

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

What's that smell?

Give your baby an opportunity to use their sense of smell. Cut an orange and let them sniff. Try cinnamon or cloves and say, "Smell this. We smell with our nose." Point to your nose.

Tuesday

Build it! Offer your baby some small, easy-to-grasp blocks and demonstrate how to drop them into a bucket, plastic cup or bowl. Combining the block and the cup shows an early understanding about how things go together.

Wednesday

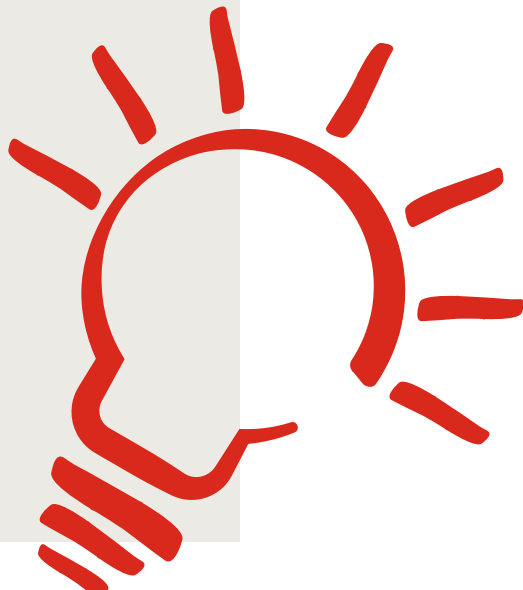
Touch it! Engage your baby and/or toddler in sensory play. Fill a gallon-size zipper bag with about 2 cups of items such as: oil/water/food coloring, baby oil/glitter, shampoo, crumpled paper balls, salt, shaving cream, sponges cut into fish shapes/water/food coloring, pasta, etc. Seal the bag with duct tape. Let your child squeeze and pat the bag while seated in the high chair or on the floor with you.

Thursday

Acting out. Put a pillow and blanket inside the laundry basket to make it a crib for a doll or stuffed animal. Offer props, such as a child-size cup, a toy bottle, a baby spoon, a washcloth and more, to encourage your toddler to act out daily routines.

Friday

Observe your world. After watching a squirrel running up and down a tree, ask your toddler, "Where do you think he is going?" "I wonder what he is doing?" While young toddlers may not have many questions to ask, as they grow, this is a great way to tap into their curiosity.



MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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BLOW, BABY, BLOW!

Gently blow on your child's face and hair. Ask them, "Do you feel the wind?" Notice if they seem to like the sensation. If so, blow with long and short breaths. Make your pauses in between long and short, too. How long can you and your baby play? Suggested age: 0-12 months.

Brainy Background

When you change how fast and slow you blow, your child feels different sensations, which is how they learn. You're also helping your baby learn to control their attention, an ability that develops focus and self-control.

BATHTIME ABCs

Is your child starting to babble? Use bath time as an opportunity to babble about the letter B. If they say, "ba," you can say, "Baby takes a bath with bubbles! Ba-ba-ba!" If they respond with more babbles, copy them right back! What other words can you make from their babbling sounds? Suggested age: 0-12 months.

Brainy Background

You're helping your child develop communication skills when you respond to their sounds with sounds of your own, building on their babbling to create words. They're also learning to engage in the back and forth conversations that are basic to relationships and learning.

WHERE IS IT?

As you play with your child, take a toy or safe object and hide it as they watch you. Ask them, "Where is it?" and let them find it. Then ask them if they can hide it and you find it. Create a cheer to use when each of you finds the toy and keep taking turns. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

When your child watches you hide their toy and then finds it, they're focusing and using their memory. When they hide the toy, they're imagining about how you might think so they can find a tricky hiding place. These skills are important in learning.



MIRROR DANCE

Put on a song both of you like and watch your child move. As they dance, copy what they're doing. When they stop, you dance around and let them watch you. See if you can create a back and forth dance, taking turns copying each other. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

As your child copies your dance, they're paying attention to your movements, using their short-term memory, and controlling their actions – all important for learning focus and self-control.

FUNNY FACES

Make a silly face and ask your child to make it, too. Then ask them to make a sillier one for you to copy. Then take turns back and forth and see who can be the silliest. Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

When you imitate the face that your child is making, you're helping them express what they're thinking and feeling. This happens even if they don't yet know how to say it in words. These conversations with faces begin to help them learn about others' point of view.

NEW TO YOU

When they are playing, help your child do things they haven't done before. Try out the swings or the slide at the playground, or even feel the different textures on the ground. As long as they're safe, let them try new things, with a helping hand if they need it. How do they respond? Celebrate what they say and do! Suggested age: 2-3 years.

Brainy Background

Giving your child the chance to do safe things by themselves helps them feel confident and learn to take on new challenges.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Finger play! Do you remember enjoying finger play songs like 5 Little Monkeys? Sharing these songs and finger play with your preschooler is a great way to bring math to life. When we use finger play, we help our children's mathematical understanding by connecting a quantity to its number name. This is a complex and abstract concept, but by using our fingers to show a quantity, we are helping children connect the number name to the quantity it represents.

Tuesday

Mathematizing. Warm weather seasons are a great time to take advantage of outdoor spaces. Let's highlight math by creating an obstacle course! From planning the course and the actions to describing the movement as you go, you can "mathematize" this fun activity. Use household items such as sheets, brooms, pots, tables and chairs and/or outdoor items such sticks, rocks and trees to create the course. Together you can design the shape of the course: will it be circular, straight, zig zag or something else?

