

Easy Ways for Families To Help Children Learn

Activities and Suggestions for Families to Enhance Learning for Children Preschool - Grade 6

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Learning for Children Preschool - Grade 6**

Table of Contents

An Important Letter to All Parents and Families2
A Simple Strategy for Success .....	.3
Helping Children View Themselves as Able Learners .....	.5
Show it Off! .....	.7
Why is Reading so Important .....	.8
Routines for Reading .....	.10
The Writing Connection .....	.12
Math and Science are Learning for Life .....	.15
At Home Activities to Help Children Learn:	
Preschool through Grade Two .....	.17-27
Reading/Cognitive .....	.17
Mathematics .....	.25
Science .....	.27
At-Home Activities to Help Children Learn-Grades 3-6 .....	.28-34
Reading/Cognitive .....	.28
Mathematics .....	.29
Social Studies .....	.32
Science .....	.33
TV & Movie Viewing .....	.35
Television Viewing Time Chart .....	.37
Games for Fun & Learning .....	.39
Tools for the Home: Reading, Writing & Mathematics .....	.40

Dear Families,

This booklet was created for busy families like yours that want to help their children:

- begin their school years with an enhanced foundation for learning
- do their best in school
- take pleasure from reading, writing, and mathematics
- make connections between what they learn in school and its application in the real world
- enjoy a richer, fuller life

Our children's experiences from the earliest days of their lives set the foundation for their learning. In order to maximize their potential later, children must have rich learning experiences from birth. For your infant, the most important learning experience you can offer is that his or her world is safe and trustworthy. When we offer warm, responsive care throughout their days and nights we teach children that they can relax in the knowledge that their needs will be met. We want our babies to attach firmly to us, and if they spend time with another adult while we work, with that person too. Studies have demonstrated that even in the case of extreme poverty, no other factor had a more important positive effect in making children resilient in the face of potentially devastating effects, than a secure attachment to a primary caregiver.

As our babies grow from infancy we want to continue to touch, hold and rock them as much as we can. It is important that we continue to sing to them and to talk to them a lot! As they grow we quite naturally teach them everyday in simple ways we may not be aware of. Become aware and it will be clear that you are only beginning to be their first or primary teacher; that is a distinction that doesn't end when they enter school.

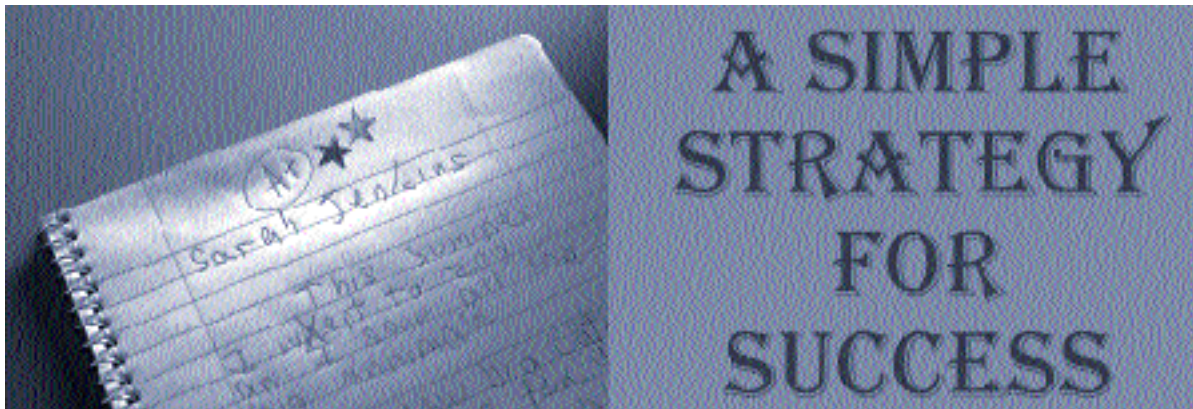
Your child's school plays an important role in teaching him or her the skills needed for today's world. But the school cannot do this alone. When schools and families are partners supporting the efforts of one another, children get more from school and from life.

