

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Peek-a-boo! Many of the games we play with babies have been around for years. They are great for development and help babies learn important skills. Peek-a-boo is one of these. A game your baby will love to play over and over. Hide your face with your hands, then remove them and say “peek-a-boo!” You can also play with a scarf, blanket or hat.

Row, row, row your boat. Play this game with your older baby or toddler. Sit on the floor facing each other, hold hands and take turns leaning back and forth, while singing. Games like these offer opportunities for imitation, touch and rhythmic awareness, which promote language skills and muscle coordination.

Tuesday

Repetition. Babies and young children love to do and hear things over and over again. This is a necessary part of learning. Your baby will let you know when they are bored or tired. Looking away or fussing is one way they do that. Forcing your baby to learn something when they are not in the mood will be stressful for you both.

Name game. Take 5 or 10 minutes to go around the house or the yard with your baby or toddler and name simple objects. Go slowly. Pick something up, let your child feel it and smell it as you name it. You can name many of the same things each time. Your child won't get bored seeing the same things over and over. Don't rush. Wait a minute to see if baby has something to say.

Wednesday

Routines can be fun! Play peek-a-boo or tug-of-war with diapers during diaper change. Instead of rushing to get dressed, make this playtime.

Bath time is a good time for play, as well! Splashing in the water helps your baby learn how to move – and make things happen! Show your baby how to splash with their hand, a wooden spoon or other toys. Have plastic containers for pouring. Demonstrate pouring out all of the water and say, “All gone!” You can also bring kitchen items into the bath, such as a colander, funnel, a wooden spoon and whisk – and let your baby cook up a bubbly storm in the tub.

Thursday

Learning machines. Babies are learning machines. Everything they do adds to their learning and development – and they are constantly looking for opportunities. Watch what your baby is interested in and give them time to explore it.

The 5 senses. Provide opportunities for your young child to learn and problem solve using all of their senses – seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. This helps your child understand the world around them. You can ask: What noises do you hear? What did you see? What does it feel like? How does it smell? Do you like the taste?

Friday

Mirror, mirror. Hold your baby up to a mirror and show them what they look like. Name parts of their face and body. Have them touch their nose and yours, too. Put a child-safe mirror on the floor so they can see themselves as they play, reach, scoot and roll. Who is that interesting person? Mirrors are great for toddlers, too! They allow toddlers to continue developing self-recognition. Looking in the mirror with a toddler and ask questions such as: Who is that? Where is your nose, tummy, etc. This encourages self-identification and fosters language growth. Mirrors can help young children develop emotionally, too, as they have opportunities to witness their own expressions throughout the day.

MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2 Powered by **vroom™**



SING-SONG VOICE

Is your child making lots of sounds? Talk back to them by repeating their sounds or describing what they're doing, using a sing-song voice. Do they respond by kicking their feet, waving their arms or making more sounds? Together, you're telling your own story! Suggested age: 0-1 years.

Brainy Background

Children's brains are wired to hear you talk in a sing-song voice. When you talk slowly and stretch the sounds out in a musical way, their eyes light up and their heart rates increase. Toddlers who hear sing-song voices smile more often – proof that YOU are making connections and building a brain!

SING, READ, REPEAT

Your child enjoys listening to their favorite stories and songs over and over again. After singing and telling stories with them, ask if they want more. How do they respond? Do they nod or squirm away? Talk about their actions like, "You said yes!" or "You look like you're all done." Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

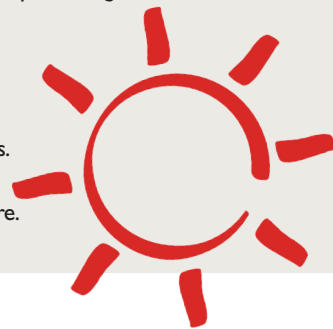
Children learn through repetition and shared back and forth conversations. Repeated storytelling and singing helps your child understand the meaning behind words and sets the stage for talking and eventually reading. They're learning the basics of communication!

