

# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



## Monday

### **Babies love faces.**

Go through pictures of family, friends or even a magazine. Point out the smiling faces with your baby. Talk about different expressions and emotions.

**What's it weigh?** Take a trip around the house comparing weights with your toddler. Pick up, or attempt to pick up, objects (a ball, shoes, a chair) and describe things as "light" or "heavy." Ask your child which is "heavy" and which is "light." You can also do this to compare sizes: "big" "little," "tiny," "huge," and amounts; "a little," "lots," "many," "few."

## Tuesday

### **What's that noise?**

Collect some objects that make distinct noises. Jingle, tap or shake each one for your baby. If they reach out to grasp one of them, let your baby hold and explore it with their hands. Games like this enhance a baby's thinking skills and small muscle development.

### **Let's make music!**

Toddlers love making music using percussion instruments like rattles, spoons, pots and pans, bells, cymbals and drums. Find fun tunes to play that have a rousing beat. Play along as well as encouraging independent play.

## Wednesday

### **Peek-a-boo pieces.**

Gather several different pieces of fabric in different textures, such as lace, gauzy polyester and felt. Hold the first piece over your face, and say, "Where am I?" Drop the fabric and say, "Here I am"! Offer your baby the chance to touch the fabric and discuss how it feels. Continue with the other fabric pieces.

### **Play hide and seek.**

Your child can hide behind the couch or under the table. Or you can hide objects around the room. This is a great activity for developing critical thinking skills.

## Thursday

### **Arctic sensory mat.**

Make the mat by filling a gallon-size Ziploc plastic bag with ice cubes and taping it to the floor. Expect your baby to drool on, slap and push on the bag, which is awesome for attention-span building, hand-eye coordinating, visual scanning, sensory exploration and Tummy Time!

**Ice bowling.** Fill a balloon with water and freeze for several days until it's solid. Remove the ice ball from the balloon. Then set up plastic bottles for pins and bowl away with your toddler!

## Friday

**Mystery box!** Place a variety of toys/objects of different shapes, textures and sizes inside an empty tissue box, baby wipes container or paper bag. Shake it to get your baby's attention. Encourage them to reach in and pull something out. Excitedly name the item they pull out. Repeat!

### **Monster mystery box!**

Challenge your toddler to close their eyes and reach into the "monster's mouth" (that same box from above, maybe decorated!) and find a mystery object by feel. Then they can "feed" the monster by refilling the box.

# MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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## WHO'S THAT BABY

Hold a mirror up to your child's face and ask, "Who's that baby?" Then say their name. Pull the mirror away and watch them. Do they smile? Wave their hands and feet? Do they reach out for the mirror? Comment on what they're telling you with their actions. Suggested age: 0-12 months.

### Brainy Background

This game is a fun way to help your child learn to focus and pay attention as they notice you and the mirror. They're also learning about how to communicate with others as you respond to their sounds and movements. This will help them learn to talk in the future.

## SOOTHING RHYMES

When your child seems fussy, try singing a rhyme or a song. Do they calm down when your voice is quiet, or do they respond to big facial expressions and an enthusiastic voice? Try different rhymes and songs to find their favorites. Suggested age: 0-12 months.

### Brainy Background

When you respond to your child's movements and sounds, you build a trusting relationship that supports future learning. You also teach them ways to deal with stress while building a love of language.

## BIG HUG, LITTLE HUG

When it's time for hug, ask your child if they want a big hug or a little hug and then do what they ask. Then you take a turn and say whether you want a big hug or a little hug. You can add other words, like a wiggly hug or a quiet hug. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

### Brainy Background

The sense of touch is calming and comforting to your child. These hugs not only make your relationship stronger, they also allow you to share new words and concepts with them like big and little.



## JUST YOU AND ME

During a quiet moment, sit or lay down near your child face-to-face and be silent for a few seconds. Watch them. Do they look at you? If they make sounds or smile, make sounds or smile back. There is so much you can say to each other with no words at all! Suggested age: 0-6 months.

### Brainy Background

Creating a safe and trusting relationship builds a foundation for your child to feel supported as they learn and grow. When you take the time to watch your baby and get to know their style of communicating, you deepen your connection.

## GO BABY GO!

When your child begins to crawl, pull up and eventually walk, celebrate their efforts with positive actions and words. Say things like: "You did it!" "You used your hands to reach your toy!" or "You're working so hard to move your body!" Make sure to clap and smile. Suggested age: 6-18 months.

### Brainy Background

When you praise your child's efforts to do things that are hard, you're showing them your support while encouraging them to take on challenges. Children who take on challenges do better in school and in life.

## DO IT YOURSELF DRESS UP

Ask your child to make choices about what they want to wear. Give options like, "Do you want to wear the white socks or the black socks?" Be silly and ask, "Will you wear them on your head? No!" Encourage them to try getting dressed on their own and praise how hard they're working. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

### Brainy Background

Your child feels supported in trying things that are challenges when you encourage them to have choices and control over decisions about what to wear. They're also using critical thinking skills when they decide what clothes go on their body.

