

Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child's communication skills are growing. She is learning how to have conversations with people she knows. She can start conversations as well as respond to people's questions. She is learning different parts of speech and using more complex sentences. When describing something, she might say, "It was a very big brown dog." She may use silly language and laugh at her own jokes.

Animal Crossing

This game is for the whole family. Cut pictures of animals from a magazine. Turn the pictures face down. Have one person choose a picture. The other people ask yes-or-no questions to guess what the animal is: "Does the animal swim? Is it bigger than a cat?" After someone guesses correctly, another person chooses a picture and lets the others guess.

Bedtime Memories

At bedtime each night, have a soft talk with your child. Whisper to him, "What was your favorite thing that happened today?" Ask what else happened. Share your favorite event, too.

Reading Adventures

Read to your child every day. Read slowly and with interest, with expression and voices. Use a finger to follow the words. Stop reading at times. Encourage your child to talk about the pictures and the story. "Who is your favorite character? What happened in the middle of the story?" Make this a special together time!

Moonbeams

When the moon is visible, find a place to look at the moon and stars with your child. Explore your child's imagination: "What do you see? Can you connect the stars to make a picture? What do you think it is like on the moon? What would you do there? How would you feel about being so far away from Earth?"

Strike Up the Band

Have your child chant or sing a nursery rhyme and tap it out on a drum, the bottom of a pot, or a small box. Make this activity more challenging and interesting by adding new instruments such as bells, spoons, or shakers. Have some noisy fun with friends!

At the Office

Set up an office for your child with notebooks, a toy phone, an old keyboard, pencils and pens, a ruler, a calculator, and a calendar. Add envelopes, paper, and stickers. Encourage her to pretend to go to work, write letters, type messages, and make notes. Pretend with her. Call on the phone and ask questions: "When will the mail come today?"

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 continues to develop and refine his gross motor skills. He is much more stable and is learning how to balance on one foot or walk along a narrow beam. He is learning skills such as jumping, hopping on one foot, and skipping. He will enjoy activities such as throwing, catching, and kicking balls. He can ride a small bike with training wheels. Watch him closely because he may try some dangerous tricks.



54-60 months

The Stone and the River

Get a group of children together. The person who is "it" tries to tag other children. If a child is tagged, she must turn into a "stone" (not move). Another child may turn a stone player into a "river" by touching her. A river player can run around again. Whoever is frozen three times is the next "it." This is great for exercise!

Leaf Fun

Go outside with your child to play in the leaves in your yard or at a park. Try catching the leaves as they fall. Collect and sort leaves of different colors, sizes, and shapes. Rake leaves into small piles. Chase each other around the piles, jump in them, or try to leap over them.

Splash Game

On a hot day, have a sponge relay with large sponges and buckets of water. Divide children into two teams. Place two sets of two buckets at opposite ends of an open space. Fill one set with water. The children race to dip their sponge in the water, carry it to the empty bucket, and squeeze the water out. The first team to fill their bucket wins! You can also play catch with the wet sponges.

Ribbon Dance

Cut ribbon or streamers into 6-foot lengths. Show your child how to dance and make designs in the air. Try circles and loops, up and down movements, and figure eights. Try the movements with two ribbons, one in each hand. Move from place to place taking the ribbons with you. Put on music to make a "ribbon dance." Skip, run, and walk!

Animal Games

Turn pictures of animals face down, and take turns choosing an animal. Act out the animal you picked. Your child has to guess what animal you are. For a kangaroo, you must jump, jump, jump. For a cheetah, you will run. Act like a giraffe by walking on tiptoes and stretching really tall.

Crazy Catch Game

For this funny game of catch, gather a ball, a small pillow or cushion, a stuffed animal, a shoe, and a small box. From a distance of about 4 feet, toss each item to your child. See if she can catch each one. Move back 6 feet. What a good catcher!

Bottle Bowling

Collect six plastic bottles of similar size. Put a handful of peas or gravel in each one and cap it tightly. Arrange the bottles in a bowling game shape: three bottles in the back row, two bottles in the middle, and one bottle in the front. Show your child where to stand, about 4 feet back, and "bowl" with a soft medium-sized ball. Take as many turns as needed to knock them down: "Strike!"

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Fine Motor

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54-60 months

Your child is able to use her fingers with more control. Her finger movements are coordinated and faster. She may be able to write some or all of the letters of her name. She may begin to prefer using one hand over the other. Your child can cut shapes with scissors and is getting better at buttoning and tying her shoes.

Lacing Cards

Your child can use safety scissors to cut simple pictures from magazines and glue them onto cardboard. Punch several holes around the outside of the cardboard. Tie a shoestring or yarn through one of the holes. Make a firm tip with tape at the other end. Show your child how to sew, in and out, around the edge. He can try to sew two cards together.

Picture Perfect

Help your child make a picture frame for a favorite photo. Cut out two rectangles of stiff paper, a little larger than the picture. On one, cut a rectangle inside that's smaller than the picture border. Let your child decorate the smaller "frame" with stickers, glitter, shells, macaroni, or anything small and interesting. Glue the photo to the large solid rectangle. Place the decorated "frame" over the picture and glue the edges. Beautiful!

Bird Café

Find a medium pinecone or corncob. Let it dry. Have your child use a plastic knife to spread peanut butter on it. Roll it in bird seed, sunflower seeds, or crushed granola. Hang it on a string under a tree or outside a window. Watch the birds discover your wonderful gift to them. Count how many different types of birds come to the Bird Café!

