

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Let's talk math.

One of the easiest ways to build math skills is through language. Talk about size, texture, color, shape and your child's reactions. "Your teddy bear is soft and fuzzy!" "The motorcycle was so loud. Did it surprise you?" "That dog is so big!" "Your bottle is next to you." "Your hat is on your head."

Take a shape walk.

Point out and describe the shapes you see: crackers that are square, lids on soup cans that are circles, spoons that are oval, etc.

Tuesday

Make a book. Making your very own book is a surefire way to capture your child's attention. Make an album with pictures of your child and people and pets they know. Have your child talk about and name the pictures. Ask your child, "Who is that?" "What are they doing?"

Look at the book over and over. There is something special for children about seeing pictures of themselves and favorite family members, pets and friends that will make this book a favorite to read.

Wednesday

Listen up! Listening and following directions are critical for learning and development, and you can help develop these skills through interaction and practice.

Help your baby learn to listen and follow simple directions, such as "Show me Grandma," "Wash your tummy," or "Hold your diaper!" When your baby responds, let them know you noticed.

Shadow shapes. On a sunny day, go outside and show your child their shadow. Try making shadows dance, jump, wave, crouch, run. Trace their shadow with chalk and color in the "shadow shape."

Thursday

Singing hands. Sing songs with hand motions, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and "Patty Cake" with your baby. When they are able to use their hands and fingers, they will start copying your gestures. Soon, they will be singing along!

What's that noise?

Show your toddler 3 things that make noise, like a squeak toy, a rattle and some spoons. Let your child play with them for a while, then cover them and make a noise with one. Remove the cover and ask, "Which one made the noise?" See if they can guess. Games like this build working memory skills.

Friday

Laundry tunnel time! While you're folding laundry, throw a sheet over the backs of two chairs. Let your little explorer crawl into the "tunnel." When they're out of sight, call to your baby. Greet them with a surprised face and big smile when they find you! Older siblings will have fun playing this game, too!

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DID YOU HEAR THAT?

When you're in the park, ask your child, "Did you hear that?" each time you hear a sound. Imitate the sound out loud and make gestures to go along with it. Invite them to make the sound too. Suggested age: 0-1 year.

Brainy Background

You're giving your child practice being able to hear differences in sounds. This is an important skill for enjoying and learning language so they can communicate well with others.

SING, RHYME, REPEAT

Help your child recognize patterns and familiar words by singing simple songs with repetition or rhymes. For example, try "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or "Old McDonald Had a Farm." Encourage them to join in by repeating the words or by adding their own ideas. Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

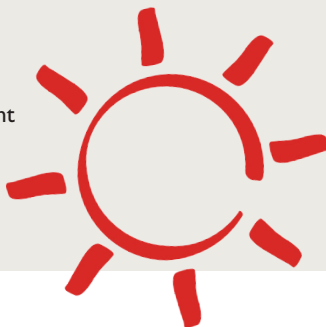
The more you sing with your child, the more they're able to predict sounds and words and join in. Songs and sound games are great activities for early literacy. They make connections between sounds and words as well as build their vocabulary in a fun and interactive way.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Encourage your child's independence by asking them questions instead of telling them what to do. If you're getting ready to leave the house, instead of telling them to put shoes on, try saying something like, "I see your socks are on. What comes next?" Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

Asking questions encourages them to think before acting instead of just responding automatically. This ability takes focus and self-control: your child must stop what they might want to do so they can reach a goal, even something as simple as putting on shoes!



SINGING TIME, CALMING TIME

As you're putting your child to bed, rock them gently and sing softly to them. Pay attention to how they tell you they want more singing. Do they turn their head toward you? Smile? Move? What do they do to say "enough"? Cry? Turn away? Take note of how to respond to their cues now and in the future! Suggested age: 0-1 year.

Brainy Background

Singing to your child before bedtime is like a calming conversation using music. You sing, they respond, you respond. They're learning how it feels to calm themselves, which is an important life lesson.

THE POWER OF POINTING

When your child points at something, talk back and forth about what they notice like, "You see the big truck!" Then you can take a turn to point something out to them and say what you see. Do they turn to look at it? Do they point or name the object? Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

Your child learns to communicate when you respond to their movements and sounds and encourage them to reply. You support their desire to learn more about the world and motivate them to continue to be curious and explore. These are essential qualities for learning.

NO WORDS

Are you teaching your child to use words to express their feelings? As you're out and about, ask them to notice animals, which don't use words, and see how they communicate what they want. Does the dog bark or stare at you? Ask them what they think the dog is trying to say. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

You can help your child learn to communicate with words and in other ways by noticing how animals communicate when they have No Words. Use what they notice to ask questions and help them think like a scientist, applying what they observe to their own life.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Musical chairs! This fun family game can be played so everyone can have a turn. Set up chairs (1 less chair than there are people). Play some music and then stop. Everyone must find a chair. Last person standing gets to pick the next song! If your child can't move around to select a chair, let them pick the songs!