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# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



## Monday

**Sink or float?** Water play is a perfect hands-on learning and sensory activity for young children on warm summer days. Gather a container that can hold water (whatever you have will do) and some objects from outside or around the house – like a cork, cap, coin, cotton ball, block, etc. Ask your child to make predictions, and discover together the science of sinking and floating.



## Tuesday

**Rockin' puzzle!** Choose rocks of a variety of sizes and shapes. Then outline each rock with pen on paper and place the rocks in a bowl. Take turns choosing a rock from the bowl and finding its matching outline with your child. This game gives your child the opportunity to practice using new vocabulary words, compare different sizes and shapes, strengthen fine motor skills, and appreciate nature in a new way!

## Wednesday

**Let's sort it out.** All you need are some squares of paper, a pen and three buckets or containers. Write a letter or number on each square and place them in one main bucket together. Separate the other two buckets – one for letters, one for numbers – and place them at the far corners of a room or outdoor space. Then take turns choosing a square from the main bucket. Do you have a letter or a number? Run to the right bucket, drop in the square and run back to get another square, until all of the squares are gone. How fast can you go?

## Thursday

**Fun with sticks.** Here's an easy, fun and free outdoor learning activity for preschoolers! Help your child collect sticks from the ground outside and form them into different shapes. Talk about the shapes you design. You can ask lots of math questions: How many sticks do you have? Which stick is longer? What is that shape? This activity helps your child learn shapes and practice counting – and you can play it almost anywhere!

## Friday

**Learning is fun!** Little learners can have fun with skill building, playing games like this:

- Hopscotch
- I-Spy
- Memory tray (put 8-10 items on a tray and let them see it for 20 seconds. Cover the tray and then ask what items were on it)
- Matching game (use playing cards)
- Cooking

Have fun and follow your child's lead. Their curiosity will amaze you!

# MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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## 1, 2, 3, CLEAN!

Involve your child in cleanup by saying something like: "We're going to do three things. Ready? One: Touch your head. Two: Spin around. Three: Jump up and down." Do these actions together. Then ask them to come up with three different things to do. See how long you can keep taking turns. Suggested age: 2-4 years.

### Brainy Background

Your child is using their memory to keep the order of things to do in mind and practicing self-control to stay on task. You're helping them learn tools for doing something they may not want to do, an ability they need for taking on life's challenges.

## STOPPING PATTERNS

Stomp on the ground three times and invite your child to do the same. Now change the pattern and stomp more quickly or add another stomp. Have them suggest a stomping pattern. You can pretend to be dinosaurs or elephants! Suggested age: 2-4 years.

### Brainy Background

While playing this game, your child is focusing and listening to remember the pattern. They're also practicing self-control to copy you. They need to think creatively to come up with their own patterns, as well as a fun story!

## SUPER SILLY HANDSHAKE

Invent a super silly handshake for you and your child. Take turns adding a step (like shaking twice). Repeat it until you both have it down. Now change one of the steps. How do they respond? Go back and forth between the new way and the old way. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

### Brainy Background

Creating and learning a super silly handshake helps your child remember and do what is needed to achieve a goal. This is a big step in learning self-control.



## LITTLE CHEF

Keep your child engaged in dinner prep. Take turns measuring, pouring and mixing. If they might spill, put the bowl in the sink so spilling is okay. Talk to them about what you're doing and the ingredients you're using. Encourage them to smell, touch (and taste!) as you go. Ask them what they notice. Suggested age: 2-4 years.

### Brainy Background

This activity gives your child the opportunity to hear new words, which builds their vocabulary. Measuring involves counting, which will help them with math in the future. Having a conversation about the experience helps them develop their communication skills.

## GETTING SLEEPY

At bedtime, invite your child to close their eyes. Then imagine relaxing, just one toe, then one whole foot, then one leg. Keep going through their entire body. Afterward, talk about how they feel. Give them a turn to lead you through relaxing. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

### Brainy Background

As your child focuses on relaxing, they're practicing skills like paying attention and self-control. You're also helping them learn strategies to relax in other situations.

## GUESS MY NUMBER

Think of a number and see if your child can guess it based on your clues. Say something like, "My number is bigger than four and smaller than six." Or "Is it the number of fingers on my hand." Make it harder by adding or taking away numbers. "My number is two more than the number three." Suggested age: 4-5 years.

### Brainy Background

Your child must think on their feet and use what they already know about numbers to play this game. Guessing games like this one ask your child to use their memory and focus to follow the clues and come up with the answer.

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CORONAVIRUS AND KIDS: RESOURCES FROM SAVE THE CHILDREN

# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



## PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

**Relationships build resiliency.** Parents and caregivers play a key role in the development and nurturing of resilience in children. The relationship between you and your baby begins before your baby is born. That closeness you feel for your baby is building their capacity to adapt and thrive. The relationships that your baby has with you and other supportive adults are essential building blocks they will need to face adversity. Science shows that the personal connections we form in our early years lead to better coping skills and better self-esteem as we grow.

Help your child to help others, have goals and move toward them, make sure to take care of you, and strive to be positive. Remember, children are taking their cues from us. **We're in this together.**