The activities in this book are for the extra minutes you may have riding in a car or on a bus, when you are working around your home, or when you are shopping for groceries. It contains practical suggestions for activities and games you can play that enhance learning.

The book is divided into general age ranges, but you may find activities that will work for you in the sections for children who are older or younger than yours. Once you have used these suggestions as a way to get started, you may want to add your own ideas to make an activity easier, harder or more fun.

Your child will benefit most from these or other learning activities when you do them without pressure and have fun together. Please request your child do only what he/she can reasonably do.

Enjoy!

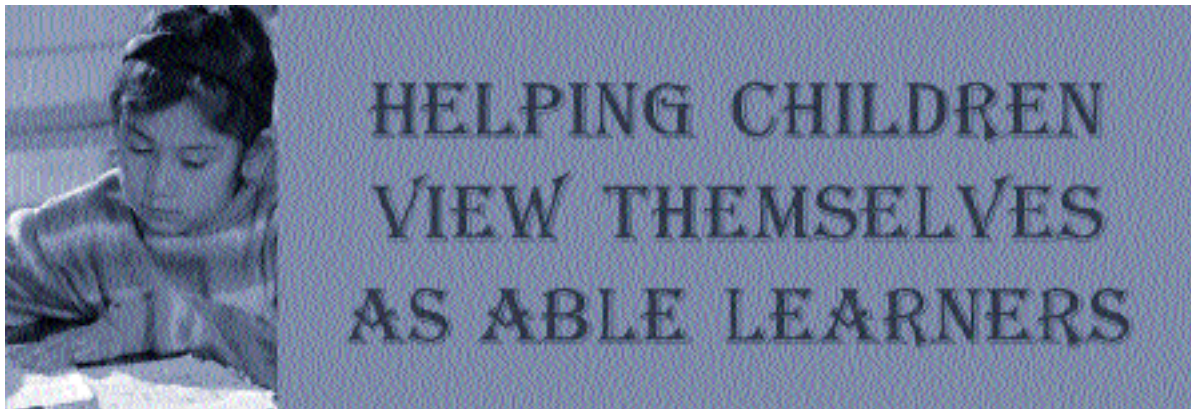


You don't need to spend money or be trained as a teacher to help your children learn at home! Regardless of what you do, you are your child's first and most important teacher. Children learn all the time through observation and interactions, and by your example. Here are some simple, yet powerful, things that you can do to help your child succeed in school:

- Read to your children everyday for at least ten minutes. Don't stop doing this even when children can read on their own.
- Have a variety of reading materials in your home such as books, magazines and newspapers.
- Talk with your child often and understand that a child's point of view is often different from an adult's.
- Demonstrate the partnership between school and home by showing an interest in what is happening at school. For example, let your child see you read all papers that come home, and ask questions about his or her school work.
- Create an avenue for your child to approach you with questions by showing that you are interested and willing to help.
- Ask your child what is happening at school. For example, ask about what activities are coming up, or what is going on with his or her friends and on the playground.

- Play games together.
- Limit television viewing time, and have alternate forms of entertainment available that you can do together. Use television as an educational tool whenever possible.
- Help your child relate new learning to something he or she already knows.
- Encourage your child and be supportive along her or his learning journey, especially when he or she is struggling.
- Have fun together!





- **Focus on the positive**

If for some reason things are not going well in some activity, do something else. A walk with a chat about the scenery, or reading to a child can be as useful. The child is still gaining practical meaning and language structure and learning more about the world in general.

- **Keep the focus child specific**

Know your children's ability levels and preferred learning styles. School success comes easy for some students; for others, school learning is tougher. Remember, when kids are encouraged to compete for grades with siblings or classmates there is always going to be a loser. Sometimes this is all it takes for a student to give up.

- **Set realistic and specific goals**

- **Get feedback from teachers on ways to help at home**

Your child's teacher can be a good resource on ways to help at home. Speak frankly to teachers and do not hesitate to ask for time to discuss all aspects of your child's performance at school. Some problems are complex and may require a well thought-out strategy in order to make a difference. Create a partnership with school professionals; they are there to help with your child's success.

