

# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



## Monday

**Baby's body.** With your baby on the bed or the floor, cover body parts with a towel or blanket and ask, "Where are your feet, hands, legs, head, etc.?" Pull the towel off slowly and say, "There it is!"

**Getting dressed.** This everyday activity is full of opportunities for learning and practicing new skills. Help your child find matching items. Practice first, second and third. Say, "First put on your coat, then your hat and third your mittens." Be silly and see if your child notices things that do not belong. Let your child decide what to wear. Being able to dress oneself provides a sense of pride and accomplishment. Praise your child whenever they try to dress.

## Tuesday

**Just have fun!** Have fun playing with your baby! Encourage your baby to touch, grasp, reach, hold and explore a variety of objects, including while in different positions, such as lying on their back or tummy, sitting on your lap or in their high chair.

**Discovery zones.** Your kitchen may be filled with safe items to discover, such as wooden spoons, measuring cups and bowls. Practice stacking and nesting these items to build spatial awareness. Pretend to cook and feed each other to develop social skills, such as taking turns and manners.

## Wednesday

**Face time.** Babies love to explore the world through touch. Show them what funny faces you can make and let them feel what different faces look like. Guide your baby's hands to your face while you speak and make facial expressions so that they can get to know how we use our faces to communicate.

**Build a blanket fort!** Stretch a blanket or sheet between your couch cushions and chairs to make a blanket fort. Crawl in and out, read a story while you're inside, play hide and seek, talk about who is inside and who is outside and more. Using words such as *in*, *on*, *out* and *under* builds children's spatial vocabulary and conceptual knowledge.

## Thursday

**Kissing, hugging, talking, telling.** Be affectionate and talk to your baby. Admire everything they do – and tell them. The way you talk to your baby now has an impact on their ability to learn in the future and makes a big difference in their self-esteem. Warm and caring people will have the most positive influence on your child's future.

**Fun with boxes!** There's no need to buy fancy blocks to build your infant's motor skills. Wrap up some smaller boxes with recycled newspaper or wrapping paper and allow your baby to handle the boxes. They will enjoy stacking boxes, knocking them over, and rebuilding the stack with your help.

## Friday

**Sit and play.** Prop your baby into a sitting position, which provides a whole new view on life. Roll a ball to them. Although they can't catch it yet, watching and tracking the ball is good for their developing eyesight. Make a sock puppet for your hand. Talk and make silly sounds as you move it slowly around.

**Moving = learning.** A moving child is a learning child! Try rolling, crawling, scooting, cruising, walking, running and dancing. Encourage your child to bend, reach and squat, climb a pile of sofa cushions, push a laundry basket, or climb in and out of a large box. Describe everything you're doing. Be silly and have fun!

# MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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## SPACE EXPLORER

Show your child the world from different points of view. When they're in your arms, crouch down low or gently lift them up in the air. Describe what you're doing and respond to their reactions. "You're as high as the light! Look what you can see up here!" Suggested age: 0-1 years.

### Brainy Background

Moving your child around and talking about what you're doing helps them learn about important concepts like shape and space. Children learn these concepts through back and forth conversations, where you follow their lead and respond to their reactions.

## BODY LANGUAGE

Practice using gestures with your child as another way to communicate. You can wave your hand and say "hi!" or shake your head and say "no." Or you can clap your hands and say "yay!" See if they will mimic your actions and sounds. Try going back and forth like a conversation. Suggested age: 1-2 years.

### Brainy Background

Many children use gestures before they speak. When you show your child how gestures and words work together, you add to their understanding of what it means to communicate. You also help them make connections between words and actions, an important part of talking, reading, and writing.

## UP AND OVER

Ask your child to find an object like a stick or rock and place it on the ground near you. Encourage them to explore different ways moving over it: Can they jump? Hop over on just one foot? Run and then jump? Take turns jumping with them and talk together about how far you both go. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

### Brainy Background

It takes focus and self-control for your child to manage how their body moves, as well as flexible thinking to come up with different ideas. Fun experiences with math ideas like space and distance help them develop a foundation for learning now and in the future.

## DROP THE BALL

Turn your trip to the park into a chance to Drop the Ball. Give your child a safe object to hold onto and drop, like a ball or a crumbled piece of paper. If you pick it up, they will drop it again. "Down it falls. Up it comes." Keep up the game with new objects. Suggested age: 0-1 years.

