

Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child now enjoys longer books and stories. She can help tell a story or make up silly stories of her own. She probably asks “why” often, not only about books but also about daily events. She can describe recent events with some detail. With a little help, she can place the events in order. She may be reading familiar signs in the neighborhood and may know what words and letters are. She knows her first and last name and probably recognizes her name in print.

Talking Book

Let your child cut out interesting pictures from a magazine or newspaper. Glue the pictures, one per page, in a notebook or on blank pages stapled together. Look through this picture book and ask your child to talk about the pictures: “Can you tell me about this picture? What colors do you see? Is that doggie happy or sad?” See if your child can tell you two or three things about each picture.

Say What You Can See

Riding the bus or in the car, look for things in a certain category. Find things with wheels, things that are tall, or things of different colors. Choose the category ahead of time or let your child pick. You might say, “Let’s see how many animals we see.” You and your child can point out live animals or animals on signs or billboards.

My Own Stories

Encourage your child to begin to make up stories of her own. Write them on a piece of paper as she tells them to you. She might like to draw or paint a picture to go along with the story. You can put these stories in a folder to make a book titled, “My Own Stories.”

Fill in the Blank

When reading familiar stories or singing familiar songs, leave a word out and pause to let your child fill in the word or even the sound: “Twinkle, twinkle...[little star].”

Do What I Do

Do a simple action, such as clapping your hands. Tell your child, “Do what I do.” Add a second motion such as patting your stomach. Have your child do it with you first, then by himself. Now add a third motion. See if your child can remember all three: clap, clap, pat, pat, wink, wink. Add more as long as your child can remember them and you both are having fun!

Rhyming Game

Try this little rhyming game. Say a word, such as *bake*. Ask your child to say a word that rhymes, such as *cake*. Now it’s your turn: say *rake*. Help your child if she can’t think of a word: “How about *take*?” When you run out of rhyming words, try another: “How about *cat*?” Sometimes you can put two words together: “Fat cat!” Have fun!

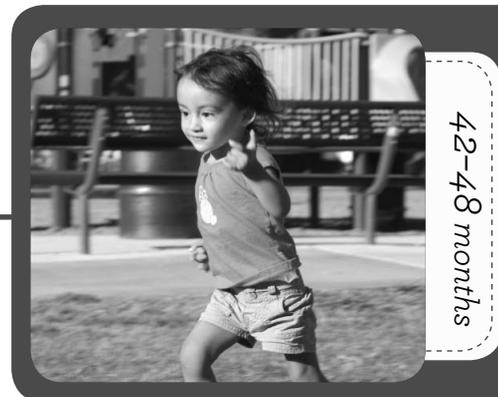
Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.

Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is now more coordinated and will run, climb, swing, and balance with more confidence. He can jump, dance, and balance on one foot for longer than 1 second. He can walk heel to toe and begin to do forward somersaults. He may have the skills to pump on a swing.

Mystery Journey

In the house, outside, or at the park, ask your child to follow you on a mystery journey. You might go over to the cooler, around the blanket, hop across the grass, walk backward, and slide down a slide. When you finish, let her take a turn leading you through a mystery journey.

Catch

This is a good age to begin playing catch. Use a soft, medium-size ball (about 8 inches) that won't hurt if your child does not catch it. Remind him to put his arms out in front of him. Toss the ball to him from a close distance, then move back so that he can practice catching from 5 or 6 feet away. Good catch!

Music Melt

Play music and move around with your child (or several children). When you turn off the music, everyone should stop moving. Encourage your child to freeze in many different positions (on one foot, bent over, on tip toe). Say, "Melt," so that everyone can move again.

Bag Toss

Make a beanbag out of a knotted sock or bag filled with dry rice, small peas, or small pebbles. Ask your child to stand behind a line and toss the "bag" into a small box. As her aim gets better, move the target back a little. She can try to toss it underhand or throw it overhand.

Jumping

When your child can jump and land with two feet at the same time, show him how to jump over something with a little height of about 3 inches. Start with a book or blocks. See if your child can still keep two feet together: "You jumped high!"