Map It

Make a map of your neighborhood. Go for a walk and point out streets, buildings, parks, or other landmarks. Use paper and markers to make a map. You may need to help your child start her map. Begin by mapping your house or her room. Ask your child, "Where would we put your bed on the map? How about your toy box?"

Cutting Shapes

Draw a pattern or shape, such as a circle or a triangle, with a pencil on a piece of paper. Have your child use child-safe scissors to cut out the pattern. When he can follow the pattern, draw larger or more complex ones. Make fun shapes, such as a teddy bear or a train!

Make a Sculpture

Create a sculpture with your child. Use materials you find in your home and outside—plastic bottles, newspaper, twigs, jar lids, paper plates, Popsicle sticks, boxes, plastic containers, bits of ribbon, and fabric. Give your child masking tape, small wire, duct tape, and some glue for joining materials together. Put materials in a place where your child can "create" for a few days and where this wonderful sculpture can dry.

Fancy Bananas

When seated at a table, give your child a smooth ripe banana and a ballpoint pen. Show your child how to draw a face at one end. Draw some clothes with buttons and a belt. Have fun decorating the banana. Now peel it and eat!

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Problem Solving

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Your child can count to at least 15 from memory and can accurately count at least 10 objects. He is able to follow directions in a group activity and knows the rules at home and at school. He enjoys pretend play and may act out different roles with friends. Wild stories and exaggerations are common. He enjoys reading books and may have simple books memorized. He is starting to understand how things work in the world and is curious about why things are the way they are.

Pretzel Fun

Have fun making pretzel letters (or numbers). Wash your hands, then cut pizza dough into strips. Help your child form numbers or letters with the dough. Show her how to brush with a beaten egg, sprinkle with salt, and bake until golden brown. Tell your child the sounds that the letters make. Eat up an A, B, or C!

Fun Food Coloring

Let your child experiment with food coloring in his food. It only takes a small drop! Color scrambled eggs blue. Color a glass of milk red. Add a drop of green to a piece of apple or to a slice of bread before toasting it. Color mashed potatoes yellow. Ask your child for ideas!

How Long? How Many?

Count how long or how many times your child can do a new skill, such as standing on one foot or bouncing a ball. Celebrate doing a new skill for a little more time. Let her count while you try balancing a book on your head. Help your child practice new skills and counting.

Storytime Acting

Tell your child a story using different voices, body postures, facial expressions, or even hats to be different characters. Now it's your child's turn to tell a story. Encourage your little one to ham it up—and don't forget to be a good audience.

What's Missing?

Give your child time to look at a group of five or more different toys. Hide a single toy and ask, "Which toy is missing?" You may need to give clues at first. Once he guesses correctly, hide a different toy. Let him hide a toy for you. It's his turn to try to trick you!

Find the Treasure

Plan this activity ahead of time. Hide "treasure" (a favorite snack, a bag of crayons, some stickers) in a place your child can reach. Draw the place you want your child to search for each "treasure." Be sure to make the drawings simple and clear. Your child will have great fun with the treasure map. Celebrate when your child finds the treasure!

Notes:



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Personal-Social

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Your child is able to meet most of her personal needs. She may need practice or help on more difficult tasks, such as tying her shoes. She eats a variety of foods, has social dining skills, and dresses herself. She enjoys playing with other children and working together on projects. She is beginning to use her words to help solve conflicts with friends.

Going on a Date

Go on a “date” to lunch or a movie with your child. Before you go out, you can get ready. He can put on a special shirt, wash his hands and face, use the potty, and brush his teeth. Show him a mirror so he can see how great he looks. Now go have fun! Be extra polite. Say “please” and “thank you” throughout your date.

Fruit Salad

Make a fruit salad for lunch with any favorite fruits such as grapes, bananas, apples, and oranges. Your child will enjoy washing or peeling the fruit. She could help slice a banana with a plastic knife. Add yummy things to the salad, such as yogurt or sunflower seeds. Your child can practice using a spoon and fork to make and serve the fruit salad.

Pressed Flower Cards

Collect flowers from your yard, neighborhood, a park, or a roadside. Flowers that are small and delicate work best. Place the flowers between sheets of paper towels or newspaper, then lay them between heavy books. Give the flowers a few days to dry and flatten out. Glue them to a piece of paper to make notecards. Help your child write someone a special note.

911

Talk to your child about what to do if he gets lost or if there is an emergency. Teach your child his name, address, and telephone number. Your child can learn how to dial 911. Role-play using a pretend phone, but teach your child to use a real phone for a real emergency. It may help if he learns this information as a song. Make a card for your child that has his name, address, phone number, emergency contact, and a list of any allergies in case you cannot be reached. Give your child his own wallet to carry the card in his pocket or backpack.

I Can Dress Myself

Make sure your child has a little extra time in the morning to get dressed. Encourage her to try to button her shirt, snap her pants, or tie her shoes. She will need help and some time, but be patient. The more she practices, the sooner she will be able to get dressed all by herself.

You as Me, Me as You

You and your child can switch roles. He can pretend to help you get dressed or brush your hair. This pretend time could include a change of small jobs, clothes, behaviors, vocabulary, and other habits. Keep the activity positive and fun.

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