

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Learning to imitate! Play Follow the Leader using simple actions like tapping the table, clapping your hands or putting on your hat. Describe what you are doing. Does your baby follow along? Let them have a turn as leader.

Toddlers love it, too! Sprinkle old Follow the Leader actions with new ones your toddler hasn't mastered. Try: clap, crawl, climb a ladder, hop, gallop, jump, fly like a bird, flap your arms like a chicken, blow in the breeze.

Tuesday

Breezy reading. There's nothing like reading a story outside with the breeze on your face. Spread a blanket under a shady tree and share a few of your baby or toddler's favorite books. Choose books that take place in nature, so you can point out the trees and grass in the story as well as the world around you. Listen carefully for chirping birds, rustling leaves, touch the scratchy grass and the hard rocks, smell flowers – are they fragrant or stinky?

Wednesday

Texture time. Put an object with an interesting texture – a fluffy pompom, sandpaper, foil – into a box. Say “peek-a-boo” as you slowly open the box and let your baby grab what's inside. Name and describe how the item feels and looks. Try with several items to see which one they favor. Let your baby try.

Toddlers love it, too! Play a version of this game with toddlers using several familiar items. Name, then place items in the box. Without looking, ask your child to find the object you name by using touch.

Thursday

Grab and describe. Place attention-grabbing objects – crushed ice, a baby washcloth, cotton ball, cheerios – in each cup of a muffin tin. As your little one retrieves and explores each item, name and describe their choice. This activity helps build skills your child needs for writing. As your child grows, offer tongs. Coordinating opening and shutting them to pick up an object encourages your child to try new ways to achieve a goal and paves the way for using scissors.

Friday

Tube tunneling. Hold a paper towel tube or tape it to the leg of a table for your child to drop balls, blocks, or other objects through into a box or basket. Does this keep your baby's attention? Which items fit through the hole? Which are too big? Use this game as a chance to talk about top/bottom, up/down, in/out/through, falling/catching, and big/little with babies and toddlers.



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



BAT IT

Hold a small safe toy over your child's head as they lie on their back wearing their fresh diaper. Make a soft noise and jiggle the toy. Do they bat at it with their hands? Try to kick it? Answer their actions with another sound and gentle jiggle. Suggested age: 0-1 year.

Brainy Background

As you play this fun game with your child, they're learning to pay attention to pursue a goal: hitting the toy with their hands or feet. It's amazing to think a baby so young is already developing thinking skills they will use the rest of their life.

BATHTIME STORIES

When your child is in the bath, make up a story about a child just like them who takes a bath, too. You can say things like, "First, they washed their hair" while you wash their hair, or "Then they splashed in the water," and see if they splash too. Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

When you make up stories, you're introducing your child to creative ways of thinking while sharing lots of new words with them. They're learning focus and self-control as they listen closely, and making connections when they move their body to your words.

TISSUE TALK

While getting dressed this morning, give your child a tissue to carry in their pocket. Talk to them about what tissues are used for as you each pretend to blow your nose. Make funny sounds. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

When you ask your child what tissues can be used for, you're helping them think about how things can help us achieve a goal – like keeping our noses clean. Did you ever imagine that a tissue in the pocket could promote thinking skills of making a plan and reaching a goal?



A CHANGING CONVERSATION

When you're changing your child, make a funny sound. How do they respond? By smiling? Kicking their legs? Making a sound? Try a new sound and see what they do. Keep adding new ones to the mix. Suggested age: 0-1 year.

Brainy Background

Back and forth conversations can happen even without words. You're teaching your child about how conversations work. First one person speaks, then the other. This is an early and important lesson about the pleasure and skill of communicating – a skill that's important in school and in life.

BYE-BYE BUBBLES

While cleaning up, give your child a soapy sponge and a large container with a little water so they can help wash safe kitchen items. Scrub up lots of bubbles together. When you're ready say, "Bye-bye bubbles!" and show them how to rinse the bubbles away. Encourage them to try it. Suggested age: 1-2 years.

Brainy Background

You're helping your child make connections between cause and effect as they explore the water and bubbles. This kind of experimenting will help them with learning math and science later on. When you include them in daily chores, you help them feel confident and independent.

BIG FOOT, LITTLE FOOT

When you're doing laundry, have your child help with simple sock matching. As you do, talk about who has big feet and little feet in your family. Have a conversation about which socks go together and why. Are they the same color, pattern, or size? Help them hold the socks next to their feet, then your feet, and talk about the difference. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

Grouping objects into categories (figuring out what's the same and what's different) and having a back and forth conversation about them helps your child to understand the world around them.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL

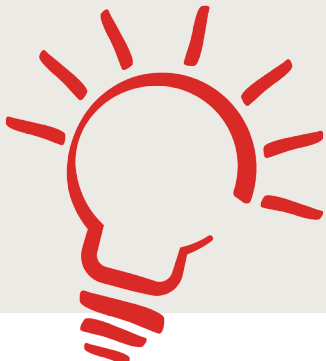


Monday

Cotton swab paint.

Using a cotton swab, paint (or use water if you don't have paint) over letters and numbers. Talk about each one!

Sink it! Leftover plastic eggs from spring? Can you add small items into them and place them in water? What will it take to sink them? Can you guess or estimate which ones will sink first?



Tuesday

Discovery time.

