

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Math talk. Build math talk into routines like diapering, meal and bath times, neighborhood walks, and play. These are ideal times to count, point out shapes and sizes, talk about patterns and describe how things are same and different. Some examples include:

“Moving that chair is hard. It’s heavy.”

“Your nap lasted a long time today!”

“Let’s count how many steps there are to the mailbox.”

“Daddy’s shirt has stripes—white, blue, white, blue, white, blue.”

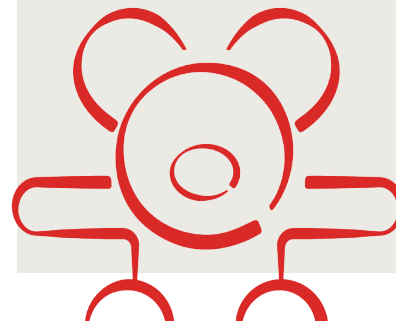
”Let’s clap to the beat of this song.”

Tuesday

Paper plate friend. At lunchtime, hang a paper plate on a wall. Help your child notice it. Draw eyes on the plate. Encourage your baby/toddler to talk about and point to their eyes, your eyes, and the eyes of other family members. Talk about the color of your eyes. Are they brown? Blue? Green? Practice opening and closing your eyes. At the next meal, add a nose. Talk about smells, and how to use your nose. Next, add a mouth. Continue adding features until you have a face and talk about how to use these features and how they are the same and different from others.

Wednesday

Freeze! Put on some music and dance with your little one. Every few minutes, switch the music off and say “Freeze!” Teach your child how to stand in place or stand holding your baby. Then play the music and start dancing again. Then, “Freeze!” Games like this teach listening skills, self-control and build balance and muscle coordination.



Thursday

Do you hear what I hear? Show your baby a bell and gently ring it. Wait until they focus on it, then slowly bring it behind your back or cover the bell with a cloth. Ask your young child, “Where did it go?” Take it out and ring it from a different location. Wait until your baby finds it again with their eyes.

Stroll through your neighborhood. Help your child hone in on sounds, such as a dump truck working or a bird chirping in a tree.

These activities enrich your child’s auditory awareness.

Friday

Compare and share. Offer your baby a rubbery jar opener to touch, pick up and handle. When they show they’re tired of it, offer a piece of lace or some soft fake fur. When they become disinterested, offer a new texture to explore. Which seems to be their favorite? Least favorite? How do they let you know?

Gather a basket of toys. Talk about shapes, colors, sizes and about how they are similar or different. This type of activity helps your child compare similar objects.

MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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EXERCISE BUDDY

Invite your child to help you exercise. Hold them while you do sit-ups, first fast and then slow. Talk about your speed with them. Do leg lifts and raise your leg above their head then back to the ground, talking about their size as you do. What else can you do? Suggested age: 12-18 months.

Brainy Background

Exercise and other physical play deepens your relationship with your child, building the trust and love between you. Your loving relationship is fuel for their brain.

FOOD RHYMES

During meal or snack time, create a rhyme or a rap about what your child is eating. "No slice, no dice, we eat rice!" or "You're no rookie, eating your cookie." They'll enjoy the sound of the words and if they respond, make rhymes from their words, too. Suggested Age: 12-18 months.

Brainy Background

When your child hears you rhyming, and when you go back and forth making up more rhymes, they're learning to listen to the sounds of words, which is critical to communicating and pre-reading skills. Making up rhymes can also make mealtimes more fun.

CHANGE-UP CHALLENGE

Is it hard for your child to change gears? Moving from one task to another can be a challenge. Work together to come up with a special routine. For example, each time you move from reading time to another task, you can give each other a kiss, a hug and a high five. Before you know it, they will be starting the change-up routine! Suggested age: 12 months - 3 years.

Brainy Background

This activity helps support your child in coming up with ways to manage their feelings. You're helping them learn to use self-control in a hard moment. This ability is essential for learning, making friends and problem solving.

SONG TRADITIONS

There are things we do every day. Sing the same songs at those moments to explain what you're doing with your child. Examples could be leaving a room, finishing eating, or washing hands. What else do you do daily that you could sing about? Suggested age: 0-2 years.

Brainy Background

Children love traditions. Singing about your shared daily moments adds to the comfort of a known routine. It also helps your child connect these moments and new words. They love learning language from your sing-song voice.

PEEKABOO MANY WAYS!

How many ways can you play "Peekaboo"? You can hide your eyes behind your hand, or use a hat, a napkin, or whatever is handy and then say "Peekaboo!" Help your child take a turn. What can they hide behind? Saying "I see you!" when one of you stops hiding should make you both laugh. Suggested age: 6 months - 2 years.

Brainy Background

This back-and-forth game builds the connection between you and your child. As they watch your face and movements, your child is learning to trust that things (and people!) go away and come back. This is an important part of building relationships and becoming independent.

TOUCH TALK

Ask your child to touch the clothes you're both wearing. Talk back and forth about how they feel. You could say, "We're both wearing shirts. Mine is smooth and yours is wrinkled." Take turns using as many words as you can to describe how your clothes feel. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

This type of conversation helps your child learn how to make connections. This is the idea that one thing (a word) can stand for other things (what they touch). You're also helping them learn new words and their meanings.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Slush time! Place 10 ice cubes and 1 tablespoon of salt in a quart-sized re-sealable bag. Place 1 cup of juice in a smaller sandwich-sized re-sealable bag, press out all the air and seal tightly. Place bag of juice in the bag of ice and seal. Shake for about 3-5 minutes or until juice turns to slush!

