, make silly noises or faces! Fill a plastic bottle halfway with water and put a rattle or toy inside. Look what happens when it rolls!

Say cheese!

Throughout the day, take pictures of your child during play. At the end of the day, pull out your phone and talk about the pictures with your child.

Friday

Tuning in. When your baby smiles and you imitate and talk back, you are tuning in and sharing feelings. When your baby starts to fuss or cry, pick them up! Holding your baby makes them feel safe, secure and understood!

Toddlers on the go!

Help your little one practice self-control by playing a "stop and go" game. Color one side of a paper plate red and write the word STOP. Color the other side green and write GO. Stand down the hall from your child and walk/hop "green for go" and "red for stop." Now switch!

MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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PLAYTIME POEMS

When your child makes a sound, turn it into a rhyme. If they say “Eee,” say, “Eee rhymes with WE and we are together.” How many funny poems can you make with the sounds they’re making? It is fun for them and helps them listen to sounds. Suggested age: 0-2 years.

Brainy Background

Your child is a natural learner. When you watch what they’re doing and follow their lead, you can begin to build their learning by adding your ideas. When they’re responded to, their brain is active, which increases learning.

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.

SONG-VERSATIONS

While waiting, create singing conversations. Instead of talking back and forth, quietly sing what you want to say to each other. How does your child respond? Then try whispering. Keep going back and forth and make it a game. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

Singing their words and whispering them gives your child practice with controlling their behavior to play the game. This self-control is an important foundation for learning and being able to do what it takes to meet goals.

SING TALK

Instead of talking as usual, try singing in a different voice. For example, it’s very funny to sing about getting dressed. Sing, “I’m sliding on my shirt, jumping in my pants,” in a low voice. You and your child can use familiar tunes and make up your own words. Suggested age: 0-2 years.

Brainy Background

When you’re having fun, it’s likely your child will be having fun, too. When you put new words into tunes and describe what you’re doing, you’re helping them make new and unusual connections. These types of connections promote creativity.

STOP AND START THE MUSIC

Set your radio to a music station and have your child turn it off and on. Every time they turn it on, start to dance – or move around – and say “on.” When they turn it off, stop moving and say “off.” Soon they will probably say “off” and “on” with you. Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

When your child is at the stage of learning new words and concepts (like “off” and “on”), they learn them much better if they can make something happen (like turning music off and on) that demonstrates what the words and concepts mean.

ONE, TWO FOODS

Pick two food words, such as “banana” and “apple,” to make a word pattern two times. Repeat with your child. “Banana, apple, banana, apple.” Have them pick two food words and make a pattern two times: “fork, spoon, fork, spoon.” Talk about which word comes first and second. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

When your child is choosing words, listening to words, and making patterns with you, they’re creating and then using a rule. Understanding and applying rules in creating patterns will help them learn math concepts as they grow.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Body tracing. Using a large piece of paper or cardboard and a pencil, marker or crayon, have your child lie down, and you trace their body. Then your child can draw clothing on it. If there is not enough space to trace a child's body, you could trace hands, feet, etc.

Add to your art!

Over the week, cut out buttons, eyes, shoes etc. from newspapers, magazines and food boxes, and keep adding to your body outline. Can you count the buttons, name the shapes and colors?

Tuesday

Patterns everywhere! Patterns can be colors, shapes, sounds, numbers, etc. Play "I spy" and think of patterns you can give your child clues to find.

Choices and voices.

Choices help children feel they have a voice. Think about ways you can support your child to make a choice. For example, offer 2 different snacks to choose from or a choice of where to sit or play. When children feel they have control some of the time, they can be more flexible overall.

Wednesday

Mystery bag. Put small "mystery" items into a bag and encourage your child to identify them by touch. Describe the size, shape and texture of the object before you guess its name. To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," sing "Mystery bag, what's inside? Show me what you're trying to hide."

Focus on movement.

Songs like the "Hokey Pokey" and "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" help children pay attention to their bodies, while having fun! "Simon Says" is also great!

Thursday

Big, small, short, tall. Talk about size. Tell your child the "Three Bears" story, emphasizing the sizes of the bears, their bowls, their chairs and their beds not only with words, but the sound of your voice. See how many words you and your child can think of to describe objects by size – for example, small, tiny, miniature, skinny, short – or big, tall, huge, giant, enormous, etc.

Scavenger hunt.