- **Teach children that mistakes are a natural part of learning**

Without making mistakes we cannot learn. Children sometimes need to be reminded that it is okay to make mistakes because it only helps us get better. It is when things "go wrong" that we have the

opportunity to learn. Tell stories about your own misconceptions or errors. This will help your child see that even parents make mistakes. Children benefit also from hearing you problem solve out loud. Let your child hear you talk to yourself as you figure out how best to handle situations.

- **Offer encouragement for improvement**

A child who works hard to complete an assignment deserves reinforcement for the effort, especially when it is an improvement over a past effort. Be specific when giving praise. For example, "I can see that you're including more detail in your stories" is more meaningful than "I like your story". Make sure to celebrate the small successes!



- **Learning is more than a good grade**

Discuss tests and homework assignments from the standpoint of the content and what your child is learning. While grades may be important, there are many ways to measure your child's success with a learning task. For example, does your child understand? Has she asked questions? Has he put effort into the task? Does she feel good about what she's learning? Resist using grades and tests as the only way to tell how well your child is doing.

Discover projects you and your child or children can work on together. If these projects are long-term and span a period of time they will allow your child to see step-by-step accomplishments. This will enhance your knowledge of individual children's ability levels and interests.



Pin it Up

Get a family bulletin board, and occasionally pin up cartoons, pictures, post-cards, a letter or words of the week and, as children get older, short magazine articles you think your child will enjoy.

Garage Gallery

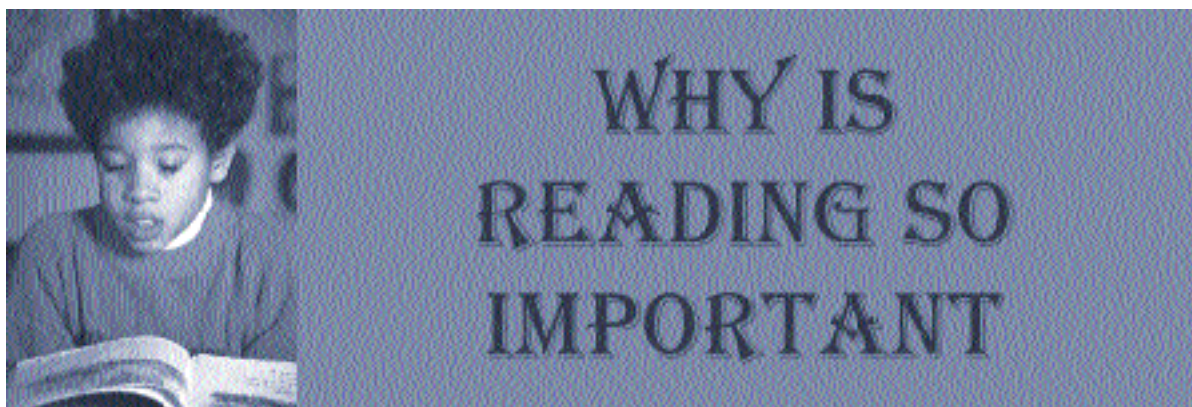
Use a wall in your garage or basement or anywhere and staple, pin or tape art work and writing for all to admire. As the wall fills up just put new “works” on top of the old. It becomes a collage of accomplishments and is easy for all to see the improvement that has occurred over time.

Refrigerator Scrapbook

Most people use magnets on the refrigerator to put up postcards, reminders, photos, and notices. Expand the use of all that space to feature a special piece of school work from each child. If you notice improvement, write your own note on the paper that says specifically what is better. Put up something new weekly.

Take a Bigger Step to Show it Off

Put your child’s art on a T-shirt, or on a mug or a plate. Take art they produce on paper to a frame shop and have it professionally framed and hang it on a wall at home or in your place of work. Make sure they see it there!