Toddler T-Ball

Use an empty round ice cream carton, bucket, or any other safe round container as the stand for a medium-size ball or balloon. Let your child swing a small plastic bat or a cardboard roll from paper towels or gift wrap. When she hits the ball, she can run home—right into your arms!

Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.

Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child has stronger finger muscles and is more skilled in drawing and writing. She can put puzzle pieces or small toys together, such as interlocking blocks, and can string beads. She's getting better at using scissors and may be able to cut on a line without help. She may even be able to trace over simple designs.



Magazine Cutting and Pasting

Give your child pages from an old magazine, catalog, or junk mail, and a pair of small safety scissors. Let him cut pictures and glue them to a piece of paper. A glue stick works better when your child is learning. You can ask him to find certain kinds of pictures like favorite foods, fruit, cars, clothing, or animals.

Where's the Button?

Provide a couple of clothing items with large buttons for your child. You can also let her help you fasten a button on your clothes. Pretend it is a hide-and-seek game. The button hides first, then peeks out, and then comes through the hole: "There you are, Mr. Button Man! I got you!"

Wrap a Present

Give your child a small box, wrapping paper (or a colorful page from the newspaper), and clear tape. Cut the paper to a size your child can manage. Ask him to wrap the "present" and make believe you're going to give it to a friend. Your child can pull the paper up and around, then tape it to the box. You may have to help a little with the taping: "Look at that. You wrapped it yourself!"

Twisting and Turning

Save empty jars and the caps of catsup, mustard, jelly, or salt. Wash and dry everything well. Let your child match the correct cap to the bottle and twist it into place. Collect other types and sizes to add to the collection!

Tool Fun

Let your child play with tools. Show her how to screw a large nut onto a bolt. Let her try to hammer a short nail into a piece of soft wood after you start it. Help fit a fat screwdriver head into a large screw, turn it, and watch it go into something soft like soft wood or a cardboard box. Tell your child what a great builder she is!

Tub Scrub

After your child's bath, ask him to help you clean the tub by scrubbing all the way around the tub. Give your child a separate sponge or cloth just for this job. (No other cleansers, please). As the water drains out, your child can "scrub" the part of the tub where the water was. When finished, squeeze the cloth or sponge really hard! "Good helper!"

Artist at Work

Make a creative space for your child. Set up an area with clear boundaries where your child can explore materials such as paper, crayons, markers, glue, scissors, yarn pieces, stickers, and tape. Encourage her to create her art piece any way she wants to. Ask her to write her name on it or to show you where to write her name. Find a place to display it for all to see. Now, it's time to clean up!

Dough Fun

Make up a batch of playdough: 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 1 teaspoon oil, 1 cup water. Squish it all up with clean hands. Give your child a flat cookie sheet or placemat with a bit of flour on it to keep dough from sticking. Your child will enjoy pinching, pounding, rolling, and squeezing the dough. Add Popsicle sticks or a cookie cutter for more fun! Store in a plastic container in the refrigerator, and let your child help clean up with a damp cloth.

Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety. Always supervise your child using tools.

Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is learning to count things and can count up to three or four items. He can probably count up to 10 from memory. His knowledge about the world is growing. He now understands simple opposites such as up and down, and whether things are the same or different. He understands patterns or degrees of change, such as "cool, warm, hot" or "loud, louder, loudest."

Remember What Happened When

Encourage your child to tell you about things that happened in the past. You can start with this phrase: "Remember what happened when...(you suggest the event)?" Follow up with questions. "What did you like the best? What happened next? And then what happened?"

Guess Who?

At any quiet time, play this little guessing game. Think of someone your child knows well. Give clues one at a time to see if your child can guess who you are describing: "She has curly hair." When your child guesses correctly, switch turns. You might even describe the goldfish!

Color Hunt

Have a scavenger hunt for colors. Say, "Can you find something blue to bring me?" When your child returns, give her another color. If she brings back the wrong color, say, "You brought me a green sock. Can you find a blue sock?" You can give her clues, such as a piece of blue paper to hold while she looks for something blue.

Where Does It Go?