MEALTIME MESSAGE

At dinner, put a message next to your child's plate. It may be a picture you tear out of a magazine or a quick note or drawing. As you sit down to eat, invite them to share the message. Take turns talking about the colors, letters and pictures you both see. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

A message at dinner is unexpected and fun. As you take turns talking about it, your child is learning to pay attention to details. They're also learning that marks and pictures stand for words and ideas, which is important when learning to read in the future.



SHARING THE STORY

When you're reading something yourself or with your child, let them explore it with all of their senses. Allow your child to touch, pat, hold and even taste (if it's clean) what you're reading. Describe their actions like, "You're patting the picture of the kitty cat. Meow!" Suggested age: 0-1 years.

Brainy Background

Children learn from touching, feeling and putting everything into their mouths. As you talk about your child's experiences, you help them make connections between words, pictures and objects. You not only share the story, you share your joy in reading with your child.

SHHH, WHAT'S THAT?

Do you hear a sound in the waiting room? Pause. Ask your child, "What's that sound?" Take turns guessing. Are you hearing a slamming door or papers rustling? The squeak of a sliding chair or someone clearing his or her throat? Name them all together! Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

You're inviting your child to focus on hearing the differences in sounds. This is an important skill for enjoying and learning language so they can communicate with others.

NATURE STORIES

While outside with your child, look for rocks, leaves or pinecones, and use these objects to retell one of their favorite stories or songs. For example, sing "Old MacDonald" and pretend to use the objects as different animals. Ask them for ideas. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

At this age, your child uses pretend play to practice their understanding of symbols – that one thing can stand for another. Being able to make these kinds of connections and to think creatively are important parts of learning how to read and communicate.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Passing notes. Write a note to your child and put it somewhere they will see it. Keep it simple – for example: Let’s read a story after lunch. Your child can bring the note to you and you can read it together! This helps young children recognize the importance of written language.

Play restaurant. Give your child a pen, crayon or pencil and a notebook. At mealtime, have them ask what you would like for dinner. Have them practice or pretend writing your order down. Encourage them to draw a picture of the food you’d like to eat!

Tuesday

What’s next? When reading a book, ask your child, “What do you think will happen next?” Let your child invent a new part of the story if they want to. If your child is still developing language, you can make up a new part of the story and see if they notice.

Container play. After thoroughly washing, old food containers make great items for pretend play for a restaurant, kitchen play, and/or picnic play. Pretend play supports every area of your child’s development!

Wednesday

Spring weather! Keep track of the weather! You can make a simple chart with words or simple pictures (rain, sun, clouds, a jacket, a t-shirt) to chart how many days in a row are sunny, cloudy, hot, cold, etc.

Reading recipes. Cooking can be a great way to practice reading and writing. Read recipes out loud together, or you can read them to your child. Write out the number of steps needed to prepare the food. If you don’t use a recipe to prepare food, have your child pretend to read a recipe to you while you prepare a meal.

Thursday

Letter writing. Keep old/junk mail, notebooks, envelopes or other materials to practice writing and play with. Set up a small space for your child to practice writing on the mail, writing a letter to a relative or friend and/or pretend to mail or send it off if you are able!

Related reading. When reading a book, relate something in the book to something your child has experienced. “Do you remember when we [insert activity], just like in the book?”

Friday

Read it, again! Reading favorite books many times helps young children with reading. They start to memorize and understand what words look like. Starting the book and leaving long pauses helps children practice pre-reading skills by filling in the blank.

Follow the leader. Think about being flexible. Young children like to be able to make decisions and practice independence. If your child wants to play somewhere else or switch activities, try following their lead!

MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES



FILL IN THE BLANK

Fill in the blanks to make up a story. "We're going to _____. When we get there, we'll see _____." As your child gets in the rhythm, take turns going back and forth. Is your story realistic? Make believe? There is no right or wrong, just have fun! Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Creating a fill-in-the-blank story means your child is thinking and cannot go on automatic pilot. They have to shift their thinking to respond to an unpredictable and changing story line. Thinking in flexible ways encourages problem solving skills.