### Brainy Background

Building your child's ability to use their hands is important. They will use this ability at home, at play and at school. In addition, they're learning to pay attention and to have self-control – also key skills for life.

## REACH FOR THE SKY

Make your waiting time fun! Ask your child, "Can you do this?" and hold your hands up very high and say, "Reach for the sky!" Invite them to copy you. Next, put your hands behind your back and see if they copy you. Then take a turn and copy them. Suggested age: 1-2 years.

### Brainy Background

When your child tries to mimic the movements you make, they're using the skills of focus and attention. You're exposing them to new vocabulary while also helping them make connections between words and what they represent, the building blocks of learning how to talk and, later, to read.

## I CAN HELP

While you're doing laundry, ask your child to help. Invite them to sort clothes into piles of dark and light colors. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

### Brainy Background

It may take longer, but when you let your child help, they learn about how to hold an idea in their mind and get it done. These thinking skills are needed to make plans and see them through – skills they will need the rest of their life.

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# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



## Monday

**Home bowling.** Bowl with what you have at home! Use plastic bottles for bowling pins and a ball to bowl in the house or outside!

**Spring art.** Spring gives us many new leaves and flowers. Can you find some outside and talk about the shapes and colors of them? If you bring leaves and flowers inside, place them in a napkin and then inside a book for a few days. They will dry and you can use them for art!

## Tuesday

**Freeze dance!** Have a dance party with a small group of kids or family members and tell everyone that when you stop the music, they hold very still. When the music starts back up, keep dancing!

**Snack shapes!** Use a snack that is already in a shape (square crackers) or cut your child's snack/food into a shape (toast, pancake, cracker, carrot, etc.). Use snack time as brain time for your child, and help them see shapes in the world around them!

## Wednesday

**Loud/quiet.** Have your child perform an action either loud or quiet. First, pick an action such as stomping feet, clapping hands, whistling, etc. The leader says "loud" and the child does that action loudly. If your child doesn't know loud/quiet yet, model it and ask them to copy you!

**Playtime plus.** Follow your child's lead and interests! Can you add to their play? Can you make something just a little bit harder for them so they need to figure it out?

## Thursday

**Use-what-you-have basketball!** Use any "balls," such as rolled-up socks, pillows, etc. And shoot them into any "hoop," such as a laundry basket, empty garbage can or toy bin. Make it harder by moving farther away. Talk about the words near/far/low/high.

**One foot, two feet.** Measuring can happen without a ruler! Have your child guess how far away something is and count out the number of feet (yours or theirs) it takes and measure the distance.

## Friday

**Red light, green light.** Make your own stoplight with red, yellow and green paper or white paper with crayons or markers. The Red Light, Green Light game lets kids move on the green light and stop on the red light. Don't get caught moving on the red light! Ask them to move very slowly if you show the yellow light!

**Sidewalk chalk!** If you have chalk at home, try some fun sidewalk chalk activities! Hopscotch and Four Square are examples of active games that are sure to get everyone moving!

# MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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## MOVE LIKE ME

Ask your child to imitate you as you walk, jump, clap or bend down to touch your toes. Then see if they can do the actions when you just say the words. Challenge them by going fast and slow or adding multiple steps like, "Reach up, turn around, and then jump!" Suggested age: 3-4 years.

### Brainy Background

Your child uses their skills of focus and self-control as they try to mimic your words and actions. By changing the speed of the movements, you ask them to think on their feet. They must also use their working memory to keep track of what comes next.

## FINGER MARKER

While waiting, draw a shape (like a circle or a wiggly line), using your fingertip on your child's open palm. Can they name it? Repeat the same shape until they can guess what it is. Take turns back and forth, drawing and guessing shapes. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

### Brainy Background

When you play a Finger Marker, you give your child a chance to put together what they know about how shapes look with how shapes feel. It's a new and fun way to learn shapes through the sense of touch!

## HOT POTATO

You and your child can play this game anywhere you are. Find a small item to pass back and forth and sing a song as you do. As the song ends, whoever has the object does something special or silly, like blink three times or jump up and down. Take turns. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

### Brainy Background

Playing Hot Potato gives your child practice in following the rules and taking turns. It also gives them practice with self-control, a skill that helps them to stick with something long enough to meet their goals.