Trace it. Can you take small wood blocks or other small items from around the house and trace them? Talk about the shapes as you trace.

Tuesday

Letter walk. Go for a walk and look for things that begin with different letters of the alphabet. If your child does not know letters yet, point out things that start with 1 letter.

Sink and float! Using small containers and a bucket of water (or in the bathtub), test out how much water it takes to sink items. Which ones float? Ask your child, "Why do you think they sink/float?"

Wednesday

Wait for me... You can prepare your child when they need to wait for something by showing them 3 fingers and saying, "In 3 minutes we can go outside." While they may not understand the time, practicing waiting is important.

Sing it! Make a microphone out of tin foil and a paper towel tube. Have your child sing out their favorite songs! Take turns!

Thursday

Funny feelings. Did you know you can feel more than 1 feeling at a time? What feelings can your child identify? If they can't say the names of feelings start labeling yours to model it.

Ice melt. Make ice cubes big and small. Using a larger plastic container, fill with water and freeze. Take the big and small ice outside to see which one melts faster. Can you guess? Why do you think the smaller one melts faster?

Friday

Bug list. As the weather warms up, different bugs and critters start to come out. What do you notice? Can you make a list of all the different insects you see? Draw them!

Memory match! Practicing remembering where things are helps kids focus. You can use a memory game or just a deck of cards. Take out pairs of numbers. Turn the cards upside down. See if your child can find the matching pairs. Use as many or as few cards your child can process. Start with 4, and increase by pairs as they get better at matching!

MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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RHYME TIME

Pick a word, like cake, and take turns saying words that rhyme with it. Keep going until you run out of words that rhyme, and then let your child pick a word to play with. See if you can come up with silly ones to keep it fun like slinky, pinky, stinky. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Rhyming or word guessing games, like this one, help your child detect difference in sounds. This will help with reading and writing later on.

STOP AND GO

While at the park, play a game of Stop and Go with your child. When you say "go" you both run, dance and jump around. Then, when you say "stop" everybody freezes. After a few rounds, let them be the one to shout the commands. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Playing Stop and Go helps your child focus, remember the rules, and not go on autopilot – important skills for success in school and in life.

LOVE CONNECTIONS

Take turns talking to your child about love connections. "I love you as much as a bee loves flowers." "I love you as much as ants love sugar." "I love you as much as a car loves gas." Ask them to come up with one. Keep going back and forth. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

When your child is challenged to find connections and make comparisons, they're learning new ways to sort and categorize information. These skills are important in math, reading and science. You're also promoting creativity and a sense of humor.



WOULD YOU RATHER?

Ask your child questions like, "Would you rather be a bird or a fish? Why?" Have them give you a few reasons from real-life experience like, "I love the water, so I want to be a fish!" Then you take a turn answering their questions! Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Asking your child questions helps develop their reasoning skills – especially when you ask questions that go beyond simple "yes" or "no" answers.

FACE OFF

Make a face that expresses a feeling and ask your child to make a face that expresses the opposite feeling. If you make a happy face, they should make a sad face. Talk about when they remember people making these faces. Then take a selfie together with your goofiest faces! Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

This game helps your child learn empathy, by practicing to understand the emotions of others, and express their own feelings. It's an important skill that we use every day as adults.

ACTING OUT

When your child does something they should NOT do, tell them why they should not have done it. Then ask them to draw a picture of what happened on a piece of paper. On the other side of the paper, have them draw what they could have done in a better way. Talk about why this new idea would be a better choice. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Using this strategy changes your approach from "dealing with misbehavior" to "promoting learning skills." When your child comes up with new solutions, they're learning not to go on autopilot and instead think of more effective ways to deal with problems.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER: SELF-CARE IS VITAL

Self-care is vital. We will continuously experience ups and downs in our own emotions and feelings, regardless of the age of our children and whether those emotions or feelings were caused by them! All of those fluctuations are normal, and we can tackle some ways to improve our wellbeing. One vital way is to practice self-care, as it helps you to regain a sense of control and calm and to lower stress. Self-care is not a luxury (although some forms of self-care can be, and that's okay occasionally!). Rather, self-care are techniques you do every day to care for your body, mind and spirit. Whether it's for 5 minutes or for 5 hours, it is to be done for you only! Pick one means of self-care, such as alone time, walking, a hot bath, prayer, dancing with friends... the list is long and is decided by you, keeping in mind what is healthy, constructive, and harmless. After you have chosen one, set yourself a goal to partake in it daily this week.

Since May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, we are spotlighting [Mental Health America](#), an organization with resources on [how to stay mentally healthy](#), [online screening tools](#), and also [how to find help](#) for those in need of mental health care. Seek out whatever resources and help you may need – no shame, no stigma. **Remember, we're all in this together!**

FAMILY

Relaxation fun time! Choose an activity that will allow everyone to relax, play and laugh! It could be playing with your pets, sitting outside in the sunshine, playing or listening to music, dancing, eating fun snacks together, going to a waterfront, playing a sport together... the list goes on! Enjoy each other's company, and again, remember to laugh!