PRETEND PACKING

Pretend you and your child are packing for a trip. It can be for a visit to a family member's house or an imaginary trip, like to outer space. Take turns naming things to bring. As they get older, you can try coming up with things in alphabetical order. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

When you take turns, you help your child practice their self-control. As they think of items to bring on your trip, they must use what they already know to imagine the future. This involves thinking critically to plan and thinking flexibly to come up with new and creative ideas.

LETTER LANGUAGE

Use a letter, like B, to begin every word you say. Instead of "Hello, how are you?" say, "Bellow bow bar boo?" Encourage your child to use the same letter to begin with words of their response. "I am fine, how are you?" would become "Bye bam bine, bow bar boo?" How long can you keep it up? Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

To keep the game going, your child must focus and think flexibly to switch the letters in the words they say. It also helps them to think hard about what each letter on the alphabet sounds like. Making these connections between letters and their sounds is important in learning language.

LETTER SHAPES

Encourage your child to point out letters on signs around them. Help describe the shapes of the letter, like: "Look. The letter A is pointy, like a triangle. What about the letter O?" See if you both can find all the letters of the alphabet and describe their Letter Shapes. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Your child is using focus to find letters, self-control to keep playing the game, and memory to use what they know about letters and shapes to make new connections. When you have fun with language and shapes, you help them enjoy learning.

LETTER LOOKOUT

Pick a letter with your child and try to find it everywhere you go. Take turns calling it out when you see it. If they see an apple for the letter A, then you have to find something next. See how many things you can find. Four? Ten? More? Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

"I Spy" games like this one are great brain builders. They make your child aware of their environment and teach them to make connections between similar things. You can try this game with letters, colors, shapes – anything really!

NAME GAME

In a waiting room or just hanging out in the living room? Flip through a magazine with your child and take turns making up names for the people in it. Start naming people with A, then B. Then go backwards and start with Z, then Y. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Playing this game involves remembering, thinking creatively, and not going on autopilot. These are all important skills for learning new things.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

Lately, we may have all been thinking about coronavirus. Questions like these may have run through your mind: Am I going to get sick? Where should I wear a mask? How quickly do the germs spread? Yes, we live in a world where we have to be mindful about health, where we need to be more vigilant than ever before about our actions. But did you know that we can be “contagious” with our emotions? Humans tend to take on the emotions, facial expressions, tone and behaviors of other humans when interacting with them. For example, have you ever noticed how when you stay calm, others tend to calm down little by little? Or if you are anxious, then others around you start to exhibit signs of anxiety, too? And then what seems to happen next is that as we express our emotions to others, we begin to “feed” off of one another, which can either cause a spread of positive emotions related to the coronavirus, or unfortunately more negative ones.

Now that you know emotions are contagious, be aware. You can take control of emotions and reframe yourself. Be authentic and know that if you express positive emotions and attitude, you are helping to spread them to others. This is a concept that you can demonstrate and teach to your children. Even if you are pregnant, taking this approach can alleviate any stress you feel, which helps you and your baby. Angela Duckworth, creator of the Character Lab, notes that a friend of hers, Professor Sigal Barsades, suggests practicing emotional contagion: “Try noticing how you are influenced by others’ moods and how their reactions influence yours. You can then reorient conversations away from catastrophizing and toward calm, showing the young people in your life that caring and hope are as easy to spread as negativity.” Many thanks to all you parents and caregivers out there spreading positive emotions and attitudes! We’re in this together, and sending positivity your way!

FAMILY

Make ice cream in a bag!

Ingredients: 1 gallon- and 1 quart-size zipper bag, 1 cup milk, 1 tablespoon sugar, ½ teaspoon vanilla, 1/3 cup salt, plus ice.

Directions: Pour the milk, sugar and vanilla into the smaller, quart-size zipper bag and close the seal. Fill the larger, gallon-size bag 3/4 full of ice, then add the salt. Place the smaller bag inside the larger bag and close the seal. Make sure you close them both tightly! Now shake the bag hard for 5 minutes. Open the large bag and dispose. Rinse the small bag off with cold water before opening to keep the salt water from getting into your ice cream. Scoop into individual bowls, share, eat and enjoy your hard work!

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