

# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



## Monday

### **Crinkles and crackles.**

Wrap a ball of waxed paper in a scarf. See if your baby reaches, grasps or crinkles it. Watch to see if they are interested or surprised by the sounds. Talk about the experience: “Wow! It crinkles and crackles. What’s inside?” Games like this encourage reaching, grasping and language development.

**What’s next?** Toddlers enjoy singing songs and having you read books with rhyming words. See if your toddler knows the next word in a familiar song by pausing before you sing or say it.

## Tuesday

**Where’s baby?** Hold your baby in front of a mirror. Talk about and point to different body parts — eyes, nose, mouth, arms, etc. Step away and ask, “Where did baby go?” Move back in front of the mirror and say, “There’s baby!”

**Music moves!** Play music and encourage your toddler to dance and move however they like. Instruct them to stop when the music ends. This kind of activity encourages listening and self-regulation skills as they practice stopping and starting again.

## Wednesday

**Hi! Bye!** Babies love peek-a-boo! When you pop out from behind a towel, say, “Hi!” When you’re about to disappear, wave and say, “Bye!” When you put words to actions, your baby will begin to understand their meaning.

**Treasure basket.** Give your toddler a small basket and take a walk around the neighborhood. See if they want to pick up “treasures” to put in their basket. This activity builds gross motor and fine motor skills as children walk, squat and pick up their discoveries.

## Thursday

**Copypat!** Play copypat with your baby. Stick out your tongue, and pause so your baby can mimic you. Next, grin, make silly noises, clap, wave, shake your head, and cover your ears and eyes, pausing after each action and encouraging them to do the same. See what they do.

**Popcorn!** Have your child hold one side of a small blanket while you hold the other. Place light toys (popcorn) on it and shake it so they bounce (or pop!). Sing “POPCORN! POPCORN! POP, POP, POP!” while you shake. Once all the toys have “popped,” have your child put them back on the blanket to play again!

## Friday

**Drop blocks.** Show your baby how to drop blocks into a container. Combining the blocks and the container shows an early understanding of how things go together.

**Sponge jobs!** Give your toddler some soaking wet sponges to play with outside. Let them wash their tricycle, the mailbox, or even stamp wet sponge-shapes onto the sidewalk. Show how to squeeze the sponge to make water come out. “Important” jobs like these help toddlers feel like confident and helpful members of the family. As with all water activities, supervise carefully.

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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.

## **CLEANING JUNGLE**

Cleanup time can be a learning time if you sing about it with your child. "This is the way we clean the house, so early in the morning!" If they respond with sounds, use them in your song. "(Your child's name) says ba, ba, ba, so early in the morning." Suggested age: 0-12 months.

### **Brainy Background**

When you sing to your child, the part of their brain that processes sound lights up, helping them make sense of what they're hearing. It also stimulates the action part of their brain, which gets them ready to say words. Singing helps them listen to the sounds even more clearly, which helps them learn words in the future.

## **STOP AND START THE MUSIC**

Set your radio to a music station and have your child turn it off and on. Every time they turn it on, start to dance – or move around – and say "on." When they turn it off, stop moving and say "off." Soon they will probably say "off" and "on" with you. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

### **Brainy Background**

Learning new words and concepts (like "off" and "on") is much easier at this age if your child can make something happen (like turning music off and on). This helps add context to what these new words mean.

## **TUMMY DRUM**

When your child is on their back, gently pat their tummy. Sing a favorite song and tap along to the beat on your baby's tummy. Try patting fast and slow. Do they smile or kick? Keep going as long as they seem to be having fun. Suggested age: 0-12 months.

### **Brainy Background**

When you share different sounds and sensations with your child, you're introducing them to concepts of math, rhythm and music. Connecting with them by touching and talking helps them feel safe and taken care of, laying a strong foundation for learning and growth.

## **BYE-BYE BUBBLES!**

While cleaning up, give your child a soapy sponge and a large container with a little water so they can help wash safe kitchen items. Scrub up lots of bubbles together. When you're ready say, "Bye-bye bubbles!" and show them how to rinse the bubbles away. Encourage them to try it. Suggested age: 12 months-2 years.

### **Brainy Background**

You're helping your child think like a scientist as they explore the water and bubbles. This kind of play will help them with learning math and science later on. Plus, when you include them in daily chores, you help them feel confident and independent.

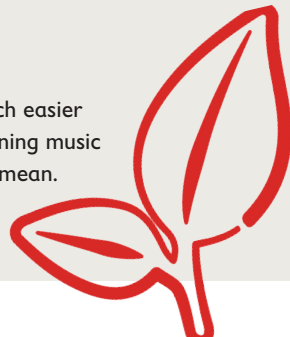
## **WORDS ALL AROUND**

Your child learns best from what you say and do, so read everything you can out loud. Read signs outside, recipes or ads in a paper or magazine. Be sure to point at what you're reading, too. Do they imitate any of your words or sounds? Do they point, too? Go back and forth with them, pointing and reading out loud.

### **Brainy Background**

Introducing your child to different things to read helps them make the earliest connections between written words and what they stand for. These kind of back and forth chats, even before having words, build their communication skills, too.

