

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Find it! Show your baby a favorite rattle or small toy. Cover it with a washcloth. Wait to see if they uncover it. If not, lift up the washcloth and show baby where to find it.

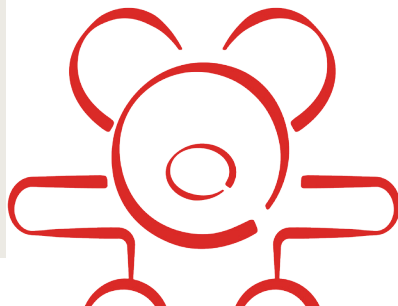
Digging for treasure.

For your toddler, fill a box with shredded paper and hide a small toy for them to find. Once it's found, let them hide it for you to find. (Other materials to try include Easter grass, sand or dry coffee grounds. Supervise carefully!) Games like these build your child's thinking and problem-solving skills.

Tuesday

Sticker surprise! During diaper changes, press a sticker on your cheek or your nose. Act as if it isn't there until your child touches your cheek or notices it. Act surprised and congratulate them for noticing the difference.

Comparing hands and feet. Have fun comparing your child's hands and feet with yours or their siblings. Show them how your hands are longer than theirs. Look for similarities and differences in terms of length, size, number of fingers/toes, etc.



Wednesday

It's not polite to point... Unless you're a baby or a toddler (or playing with one)! Point and identify what you see in the world around you. Get on your baby's level to point out what's at their eye level.

What's this? Walk around and point to different objects while naming them. Even if your child isn't showing signs of speaking or making many sounds yet, they are listening and observing as you speak. Point to things and ask, "What's this?" Wait a few moments, then answer. You'll be amazed one day when they answer you!

Thursday

Sticky ball. Roll up a wad of masking tape. See if your baby likes touching this "sticky ball" and moving it from one hand to another.

Crinkly bag. Give your baby a paper bag to crinkle and crunch between their hands. Do they like the sound it makes?

Clip and remove. Clip or place clothes pins around a can's rim for your toddler to remove.

These activities help develop and coordinate the small muscles in hands and fingers and build strength and coordination needed to grasp a pencil and write later on.

Friday

What happened today? At bedtime, talk about what your child did today – how they felt, what they saw, where they went, etc. This helps them remember their experiences and make sense of what happened.

The story of today. You can create simple photo books of everyday experiences and include pictures of the morning routine: eating breakfast, brushing teeth, putting on shoes. Babies will enjoy seeing pictures and hearing your story. With your prompts, toddlers can begin to "tell" you the story using the pictures and their memory.

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SHARING THE STORY

When you're reading with your child, let them explore it with all of their senses. Allow of them 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 bunny." Suggested age: 0-12 months.

Brainy Background

Children learn through touching, feeling and putting everything into their mouths. As you talk about their world and senses, you can help connect words, pictures and objects. Plus, you're not only sharing the story, you're sharing your joy of reading with them.

READ TO ME

Share a picture in a book, magazine or news article with your child. Be sure to point at what you're looking at and chat about it. For example, "Look at the blue shirt the lady is wearing – I have one, too!" Or, "This is a picture of diapers, like the ones you wear." Let them pick the next picture and talk about what you see together. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

Around age 1 or later, babies start to understand that pictures represent real things. As you connect pictures and real things – especially things they know – you help them understand symbols. These chats are a critical step in learning to read later.

LAUNDRY INS AND OUTS

Invite your child to help you gather dirty clothes. Put them IN the laundry basket, pull them OUT. Then put them IN the machine, and pull them OUT. Use the words IN and OUT to describe your actions and see how they learn these ideas. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

Children this age like putting things in and out of stuff. Use this interest to help you get a chore done! It also helps them learn the concepts of IN and OUT and organize their world.

FACE-TO-FACE

Make eye contact with your child, quickly look away, and then look back and smile. Do they smile back? Next, look at them, close your eyes and open them again, making a big surprised face. Change the speed of what you do and have fun connecting. Suggested age: 0-12 months.

Brainy Background

Making eye contact is an important part of learning to pay attention to and interact with others. If your child responds when you make a face, you can build on their response. As you do this, you're helping them learn the back and forth of communication and relationships.

SOUND SEARCHERS

Pay attention to the sounds you're hearing and talk about them with your child. "I hear a bird tweeting. Do you?" Try to find the bird. Do this with fire trucks or cars going "vroom!" Pay attention to what they are listening to and ask them, "What do you hear?" Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

Children learn through their senses and through games like "Sound Searchers." Using words about the sounds you're hearing helps your child begin to listen to the differences in sounds and the words that describe them.

ANIMAL GAME

Here is a fun guessing game while waiting. Start with, "I'm thinking of an animal." Then give your child clues to help guess what animal it is. For example, "I'm thinking of an animal who lives in our house and is black." Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

Playing games like this help develop what scientists call "working memory." They are using working memory to remember names and details. It also turns waiting-time into a fun time for learning!

