

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Math fun! Becoming good at math begins long before entering school. Babies can do simple math, such as noticing amounts and patterns. Toddlers love learning math concepts and playing math games, like comparing sizes and shapes. Clapping a pattern, such as one clap and 2 fast claps, and encouraging your child to copy it and repeat helps your child learn math concepts and boosts brain development as you play and talk together during everyday moments.

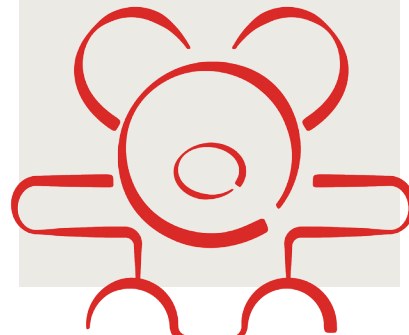
Tuesday

Counting in rhythm. Clap, tap, rock or kiss your baby in a steady rhythm while counting. For example, while dressing your baby, tap their tummy three times while counting aloud. Repeat. Have fun and make silly faces. This is a good way to teach about counting and patterns.

Counting in groups. Count your child's toes or pieces of fruit. Infants and toddlers learn through all of their senses, so hold objects up for your child to see and touch. "Look, there's one... two... three bananas. Three bananas!"

Wednesday

Texture book. Make a texture book for your baby by gluing squares of different kinds of fabric to index cards. Punch a hole in the corner of each card and tie together with yarn. Help your baby touch each texture and see how they respond. As you read the book together, you can name the color and texture of the fabric. Add more textures such as sandpaper, bubble wrap, tape, small pebbles, etc. for toddlers to explore.



Thursday

How big? Stretch your baby's arms above their head while saying, "How big is [name]? Sooo big!" Kiss your baby's tummy. How do they let you know they want to start or continue the game? Comparing sizes forms a base for math learning. For toddlers, pick a few toys or household objects in different sizes. Call out a size like "big" or "small" and ask your toddler to pick a toy of similar size. Reward your toddler with a big kiss or cuddles.

Friday

Let's math talk! What's math talk? Simply talking to your child about the everyday math they experience. It grows with your child. Here are some examples:

When you hide your face behind your hands and say, "One, two, three, peek-a-boo!" your baby learns to anticipate seeing your face because of counting.

When you walk down the street with your toddler and say, "Let's count the trees! I see one tree! Oh! I see another! That is two! Do you see another one?"

That's math talk.

MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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TOE TALES

As you sit with your child, hold their feet and touch each of their toes, making up a story about each one. The small one is a little piglet that goes “oink, oink!” The next one is his big brother, etc. Keep going and respond to what they do and say! Suggested age: 0-2 years.

Brainy Background

When your child hears words and feels your touch, they're making connections in their brain between words and actions. When you respond to what they do and say, it helps them to develop the foundation for talking and reading.

WHERE'S YOUR HAND?

Put one of your child's socks on one of their hands, asking “Where's your hand?” How do they respond? Wave their hand? Look at it? Next, put it on the other hand. Do they respond in the same way or do anything differently? Suggested age: 6-12 months.

Brainy Background

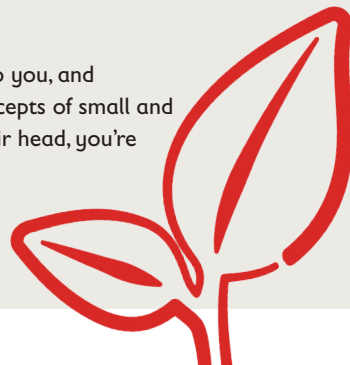
As your child finds the answer to “Where's your hand?” they're practicing attention. They're also working on controlling their hands and fingers. Focusing like this is an important skill in learning.

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

What is your child looking at? Follow their lead and chat about what they see. “Yes, those are my shoes. And that is my hat. Do you want to try on my shoes and hat? I'll help you!” Take turns! “Can you put my hat on my head? Now try your head. Look, it's too big!” Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

Your child is learning about which clothes belong to you, and which belong to them, and they're learning the concepts of small and big. When you laugh about putting your hat on their head, you're also promoting their sense of humor.



THREE HANDS

Hand your child safe objects or toys for their right hand and for their left hand. Then give them a third. How do they respond? Do they try to hold it with hands that are already full? Talk to them about what they might be thinking about holding objects.

Brainy Background

This simple game is a fun way to watch your child's thinking change over time. Even before they walk, they're starting to be able to come up with new strategies to help them solve problems.

SPOON PICK UP

When your child drops their spoon on the floor (and they will!), pick it up and give it back to them saying, “The spoon is falling down, down, down!” How long does it take until they drop it again? When they do, talk about falling down again. Suggested age: 6-12 months.

Brainy Background

Make sure you feel comfortable with what your child throws on the floor so it's not annoying. This game is the beginning of understanding cause (dropping the spoon) and effect (the spoon falling). You're helping them learn this by connecting words to their actions.

IMAGINARY FLOWERS

Does your child like to pretend? Tell them there is an imaginary flower growing on their nose. Describe what it looks like. Then pretend to grab it! Now say there is a flower on their ear and grab it, too. Have them describe and grab the flowers on you and enjoy the joke. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

Although pretending is lots of fun, it also teaches your child that one thing can stand for something else. These symbols are the basis of reading and writing, with words standing for objects and ideas. The game also develops children's creative thinking.