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# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



## Monday

**Mastering tasks.** All children need practice to strengthen their executive functioning skills. Executive functions are the processes in our brains that help us accomplish tasks from beginning to end. Here are some really fun games and activities that can sharpen those skills: Freeze dance or freeze tag, Simon Says, hiding toys and objects or Hide and Seek, coloring and drawing, matching and sorting games (pull out your canned goods and have them make a fruit pile and veggie pile).

## Tuesday

**Pretend journey.** Essential critical thinking skills begin to develop early in children. They can practice these skills with you with something as simple and fun as pretend play. This will give them a chance to become great thinkers and problem solvers. Go on a pretend journey with your child. Let them decide where to go, how to get there, and what supplies are needed. By presenting potential problems along the way like, “Oh no we forgot to get\_\_\_\_\_,” you will give your child a chance to think on their feet.

## Wednesday

**Make the most of meals!** Meal planning and cooking are two ways to help children learn important math and planning skills. Ask your child to come up with a menu for the day. They will need to help you think of the list of items needed, a grocery list! Then when cooking together, you can ask them to help with gathering the ingredients and measuring things. You can also present your child with items you already have on hand to see what kind of meal they could come up with. We bet you will be amazed by their creativity in the kitchen!

## Thursday

**Boxes rule!** If you're a family having items delivered to your house, save the boxes! There are so many cool things that you can do with boxes of all sizes. This is another great way for pretend play to take the stage. Your child can make a stuffed animal house, a ramp for their cars, a fort, or a quiet place! You can also use boxes for art, just let them draw and color the box. Painting boxes outside can be a lot of fun. The creative ideas are endless!



## Friday

**Taking a call – for two!** When you need to take a phone call about something important, and need your child to focus on a solo activity, try this. Have a pretend phone, notepad and crayon in a special place where you can grab it quickly for your child when the phone rings and it's a call you must answer. Let your child pretend to talk on the phone and take notes just like you! After the call, you can ask them who they were talking to and what they wrote down, which will help with their memory recall skills.

# MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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## **SORT AND CLEAN**

Encourage your child to sort objects during cleanup. Talk about what you're doing: "All of the small lids go in the little bowl and the big lids go in the big bowl." Then mix it up and ask them to put the small objects in the big bowl. You can also sort by shape and color. Suggested age: 18 months-4 years.

### **Brainy Background**

Being able to group things by size or color is an important skill. When you switch the rules of the game, you're helping them learn how to think flexibly, use self-control and not go on autopilot.

## **ANIMAL STOP AND GO**

When moving or dancing with your child, instead of using the words "stop" and "go," choose two animals. Encourage them to move when they hear the word "bird" and to stop when you say "dog." Go back and forth between the two animals, fast and slow. Then give them a turn to lead the game. Suggested age: 2-4 years.

### **Brainy Background**

Children learn skills like focus and self-control by moving, not by sitting still! Playing active games with your child helps them learn to pay attention, follow directions and respond to changing situations – skills they will need in school and in life.

## **NAME THAT FOOD**

Pick three food words and make a pattern, "banana, apple, pear." Repeat it three times together with your child. Then leave out the middle word and see if they can guess what it is? Try leaving out the first and the last word, too. Add another word when this gets easy. Suggested age: 4-5 years.

### **Brainy Background**

When your child is listening to words and making patterns with you, they're creating and then using a rule. Understanding and applying rules will help them learn math concepts. When they guess what comes next, they're using their working memory.



## **IMAGINARY FLOWER**

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. This game also develops children's creative thinking.

## **BEAT AND REPEAT**

Play "Beat and Repeat" anywhere. Create a rhythmic beat with two claps. Can your child copy it? Repeat until they get it. Have them create their own rhythm with two claps. Anything someone misses, try again. Then make it three beats. How many beats can you get to? Four? Five? Six? Suggested age: 3-5 years.

### **Brainy Background**

Your child develops self-control as they copy your patterns or create their own. If they make a mistake, all the better. They learn that mistakes are a necessary part of learning – a good lesson no matter how old you are!

## **KEEP ON CLAPPING**

Encourage your child to clap along to the rhythm of a familiar song. Guide them by clapping together. Then ask them to try and keep clapping while you clap to a different song. This may be as hard for you as it is for them! Suggested age: 4-5 years.

### **Brainy Background**

Keeping the beat of a song takes focus and memory. When you ask your child to continue to clap to the rhythm while you clap to a different rhythm, you're also helping them learn to pay attention and use self-control – both important learning skills.

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# WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



## PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

**Getting close and cozy!** Did you know that babies who are around 2 months of age can only see about 18 inches away? That is just a little over a foot in front of their face! Get close and cozy with your baby so that they can see all of your expressions clearly. Feeding time is a perfect chance to gaze into your little one's eyes. This is a great time for bonding between you and your baby. Feeding time can be a chance to talk to your little one, or tell a story. Literacy and a love for words starts early. So the next time you are holding your small package of joy take a long look and tell them the story of when the two of you met for the first time.

**Remember, we're in this together!**