Reading is the key to learning in all school subjects and is the foundation of success in the world outside of school. But we know that learning to read begins long before the first day of kindergarten. In fact, many literacy experts believe that learning to read begins in the first interactions and conversations between caregivers and their children. In these early conversations, children are learning to hear and use spoken language—the foundation of reading and writing.

It is an exciting time to be a parent of a young child. Research has confirmed what caregivers have long known: The activities that parents and children have always enjoyed—talking together, singing songs, telling and reading stories, reciting nursery rhymes, playing games, and acting out stories—play a very important role in children's language development. When you enjoy these activities together, you are helping your child increase his or her vocabulary and knowledge, building memory and listening skills, increasing attention span, and helping your child develop phonological awareness (the awareness of the sounds in words).

While you are helping your child develop strong language skills, you are building a strong foundation for lifelong reading and writing. Before children are able to match print to sound (to decode words), they are using language to reason, imagine, analyze, compare, make predictions, share experiences and ideas, and solve problems. Later, when children read, they will use these same skills. When your five-year-old makes up her own stories, invents new rhymes, writes pretend messages, discusses books that have been read to her, sings complex songs, and reads a book she has memorized, she is showing you that she has a great deal of knowledge about reading and writing.

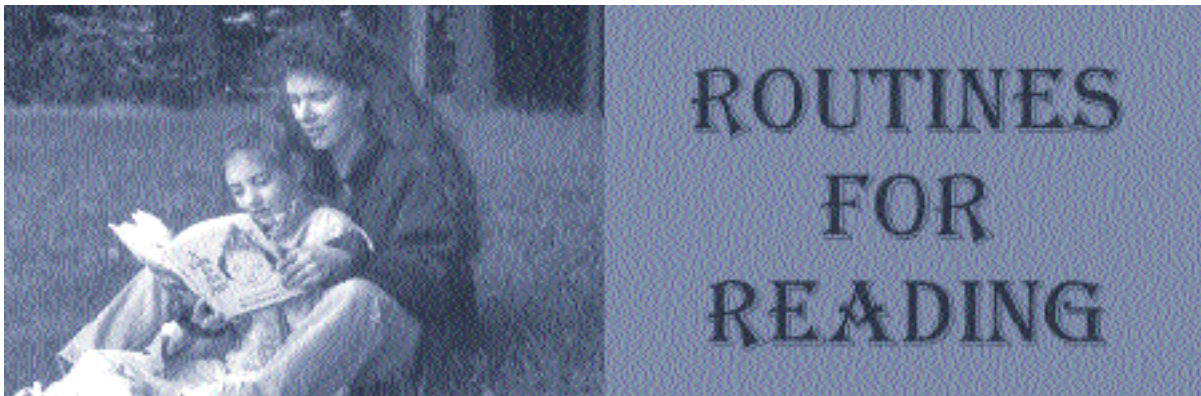
Children need many different kinds of experiences—with their families, with other children, with sand, water, painting and drawing, with music, with libraries and bookstores—to name just a few. And children need to share these experiences in conversations with adults and friends.

One of the most important things you can do to help your child learn to read, is to read together and talk about the story. Whether children ask to hear stories over and over again or are interested in reading something only once, they are learning about language and gain valuable information about reading including:

- Books are enjoyable
- Pictures help tell about the story
- Books can be full of information and provide imaginary worlds to enter
- Print should makes sense
- Print is different than pictures
- Words combine to communicate information, ideas and needs
- Letters represent sounds
- Sounds combine to make words
- Sounds heard in words match with print
- Print goes from left to right, front to back, and top to bottom

These are building blocks to becoming an independent and life long reader!





