

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2



Monday

Baby bell. Show your baby a bell and gently ring it. Sing, “Do you hear it? Do you hear it, baby dear, baby dear? Listen to the bell ring; Listen to the bell ring; Ding, dong, ding; Ding, dong, ding.” At the end of the song, hide it behind your back. Slowly bring it out to jingle and sing again.

Showing emotions. Make happy faces, sad faces, mad faces, and silly faces in front of a mirror. This is fun!

Tuesday

Make a tissue fly! With your baby laying on their back, wave a tissue above them to see. Tissues also can fly, float, and tickle parts of your baby’s body. See how your baby responds. If they fuss, then stop playing.

What’s that? Point to clothing, toys, body parts, objects or pictures and ask your toddler to name them. If they don’t respond, name it for them and encourage them to imitate the words.

Wednesday

Jingle, tap, shake. Gather several different objects that make distinct noises. Jingle, tap or shake each one. If your baby reaches out to grasp one, let them hold and explore it with their hands or mouth. Sensory games enhance tactile awareness and listening skills. Grasping objects encourages small muscle development.

Let’s dance! Dance with your toddler. Make a simple instrument out of a large plastic food tub (for a drum) or a small plastic container filled with beans or rice (for a shaker).

Thursday

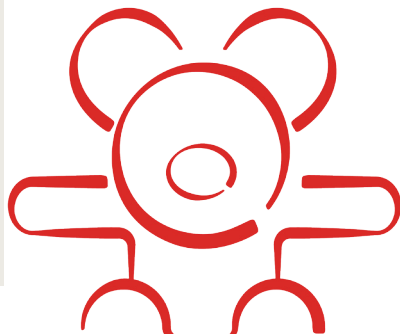
Here I am! Step back so your baby cannot see you. Gently call their name. Watch what they do. Do they stop moving for a moment? Do they try to move their head toward your voice? Pick them up. Say, “Here I am!”

Take an adventure. Make an outdoor “adventure path” or obstacle course for toddlers to follow and take turns moving like different animals. Hop like a bunny, waddle like a duck, gallop like a horse, plod like an elephant, and on and on!

Friday

So big! Ask: “How big is baby?” Then lift their arms and say, “Sooooo big!” Babies love this game and will eventually learn to lift their arms in response to your question.

Confidence boosters. Kids love to feel important and needed. Giving them their own official “jobs” will boost their confidence – and help strengthen their social and motor skills. Select age-appropriate jobs like table-wiping duty, helping sweep the floor, putting toys away, delivering clothes to rooms or lining up the family shoes.



MORE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO AGE 2

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DRESSING PLAY

Even if your child doesn't seem to understand, tell them everything you're doing as you get them ready in the morning. Start with how you picked their clothes and go from there. Make eye contact and respond back to the sounds they make. Suggested age: 0-12 months.

Brainy Background

Think of yourself as a sports announcer – one who responds back with sounds and faces. These back-and-forth conversations are helping them bond with you and begin to associate words with their experiences.

WATER WORKS

Hand-washing time? Tell your child, "This is the HOT water (point to the faucet); this is the COLD water. Together they make warm water! This is the soap. Soap and water make BUBBLES that clean your hands. Now, let's rinse off the bubbles. Can you help me dry my hands with this towel?" Suggested age: 9 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

You're helping your child learn a routine that will keep them healthy, and sharing the science of how things work (hot and cold make warm). If they're just learning to use words, you can prepare them for what's about to happen, by using a word they love, like, "We're going to wash our hands – BUBBLES."

FEED ME!

Encourage sharing and taking turns by asking your child to feed you, too. After they take a bite say, "My turn!" Open your mouth and see if they'll give you a bite. Say, "Thank you!" and then prompt them to take a turn. They will love having a turn at being in charge! Suggested age: 18 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

When you and your child take turns, you're modeling the back-and-forth of communication, which will help them as they learn to talk and read. They're also learning about relating to others in a fun way.



REAL LIFE MATCHUP

Match pictures to the real objects. After looking at a picture of an apple, for example, let your child touch and smell one. Describe what they're doing. "You're feeling the smooth red apple. Look, here it is in the picture!" Go back and forth and create a conversation. Suggested age: 0-12 months.

Brainy Background

Babies take in information through their senses. When you let them make connections between real objects and pictures by using their senses, you help them understand the world around them. You're also introducing them to new words in a fun way through a back-and-forth conversation.

SNACKTIME CHALLENGE

Drop a small snack inside an empty clear plastic bottle. Encourage your child to get the piece out of the bottle. Do they shake the bottle or put their fingers inside? Can they try in different ways? If they're struggling, ask, "What would happen if you turned it upside down?" Suggested age: 18 months-2 years.

Brainy Background

You're helping to build your child's critical thinking and problem-solving skills when you encourage them to test out ideas and come up with answers on their own. By talking with them about what they're doing, you help them to understand the world.

WINDOW WATCHING

Look out the window for big things and little things. Take turns with your child, saying, "I see something big!" And then name it. Do the same thing with something little. Ask them to go next and see how many things you can find together! Suggested age: 2½-3 years.

Brainy Background

When you're "Window Watching," your child is practicing paying attention, focusing on an idea and forming categories. These thinking skills are important for problem-solving.

WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRESCHOOL



Monday

Help me! Teach your child it is alright to ask for help. Tell your child, “If you need help, say, ‘Help please,’ and I’ll be there to help you.” Remember, until your child asks, try to stand back. The lesson is for your child to try on their own and understand when to seek help from someone else. It will be an important skill in Kindergarten and beyond.

Tuesday

Making tracks. Get your feet wet and make tracks on the sidewalk. Try taking big steps and then small steps. What are your favorite animals? Can you move like them and see if someone can guess what you are? Can you get your hands wet, too, and make animal prints on the sidewalk?

Wednesday

Wait for it... Practicing waiting for very short periods of time can help prepare children for Kindergarten. Build in short waiting periods, such as, “We will go outside in 1 minute.” Saying things like, “We will go outside later” can be confusing for young children. Later has no meaning to them. Help them learn they can wait for short periods of time.

Thursday

Daily schedule. Young children are not able to tell time, so having a routine helps them organize their day – which can reduce frustration for both you and your child. Don’t make it too hard, just write down several major things that will happen throughout the day, such as getting dressed, meal times, snack times, playing outside, etc. Then you are able to say, “We will have snack after we play outside.” Look at the schedule together. Even if your child can’t read, they will start to understand the organization.

Friday

Move it! Can you try to move for two minutes without stopping? What happens to your heart when you do this?

Think about this together with your child before you start. Can you guess what might happen? What might happen when you stop?



MORE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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CALM DOWN KIT

Use an empty shoebox or other container to make a “Calm Down Kit” with your child. Have your child put special items inside that help them feel secure and relaxed. When they are feeling upset, remind them to use their kit. They even can decorate the box to make it their own. Suggested age: 2½-5 years.

Brainy Background

It helps to make a “Calm Down Kit” before upset feelings happen. You’re helping your child plan for how to handle stress so they can take action in a difficult moment. This gives them more control. It also builds skills important to tackling challenges.

NAPKIN FOLDS

When you set the table for a meal, encourage your child to think of different ways to fold napkins or paper towels to make different shapes and sizes. You might say, “What shapes can you make?” “What does this shape look like?” “What would happen if you kept folding the corners down?” Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

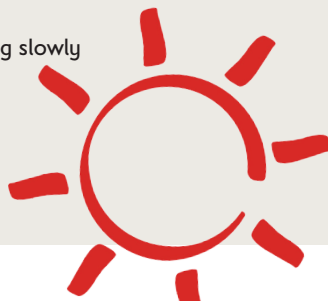
Your child is thinking about a familiar thing – a napkin – in new ways as they fold. Having a back-and-forth conversation about what they’re doing promotes curiosity. It also helps them connect shapes and what they look like. The conversation helps develop creativity and critical thinking, all skills they’ll need later in life.

SLOW MOTION

Challenge your child to move as slowly as possible to get somewhere, like to a nearby tree. How slowly can you both move? Try different ways to move, like by hopping or jumping. Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

This game helps your child think before they act. By moving slowly instead of quickly, they’re practicing focus, self-control and flexible thinking. These important skills are critical in life and learning.



LISTENING GAME

When you’re out with your child, talk about sounds. When you hear a sound, tell them what you hear and chat about where you think it is. “I hear a bird and I think it is in that tree.” Ask what they hear, and where they think the sound is coming from. Take turns being the leader. Suggested age: 3-4 years.

Brainy Background

When your child listens and names what they’re hearing, they’re paying attention and learning to connect words with sounds. This promotes language skills. By going back-and-forth together, you’re reinforcing their learning.

SEASONAL STROLL

Walking somewhere today? Talk to your child about the seasons. Is it cold or warm? What clues do you see that tell you what season it is? Snow? Flowers? Colorful leaves? Suggested age: 3-5 years.

Brainy Background

Games like these help your child to think like a scientist because they’re observing the world around them. Turn it into a conversation, building on what they say and observe.

PREPARE A PATTERN

Do you have a muffin tin or an empty egg carton? Look for things that can fit inside each hole, like pen caps. Make a pattern, like one red cap in a hole, then two blue caps in another, then another red cap. Then give the caps to your child. Can they match the pattern? Suggested age: 4-5 years.

Brainy Background

Making and re-creating patterns asks your child to focus and keep the pattern in mind, even when it isn’t there anymore. Being able to recognize patterns is an important skill for math, science, and language learning.

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WEEKLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PRENATAL TO PRESCHOOL



PARENT AND CAREGIVER CORNER

Let's take on active coping! Have you found yourself – and your children – falling into coping patterns during the pandemic? We all find ways to be able to shut out the stress and fears the world may bring, such as fear of becoming sick or fear of whether we'll have gainful employment. Yet there are ways to cope that are healthier than others, and we tend to be linked to one of two categories of coping: passive and active. What we want to strive for is making sure we fall into the active coping group! When we are active copers, we are more likely to have better mental health and wellness, too. Active coping, such as keeping consistent with a healthy hobby, taking interest in events and people around us, and finding positivity in moments of darkness, builds our resiliency, too. In a recent news article, Dr. Maryland Pao, from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Intramural Research Program, said, "Taking on new activities gives us internal control," and "being able to accomplish something makes people feel competent."

Taking on a small activity for yourself or with your children can support everyone's coping skills and mental health. No effort is too small when we are supporting our health and wellbeing. Let's be active copers, and take on an activity or engagement this week to support ourselves and our children. For other ways to help cope during the pandemic, see [NIMH's website](#). **Remember, we are in this together!**