Put a glove or sock on your head or somewhere it doesn't belong. Ask, "Where is my glove?" When your child points or says it's on your head, ask him where it really belongs: "On my hand? Really?" Have fun with this silly game. Try another object, such as a bar of soap in a cereal bowl.

What Do You Do When

Ask your child simple questions, such as "What do you do when you're really tired?" "What do you do when you get hungry?" or "What do you do when you're all wet?" See if your child can give you answers that make sense. Talk about it.

What Doesn't Belong?

Gather three things that are very similar or in the same category, such as three lemons. Add a fourth item that does not belong, such as a bar of soap. Ask your child which one doesn't belong. You can also gather three things from the bathroom (soap, shampoo, toilet paper) and add something else, such as a screwdriver: "What doesn't belong? Why?"

Make a Rhyme

Play a rhyme game. You can make up the first part: "I picked up my *book* and started to..." Encourage your child to fill in the blank with a word that rhymes, such as *look*. Ask your child to quiz you, too!

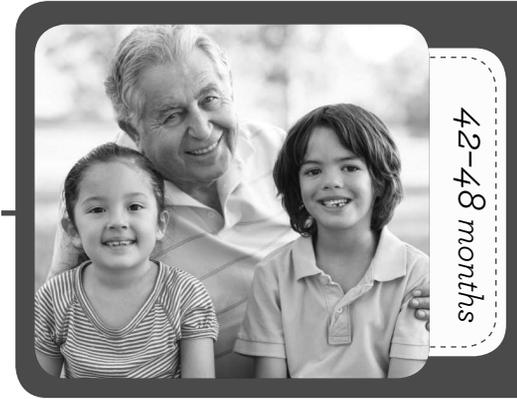
Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.

Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is better at taking turns and waiting. Although she plays with other children cooperatively, she still needs adult help from time to time to solve problems. Her feelings can be strong and may become easier to understand when you name them. She likes to select her own clothes and is more skilled at dressing herself.

Perfect Pouring

Give your child opportunities to pour at mealtimes. Give him a small pitcher or cup half filled with milk. Let him pour from the pitcher into his cup or bowl of cereal. Let him pour water, juice, or milk for himself and others at the table. Be patient, and have a paper towel ready just in case. Be sure to praise his success!

Dress-Up Party

Provide a variety of clothes to play with—nothing fancy, just oversized shirts, scarves, hats, skirts, shoes, or even loose fabric. Choose a theme, such as going to the beach or getting ready for a party. Have your child search for objects or props. Pick out your own outfit once your child has selected hers. Children love to imitate adults in their family and community. Encourage her to dress herself by fastening buttons, snaps, zippers, and so forth. Play along: “Are you going to a party?”

Playful Puppets

Puppets are great for pretend fun. Use store-bought puppets or make your own. Find or draw a picture of a person or animal, cut it out, and paste it on cardboard. Attach a Popsicle stick, paint-stirring stick, or chopstick for a handle. Draw a face on the bottom of a paper lunch bag and put your hand up into the folds. Move your fingers and make it “talk.” Let your child be one character and you can be another. Have conversations in pretend voices.

Special Helper

Tell your child he is your special helper. Let him help you wash the clothes, cook, feed pets, sweep, and wash dishes. He can help in some small way with almost everything. Be sure to allow extra time since young helpers may need it. This helping may become part of your child’s family chores. Be sure to give a lot of praise and keep it fun.

Choice Time

Offer choices to your child about her activities, including taking care of herself. You might offer her the choice to brush her teeth either before or after she puts on pajamas. You can also let her pick a snack from two options. It’s more fun and easier if she has some choice in how things happen.

Soothing a Playmate

When young children play together, often one child will get a bump or feel injured in some way. Show your child how to comfort a friend in distress with a gentle touch or a little hug. Teach your child some comfort words, such as, “Are you okay?” This empathy will be a valuable lesson in making and keeping friends.

Feeling Faces

Act out different feelings with your child. Be happy, sleepy, sad, silly, surprised, and frustrated! Show your child a deep frown, a giggle, or pretend to cry and have him guess what you are feeling. Now have your child try with you!

Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety. Always watch your child during mealtime.