Send your child on a scavenger hunt to find objects related to the size you describe. Then switch roles.

Friday

Making music. Kids of all ages and abilities love music and dance. Make instruments using plastic jars or bottles with sand, beans or rice. Make a drum with wooden spoons on pots, pans or plastic containers. Make a guitar with rubber bands and a box. Sing a familiar song or make up new words to a familiar tune!

Musical patterns.

Practice different sound patterns with your instruments. Can your child copy the pattern you make? Can they come up with a pattern of their own?

MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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NAME THAT TUNE

Start humming a song your child knows and have them guess what it is. If they guess wrong, start over and hum the tune again. After a few guesses, you can add in some words to the song as hints. After a few tries, let them try a tune while you guess. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

This game helps your child focus and pay attention to sounds – which is important in communicating, reading and writing – and it's fun, too!

SILLY SONGWRITER

Turn a familiar tune like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" into a silly song. Change the words to something like, "Row, row, row your elephant." See if your child catches on to the joke. "Can you really row an elephant? What could you row?" Can they take a turn to add a silly verse to this song? Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

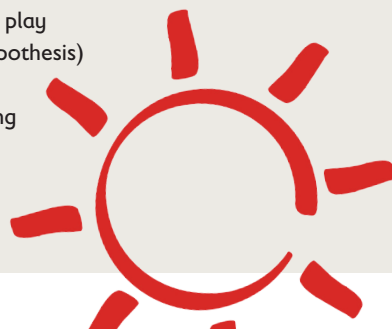
To play this game, your child must listen closely and use their memory to recall the words to songs. They're also playing with what's real and what isn't – important concepts for understanding how the world works.

MEALTIME MATH

Making dinner? Take a moment for Mealtime Math. Take measuring cups and ask your child questions like, "Which one looks bigger, a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup? How many $\frac{1}{4}$ cups will fit into the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup?" Test out your child's guesses together by filling the cups with water. Talk about what you discover! Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Your child is thinking like a scientist when they play Mealtime Math, by making a good guess (a hypothesis) about what they expect to find, testing it, and talking about the discoveries. This is also helping your child learn about measuring and fraction concepts like $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$.



ONE SHIRT, TWO SHIRT

Try giving your child some options today. As you're getting dressed, give them a choice between two shirts. Ask them why they like the one they have chosen, where they remember wearing it. What else has the same color or pattern? Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Helping your child explain why they made the choice they did helps build their reasoning and communication skills.

DANCE DUET

Let your child pick a fun, fast song to dance to. Take turns making up dance moves. They can start, then you copy them. Keep going back and forth by repeating the moves and adding new moves. Before you know it, you will have a whole dance routine! Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

When you and your child build on each other's moves, they're using their memory and focus to follow and remember the moves, as well as their flexible thinking skills by making up their own moves. These skills are important for creativity and learning.

CLOTHING COUNT

Are you and your child both wearing clothes with buttons or pockets (or something else that's the same)? Together with your child, count the buttons/pockets on his/her clothes and on yours. What are the numbers? Who has more – you or your child? Count again to make sure! Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

Children learn what numbers mean through real-life experiences counting objects – not by memorizing number names. To find out which is more or less, help your child see actual quantities of things – like the number of fingers that represent the buttons or pockets. If you say the results out loud, it's easier to remember.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

For pregnant parents. To alleviate any worries you have about whether or not your baby will get sick in utero, remind yourself that as you do the best to keep safe and healthy, your baby will be kept safe and healthy, too. Bringing down stress levels is very important, so that they do not affect your baby's growth. It's okay if you need to take some breaks throughout the day, so you can breathe deeply, lay down and relax, rub your belly, and even talk and laugh with your baby growing inside!

For parents with very young children. Feeling cooped up and worried about your fussy child, whether you have an infant or a preschooler? It is hard when young children don't fully understand that you can't go out to as many places right now or see other people. And you may be feeling stressed about being limited in your surroundings and away from your social circles. To help, make a list of places that are safe to explore and visit. Finding a path to walk with your child is always a good option. Along the way, encourage your child to explore! Use simple language to explain to your child why you are not able to do the things you normally do. For example, you can say, "Right now we are keeping healthy and safe. That means we need to stay inside for a little longer. We will be able to go see friends soon." Most importantly, emphasize that you are there to take care of your children and to keep them safe. Hug them, talk to them and play together. When they feel protected, the fussiness may subside, leaving everyone a little less stressed!