Using 2 empty toilet paper rolls, glue or tie together to make binoculars. Use outside to find rock patterns.

Tag it! Try to find something and tag it. For example, "Find and tag something blue." Or "Find and tag something that starts with the letter S." Give your child 1 minute to find as many items as they can. If your child can't yet find these items, do it together or place the items in front of them so they can reach!

Wednesday

Float it! When near water (or in the bath), can you guess which things will float? Why will they float? What might make it sink?

Animal moves. Move like a snake (wiggle on belly on the floor). Move like a bear (walk on all fours). Move like a frog (get down and hop). Move like an elephant (with heavy stomping). Move like a penguin (waddle with ankles close together and arms pinned to sides). What other animals can you do?

Thursday

Shape find! Draw many different shapes for your child. Ask them to color in the triangles, the circles, diamonds, etc.

Sweet and sour. When cooking, talk about opposites. Taste the sweet vs. sour, crunchy vs. soft, wet vs. dry, hot vs. cold and any other opposites you can think of!

Friday

Ask me! While reading with your child, ask what, where, when, why and how questions. You might say, "What's the name of this?" while pointing to an object in the book. Wh- questions teach children new vocabulary.

Family names. Practice writing the names of everyone in your family. If your child needs help, write in yellow or light pencil and have them trace the names.

MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES



DRUMMER BEATS

When you're doing the dishes, use one of the clean pots and a spoon to make a drum. Copy each other's sounds. Go back and forth taking turns, repeating the same sounds. Build on each other's beats. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Your child will be paying attention and using their memory to repeat the sounds you make. Memory and focus are important skills in learning.

SPOT THE COLOR

At breakfast, ask your child, "What color is your shirt today (or pants or dress)?" Then ask, "What other things are that color?" Add your ideas, too, and make it a back and forth naming game. See how many things you can name by the time you finish eating. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Playing the Spot the Color doesn't just teach your child colors. You're also giving them the chance to practice their growing ability to focus on an idea and a task with another person. The ability to "focus" is very important in life and in school.

NATURE PATTERNS

Have your child collect items like rocks and leaves. Arrange them in a pattern like one rock, two leaves, one rock, two leaves. Then mix them up and ask them to recreate your pattern. Can they remember the order? Have them take a turn making a simple pattern for you to remember. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Noticing and recreating patterns requires your child to use their focus, memory, and ability to make connections. These are all important skills for learning. Playing with patterns also gives them practice with math ideas like numbers, shapes, and comparing sizes.



SANDWICH SHAPES

Sandwiches can seem even better when they aren't square. As you make one for your child, ask, "How many pieces do you want?" Count them together. Talk about their shapes or arrange them on a plate in a new shape and ask what it looks like now. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Did you ever think making a sandwich could stretch your child's thinking skills? You're helping them learn the skill of making unusual connections, which is the basis of creativity!

SKIPPER

If you are near water (a pond, river or the sea), skip rocks in the water, talking back and forth about how differences in the shapes and sizes of the rocks affect how they skip. If you're near a big puddle, you can do a similar experiment with rocks, sticks, or leaves. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

This game helps your child learn to create science experiments – to focus on understanding the evidence (how the size and weight of the rock affects how the rock skips) and to make predictions based on that evidence. Your child is learning critical thinking skills.

FIND THE OPPOSITES

When you're waiting somewhere, ask your child to play Find the Opposites with you. You call out something big and they respond with the opposite, something small. Start with easy comparisons, like big and small, high and low, or near and far. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

When your child learns opposites and distances (near and far), they're learning concepts they'll use in math, science and reading. Remember, it's always important to play these games in a back and forth way because that is how your child learns best.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

This week's message is brought to you by the letter A, as in A for Anxiety. Whether we are expecting our first child or already taking care of four kids at home, we know that we have anxiety from time to time... maybe even often or all the time. Anxiety stems from the “unknown,” or when we are faced with uncertainty or feel we are not in control. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted how much is out of our control, and unknown even to experts. So what do we do? What we can do is accept that there are things we can change and things that we cannot. We can welcome uncertainty in our lives. When we do so, we can hold the reins of our anxiety. It's alright to have anxiety – it's a normal emotion like all our others.

We can encourage our children to normalize anxiety and to understand that sometimes we don't have the level of certainty or confidence that we expect. When we take more ownership of our anxiety, we can lessen the stress on our body, which is vital for expecting parents and even parents with older children. We don't have to wait to help ourselves. Kaitlin Soule from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America writes, “If we wait for things to be ‘better,’ or the perfect circumstance to work on our mental, emotional, physical or spiritual health, we just might miss the boat.” What is certain is that you can help yourself now, and you can seek support from others. **Remember, we are in this together!**

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month! This week we are highlighting the [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#) (ADAA). ADAA has resources for finding help, such as tele-mental help or [help from a therapist over the phone](#), screenings and information on self-care and stress relievers due to COVID-19.

FAMILY

Supportive comic relief. Need some support, but also comic relief? Consider listening to the podcast [Parent Trapped](#). It showcases real-world stories on juggling work, homeschooling children, and fun family activities.

Breathe, think, do. Play some of the breathing, mindfulness and de-stressing games with your little ones on the free app [Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame](#). Also, listen to [funny messages from Grover of Sesame Street](#) to help to adapt to life during COVID-19!