## DO AS I SAY

Ask your child to listen to your words and what you say, instead of following what you do. Say, "Stomp your feet" while you clap your hands. They should stomp their feet and try not to focus on clapping. Try new words and new actions when they learn to do this. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

### Brainy Background

Your child has to focus carefully on what you say and use self-control to not be distracted by what you do. It's hard, but playing this game helps children develop life skills that they'll use now and in the future.

## NEAR AND FAR

When you're outside, you can start a fun game with your child. Give them a place to stand and have them estimate how many steps they are from you. When they walk back, together count their steps aloud. Try all different distances! Suggested age: 4-5 years.

### Brainy Background

Young children can tell there is a difference between large and small quantities! By doing fun, back and forth games like this, you're building on this capacity and helping them understand more about what numbers stand for.

## FOLLOW THE LEADER

Walking somewhere? Turn your trip into follow the leader. Ask your child, "Can you do what I do?" while you pat your head. Then switch it up. If you pat your head, have them pat their stomach. Keep switching! Suggested age: 4-5 years.

### Brainy Background

The game of doing the same and then opposite actions helps your child remember the rules of the game, think flexibly, and not go on autopilot. This helps them learn to pay attention and exercise self-control – essential skills for school and life success.

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# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



## PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

**For pregnant parents.** Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment, and it may help women cope with the physical and emotional challenges of pregnancy. There are many ways you can incorporate mindfulness into your day without spending hours on it. Whenever you feel your baby move or kick, let it be a reminder for you to be mindful. Make mindfulness a bonding moment. Place both hands on your belly and take a few deep breaths in and out. As you breathe, notice your baby belly fall and rise. Start out with just a few breaths once a day then work your way up in slow intervals.

If you add a mindfulness practice into your daily routine, realize that it will likely change once your baby is born. However, you shouldn't give up your mindfulness practice. Find short windows of time, such as doing a quick mindfulness meditation while your child is napping. You can also add mindfulness into some of your daily tasks. Mindfulness can alleviate stress, help you maintain greater calm and support your overall focus!

**For pregnant parents and parents with young children.** We have gone through several emotions that affect our well-being and stress, and we've covered some coping mechanisms. Yet, there is one emotion that we haven't quite yet touched on: grief. Our lives have changed, and we have each been touched by one or more of the following: the loss of a schedule, a job, social connections, sense of security and loved ones. We have lost, at some level, the ability to go to all the places and participate in the activities we used to do in our everyday lives. These past several weeks have left all of us struggling with losses, big or small, explicit or less obvious. What we once held as something firm and secure is not reliable at this time. All of this loss produces grief within us. Whether we may know it or not, we are walking along the path of anger, sadness, powerlessness and denial – all symptoms of grief. *(Continued on following page)*

## WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



### PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER (continued)

What do we do about grief? Well, it's certainly normal to go through it, and for many of us, it's not our first rodeo with grief. However, we, and along with our children, must walk along the path. We need to take time to grieve. We need to recognize what we have lost, and be aware of it in ourselves and in others. What we have lost is not trivial, and there is no shame in grieving. Recognition of grief allows us to heal and create new methods to move forward. We can honor our grief: Communicate our loss to someone, exchange stories, create and express. For example, art therapy is an excellent choice for us as adults and for our children to do in order to process and come to terms with a loss. Mindfulness, sitting quietly and meditating, and seeking opportunities to be grateful and joyous are also ways to cope with grief. In an NPR article, interfaith chaplain and trauma counselor Terri Daniel explains that, "Grief is not a problem to be solved. It's a presence in the psyche awaiting, witnessing."

Grief has a process, and it doesn't have to last forever. It is best to tend to it and keep chugging along, seeking the good in ourselves. **Remember, we're in this together!**

### FAMILY

Communication, compassion and connection. Take time to communicate with one other about what you miss or what you may have lost. Remind each other that it's okay to have certain feelings when you are grieving. Think of ways to honor the person lost or to create a new tradition or event to make up the loss of something. Then, do something fun all together! If the weather is nice, pack lunches, grab a blanket and have a picnic lunch outside. Or, spread the blanket out on the living room floor as a treat!

[savethechildren.org/coronavirus-resources](https://www.savethechildren.org/coronavirus-resources)