Lunch sort. Can you sort your food into categories? Put all the red things on your plate on one side and all the square items on the other.

Tuesday

Letter grab! Using small pieces of paper, write 1 letter on each piece. Tape the papers in a doorway so they hang down. Have your child jump to grab the letters you call out!

Shoe trace! Trace the shoes of family members in your house. Whose will be the biggest? Which one might be the smallest? Can you measure them? Decorate your family shoe drawings.

Wednesday

Watch me! Observe what your child is doing. By watching your child, it gives you a chance to understand their development and think about what you can teach them next! Follow their lead and mimic their activities.

Name game. Write out your child's name on a piece of paper. Use popsicle sticks to write one letter on each stick so they can spell their name in popsicle sticks!

Thursday

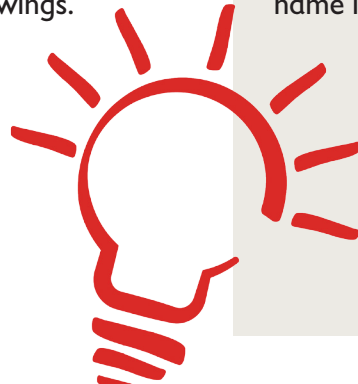
Pretend food. Extra craft materials? It makes for great pretend play. Yellow yarn makes great spaghetti, red yarn can turn into meatballs, blue paper can go into plastic cups to look like water.

Guess it! When preparing meals, have your child guess how much is left. Can they guess how many pickles are left in the jar? Can they estimate how many pieces of bread are in the bag?

Friday

Toss a toy! Toss soft toys or pillows into a laundry basket or box. Can your child throw higher? Farther? Guess how high or far it can go!

Paper pizza. Using 2 paper plates, cut one paper plate into 8 pizza slices. Then make the same amount of pizza slices on the other paper plate using a crayon/marker. Write a number on each slice on the paper plate that is not cut. On the paper plate that you cut into pieces, color 1 pepperoni, 2 pepperoni, etc. So you can match the number of pepperonis on each slice to the corresponding number on the plate.



MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES



SILLY SPEECH

Start by asking your child to choose a word. Then say it together in different ways. Use a high voice or a low voice; a loud voice or a soft voice; speak slowly or speak fast. Have fun and keep it going back and forth! Take it to the next level by having a conversation or telling a story together while you play “Silly Speech.” Suggested age: 2-4 years.

Brainy Background

Playing with word sounds is fun, but those sounds are also the building blocks of your child’s language skills. They’re also paying attention and thinking flexibly. These skills also help them come up with new, creative ideas.

SPOT THE COLOR

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 game. See how many things you can think of. Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

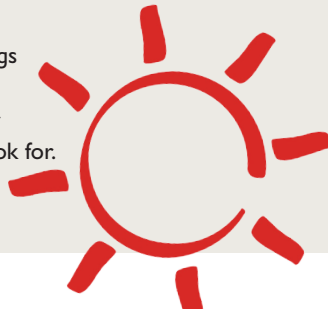
Playing the “Spot the Color” doesn’t just teach your child colors. You’re also giving them the chance to practice focusing on an idea and a task with another person. The ability to focus is very important in life and in school.

IN THE RIGHT ORDER

Have your child look for letters or numbers in a specific order on signs and license plates. You can say, “Can you find a one and a two next to each other?” or “Can you find an A and an E next to each other?” Take turns and see how you can find the most. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Your child must pay close attention to their surroundings to find letters or numbers and keep track of what they have seen and how many times. They’re also using their working memory to remember the correct order to look for.



IN THE REAL WORLD

When out and about, point out things you and your child have read about in books or seen in their favorite show. For example, “See that dog over there? Where have we seen a dog that looks like that?” or “When you wear your red coat it makes you look like a superhero! Are there any superheroes with a red cape like that?” Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

This game helps your child understand symbols because they can see how the things in books or on TV have representations of real life.

THE BIG GAME

Play “The Big Game” by naming something big. Then ask your child, “Can you name something that’s bigger?” Take turns and keep playing until you come up with the biggest, most gigantic, huge thing you can think of. Switch it up and name the smallest thing you can think of. Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

Playing “The Big Game” helps your child see connections between the size of things, then organize them according to size. These are thinking skills they’ll need in school and work.

WORD OF THE DAY

Come up with a word of the day, like “play.” As you and your child go through your day, point out moments or things you see that remind you of the word of the day. You might say, “Look, those dogs are playing!” Encourage them to find their own examples of the word of the day. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Your child must use their memory to remember the special word all day, and use focus and self-control to play the game. They’re also exposed to new words and learn about the different ways that words can be used. These are important parts of learning to read and write.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

Sweet dreams for development. “Sweet dreams” is a phrase a lot of parents and caregivers say to wish our children a good night’s sleep. Have you ever wondered what your children are dreaming about? Yes! Your baby dreams more now than they ever will again. While we don’t know exactly what they are dreaming about, we do know how important it is for babies to get the sleep they need. Sleep is a part of a child’s healthy development. Dreaming occurs during REM sleep and as we grow up, the time that we spend in REM sleep decreases. Newborns spend on average 40 to 70 percent of their sleep time in REM compared to only about 15 to 20 percent for adults. During REM sleep, all kinds of wonderful things are happening in the brain. Studies have shown that without enough REM, our learning and memory skills can be compromised. For brain development, neural connections kick into high-speed during REM sleep, promoting healthy development for the little dreamer. Studies have shown a link to REM sleep and the ability to cope. These adaptability and coping skills will certainly be important as your baby moves through so many different stages. Sweet dreams, little one – and to you, too. **Don’t forget, we’re all in this together!**