Wednesday

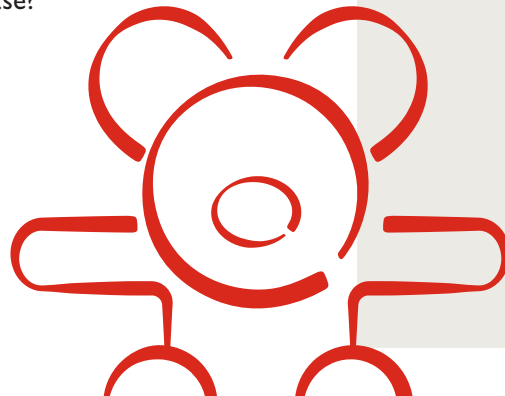
Let's puzzle! Puzzles are a great way for children to develop their spatial thinking and problem-solving skills. Making one from materials found around the house, keeps it fresh and new. Do It Yourself puzzles allow you to adapt and create them to address your child's personal skill level and age. For a child new to doing puzzles or a young child, you might make a puzzle with just 5 or 6 pieces, but for a more experienced child, you can make more pieces.

Thursday

Loose parts play. Loose parts are items that you can find around your home, inside or out! Things like empty toilet paper rolls, sticks, grasses, leaves, flowers, pinecones, shells, feathers, rocks, fabric, ribbons, blocks, measuring cups, cups, spoons, funnels, paint sample cards, buttons, and old yarn spools and more. They can all lead to a creative time spent with you and your child, letting them decide where the materials take them. Their imagination will run wild with ideas about how to use many of these objects in creative ways.

Friday

Dress up! Playing dress up is a fun and easy way to let your child be creative while you teach vocabulary skills. What are the different names for pants? They can be jeans, khakis, slacks and so on. Shirts are also called tops and blouses. You are also teaching the important skill of how to get dressed, how to use buttons, snaps and ties. Let your child pick out 4 or 5 items of your clothing to play a dress up game of whatever they want. Let them lead you into their imagination. Where are they going in these clothes and what will they do when they get there?



MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

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SNACK SENSES

Take turns with your child coming up with words that describe what they're eating. If they have a carrot ask, "What does it look like?" They might say, "orange," and you might say, "pointy." Keep the conversation going with questions like, "What does it feel, smell and taste like?" or "What does it sound like when you eat it?" Suggested age: 2-4 years.

Brainy Background

When you use lots of different words with your child, you help them build their vocabulary and connect words with what they mean. They're also practicing tuning out distractions to focus on one thing. These are important skills for learning to read.

SOUND PATTERN PLAY

Take turns with your child making sound patterns. For example, say, "Coo, coo, ca, coo." Ask them to repeat your sounds. Then ask them to come up with a new pattern, and you repeat it. See if you can make the patterns harder by going faster and adding more sounds. Suggested age: 2-4 years.

Brainy Background

Your child must use their focus, memory and self-control to pay attention, remember the pattern, and follow the rules of the game. Playing sound grams like these are a great way to build language skills with them in a fun way, too.

HOT POTATO

You and your child can play this game anywhere you are. Find a small item to pass back and forth and sing a song as you do. As the song ends, whoever has the object does something special or silly, like blink three times or jump up and down. Take turns. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Playing "Hot Potato" give your child practice in following rules and taking turns. It also gives them practice at self-control, a skill that helps them to stick with something long enough to meet their goals.

UNPACK YOUR BAGS

After shopping, invite your child to help take items out of the bags. Give them some small, safe items to put away, giving hints for where things go, like, "Are there other cans in the cupboard that look like this one?" or "An apple is a fruit. Where do we keep the other fruit?" Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

Grouping things and being able to see similarities and differences helps your child make connections, which is at the heart of learning. You're also building their memory in fun ways while encouraging them to help out!

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 and 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.

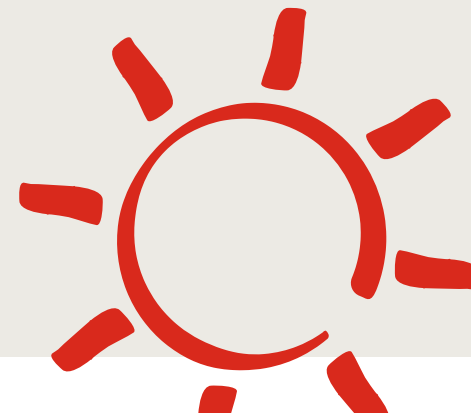
PLAYFUL DINNER PREP

Try to prepare dinner in a new way. Ask your child, "What if we only use one arm to make dinner tonight?" See what you can do easily and what's really hard. Share ideas back and forth about how you manage with only one arm. Then try, "What if you use your right arm and I use my left arm?" What is easier together? Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

When you try to do things differently, you can't go on autopilot. The process of setting challenging goals and finding ways to achieve them promotes skills that are very important to learning.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

Making transitions. You may be coming to make a transition back to school, work or child care. Some parents and caregivers have had more time than usual together with their child, and this might make it hard to be apart when the time comes. Keep in mind there are different procedures for entering public spaces right now, so you may be dropping your child off differently, like walking them to the entrance, but not the classroom door. Remember during these times of sudden changes and transitions that children still need preparation for what comes next. If you are aware that a transition is coming, it will be important to remember to have these planning conversations with your child. Just like us, they need to know what is happening now, next and then after that. Keep it simple, positive and reassuring.

Children will model the behaviors they see. When you are faced with a challenge that requires a quick shift, accept the challenge and let your child see that you are flexible and calm. They will likely do the same the next time they are asked to accommodate.

Remember, we're in this together.