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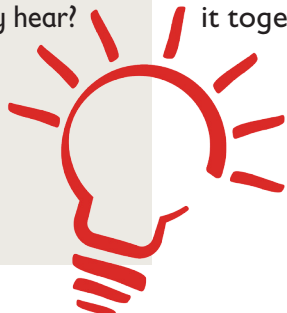
WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Pretend play! Young children love to pretend. Pretend play encourages imagination and creativity. During bath time, ask your child where they could go. On a boat? The sea? Rafting? What can they see?

Drawing music. Play different types of music. Give your child some paper and different colored markers or crayons. Start the music and ask them to draw what they are hearing. Can their crayon follow the sounds they hear?



Tuesday

Jumbo blocks. Make your own jumbo building blocks by using shoe boxes or other boxes of similar size and wrap them with wrapping paper or decorate with crayons and markers. Your child can build so many things with these big blocks!

Puzzle hunt! Do you have a puzzle your child likes? Mix it up by hiding the puzzle pieces around the house. First find the pieces, then put it together!

Wednesday

Hurry up! Young children do not yet have a strong concept of time. When you are in a hurry, they cannot understand your need to rush. Try making it a fun game. Can your child be fast like a cheetah and get dressed quickly?

Chain countdown! Do you have a fun event coming up? A family member's birthday or upcoming celebration? Make a paper chain and write the number on each link equal to the number of days until the event. Count down!

Thursday

All the feels. Draw simple faces to discuss emotions with your child. Emojis can be a great way to talk about how your child feels. Can they identify how they feel? Talk about how we all can feel more than one feeling at a time.

Leak-proof bag! Fill a large plastic bag with water and seal the top. Take a sharp pencil and poke all the way through the bag. Try to do it quickly to prevent leaking. How many pencils can you put through the bag? Can you do it without leaking any water?

Friday

Weigh it. Talk about weight of toys or objects. Which one is light or heavy? Which one do you think weighs the most? Do you have a scale at home you can weigh items and see exactly what things weigh?

Cotton swab art! Cotton swabs make great paint brushes! Can you paint using a cotton swab? If you don't have paint, get creative! Can you paint with pudding or shaving cream? Can you draw letters or numbers? Or faces to show emotions? Have fun!

MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES



SILLY SONG

Turn a familiar tune into a “Silly Song.” Change a word in a song your child knows well and see if they notice. Stretch the moment by asking why that doesn’t work. Can they take a turn to add a silly twist to the song? Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

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

MEMORY MOMENTS

Share your favorite family moment with your child. Say something like, “Remember the first time you tried the slide at the playground?” Talk about the memory and ask them how it felt and what they were thinking. You might be surprised at what they remember. Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

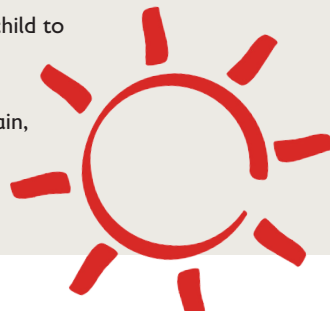
Making memories and creating stories helps your child learn to love language. Your child is practicing memory and attention skills as they share. It makes your special bond stronger, too!

DREAM STORY

At bedtime, ask your child: “What do you want to dream about tonight? Do you want to dream you’re going to a faraway place? Or doing something special?” Encourage them to tell you as many details as they can imagine. Then share a Dream Story of your own. Suggested age: 4-5 years

Brainy Background

Taking time to slow down and think encourages your child to use focus and control their behavior. Coming up with Dream Stories also encourages your child’s creative thinking. Bedtime routines not only help your child’s brain, they strengthen the bond you have together.



TRUCK MYSTERIES

When you’re out for a walk or drive, point out all the different trucks for your child. See if they can guess what’s inside each of them by the pictures and words on the outside of the truck.

Brainy Background

This kind of game helps your child think like a scientist, looking for clues in the pictures and words about what’s inside the truck. If they make a mistake, give them a better clue. “See the apple and a word that begins with an F – it’s a fruit.”

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: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

Creating a “Fill-in-the-Blank” story means your child is thinking and cannot go on autopilot. They have to shift their thinking to a new and changing story line. Thinking in flexible ways builds problem-solving skills.

CALM DOWN KIT

Use an empty shoebox or other container to make a “Calm Down Kit” with your child. Have your child put special items inside that help them feel secure and relaxed. When they are feeling upset, remind them to use their kit. They even can decorate the box to make it their own. Suggested age: 2½-5 years.

Brainy Background

It helps to make a “Calm Down Kit” before upset feelings happen. You’re helping your child plan for how to handle stress so they can take action in a difficult moment. This gives them more control. It also builds skills important to tackling challenges.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

Keep calm and carry on. Children are becoming more familiar with seeing people wearing masks in public places. They will have questions about what they see. It is important for caregivers and parents to talk to children about what they are observing in their world. You might start to talk about masks and why people are wearing them.

We also know that children are watching our every move and they are also looking to us to gauge their own emotional state and reactions. It is good for children when their caregivers and parents remain calm in stressful situation. Remember, they are hearing your words and seeing your actions. For children, their memory of this time will depend a lot on how we shape it. We do not want to seem scared, worried or frustrated. We want our children to know that we have things under control. Remember that when children are having feelings that they cannot describe, it is possible that their feelings will be very visible through their interactions and behavior. Watch closely, and remain reassuring.

If you are currently pregnant and have concerns about how COVID-19 may impact your pregnancy, read this [helpful blog](#) from Harvard Medical School.

We are all going to get through this, together.