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Hide and seek! Play hide and seek and practice counting. Can you count to 10? 20? 30? How about backwards?

Bath themes. Help your child decide on a bath theme. Can you use kitchen tools, toy cars, plastic blocks, or other objects to make bath time more interesting and different? Think about all the ways you can guess what will happen with different objects.



Tuesday

Ask why. When reading with your child ask why they think a character might do what they did. Ask why they think what happened in the story did.

Ramp up! Make predictions and help your child think about the world around them. You can encourage hands-on science exploration at home or at the park. Use a playground slide as a ramp and explore the speed of different objects sliding down it. If you don't have access to a slide, use a sturdy board on some stairs.

Wednesday

Hop, skip and jump! Set up paper plates or pieces of paper or old newspaper around the house or outside and encourage your toddler to jump from one to the next. If you have different color plates or paper, call out what color they should jump to next! Now, try skipping or hopping.

Chore time. Can your child help you with simple chores like making the bed? Talk about where blankets and pillows go. Do they go under? Above? What goes on first/second/third/last? Thank your child for the help!

Thursday

Name that tune! Clap or tap out your child's favorite nursery rhyme or song. See if they can figure out what it is!

Beautiful butterflies. Take one paper towel sheet, pinch and then tape the center to make it look like a butterfly. Color with marker, then drop water on it to watch the colors spread! Name the colors as they are spreading. Can your toddler predict how far they will spread? What happens when the colors mix?

Friday

Kitchen music. Fill an assortment of glasses or jars with varying levels of water. Line them up in order from least to most full. Give your child a wooden spoon and have them experiment with the different sounds.

List it! Children love to imitate adults. Can you write a "to do" or a grocery list? How can your child do it with you? You can ask your child to list the items, they can pretend to write, they can trace words you write and/or they can scribble after your list. Can they draw a picture of a few items you need to buy or tasks to accomplish today?

MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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FOLLOW ME

Ask your child, "Can you do what I do?" Walk forward or backward, bend down or reach up high. Talk with them about what you're doing like, "Touch your toes and touch the sky!" Then give them a turn to lead. Change the game and see if they do the opposite of what you do. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

When your child follows your actions, they learn ideas like up and down by doing them with their body. When you change the game, you challenge them to use self-control to stay focused and not go on autopilot. These are important skills for learning now and in the future.

WAITING STRATEGIES

Waiting for a parent to finish a meeting or task can be hard. Help your child come up with strategies for waiting. Say something like, "Think of as many red things as you can." Or, "How many words can you come up with that starts with the letter G?" Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

When you help your child learn to manage feelings on their own, you support their ability to problem solve. They can also better control their behavior according to the situation. These skills are important for learning in school and life.

SAME LETTER SENTENCE

Start this game by choosing a letter. See if you and your child can think of a sentence that uses as many words as possible that begin with that letter. If you chose the letter M you might say, "My mother made meatballs." What other M words can you both come up with? Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Playing with letters and sounds is not just fun, it's also the building blocks of your child's language and reading skills. They're using what they already know, paying attention and thinking flexibly. These skills also help them to come up with new creative ideas.



TODAY'S FEELINGS

Ask your child to talk about their day using feeling words like happy, excited and sad. Try questions like, "Was there a time when you felt frustrated today?" Ask them to make faces that express these feelings. Share your day as well. Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

When you take time to talk about feelings with your child in fun ways every day, you make your relationship stronger. You're helping them connect feelings and actions, too. Once your child understands their emotions, they can better relate to others.

ACTING OUT

Every child sometimes does something they should NOT do. Use this time to talk to them about 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. Ask them 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 growing and learning. Coming up with new solutions helps your child learn ways to avoid going on autopilot. Instead they can think of better ways to deal with problems.

HAND LETTERS

While waiting, draw a letter using your fingertip on your child's open palm. Can they name it? Repeat the same letter until they can "read" it. Take turns back and forth, drawing and guessing hand letters. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Playing "Hand Letters" lets your child read and write using their sense of touch. Their body and mind are learning about letters in a new way.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

Encouraging words for everyone. Encouragement is the act of giving someone confidence, support and hope. We can encourage children at all stages in life, starting prenatally, and throughout their life. Encouraging words when a baby is growing in the womb familiarizes your baby with your loving voice. When your baby is born, encourage them to move and stretch during tummy time. When it is time for baby to grasp objects and move more, put a toy just out of their reach and encourage them to go get it. Talk and encourage them along the way: "I see you working hard to reach that little yellow star." There will be so many opportunities to encourage and cheer on your child as they grow.

As much as your child loves to hear your heartening words, you deserve encouragement, too. Positive self-talk and feeling good about yourself and your parenting are ways to give yourself some encouragement. You're doing an excellent job in a really difficult time.

We're all in this together!