- It's never too early or too late to start reading to children. Babies and toddlers may like to chew on books almost as much as hearing them, but they are learning about language as they hear your voice. They love the rhythmical language of nursery rhymes and other poetry and the repetitive language of short, predictable books. Older toddlers love chiming in on a repeated phrase and may even memorize short books. The preschooler and kindergarten-age child may find that she can recognize some of the words that she has memorized, a first step in matching print to sound. In fact, children who learn to read without a great deal of formal instruction have often been described as teaching themselves to read from favorite storybooks.
- History, literature, science, and math all require story reading skills, and in middle elementary school, your child will need to transition from learning to read to reading in order to learn in these subject areas. Whatever your child's age, start reading together now.
- Try to select a time you can regularly read together for at least ten minutes a day. It doesn't matter if you choose the morning, the afternoon, after dinner or just before bed. It is much easier to do if it becomes a habit like brushing your teeth or anything that is done at approximately the same time each day.
- If your schedule changes often and you cannot come up with a regular time, squeeze in reading whenever you can—on the bus, at the beach, while you wait for the doctor, or at the Laundromat.

- Ask child care providers, older sisters and brothers, grandparents or others to read to your child.
- Use the public library, thrift stores, low-cost book clubs offered through schools, or form a neighborhood book co-op with other families to have a constant supply of books to read. Look for Caldecott and Newberry award winning books, and don't forget series books (remember Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys?) Those old series are still out there, and newer ones are available for kids today. Ask the children's librarian for suggestions of high-quality literature for kids. Introduce your child to the children's librarian so she or he can begin to feel comfortable asking questions at the library.
- It is not true that once children can read on their own they no longer benefit when others read to them. Children still learn about language and about the world when books are read aloud to them. Read longer, more difficult books than they can handle on their own when you read aloud. Share your experiences of the book, make predictions together about what will happen in the story, discuss plots and help children connect stories to their own experiences.
- Give books and magazine subscriptions matched to your child's interests for lasting gifts.
- Encourage reading in bed by letting children who are reading stay up 15 - 30 minutes later. Ask them at breakfast about what they read the night before. Encourage talking about their reading by being an interested, patient listener.
- Try reading interesting bits of information from the newspaper or magazines while your child is cleaning the kitchen after dinner or doing other chores. Perhaps tell a resistant reader you'll do the dishes occasionally if he or she will read aloud while you do them.
- Create opportunities for your child to act out stories. Acting out stories is an enjoyable way to bring the printed word to life and encourage reading.
- There are an unlimited number of ways that families work reading into busy schedules—the important thing is to do it!



Parents can encourage the development of writing skills at home at all ages by making writing a natural part of everyday activities and by having some basic materials available. For most children the process of learning to write starts with a crayon and appears as nothing but scribbles on the page. These scribbles are a meaningful first step in the same way that babbling is a first step in learning how to talk. Young children who are encouraged to draw pictures, “write” and “read back” what they’ve written will learn to write more easily.

Here are some suggestions for helping children learn to be writers at different stages of development:

Beginning Writers

- Signs, labels, and logos surround us and are usually the words children remember and read first. Help your child recognize and learn to read words in the environment.
- Drawing and painting pictures is a wonderful way to help children “see” a story and to nurture imagination and creativity. When children draw pictures have them dictate a story or caption to go with it. Be sure to read back their words to them.
- Pretend play is a great opportunity for children to use markers and pads to write “prescriptions,” make restaurant menus, store signs, tickets to a performance or a train ride. Encourage them to pretend they work at the post office, or at some other job where they can use scrap paper, junk mail, stickers, and recycled envelopes. Some children may ask for words to be written so they can copy them; some may stick to scribbles.

- Making books of all shapes and sizes can happily occupy children and help them learn about writing and reading. A suggestion for making an animal book can lead to a productive half-hour or more spent cutting out pictures from old magazines, writing about the pictures, and then reading the story back. Other favorite topics include sports, horses, toys, or a children's recipe book.

Developing Fluent Writers

- Just like adults who may write many drafts before coming up with a final product, children need the opportunity to get ideas on paper without focusing on correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. By prodding children to come up with "perfect" writing products, adults can turn kids off to the joys of writing. When reading your child's writing, make comments on the way words are used (even if they are misspelled), and the general content. Tell them before they begin that you will help them with spelling and punctuation as the last step before sharing their writing with others.
- Have paper and pencil or other writing materials by the phone and show children how to write down messages. Write messages to your children whenever possible and put them on the bed, in a lunch box or on the refrigerator.



- Encourage neatness in school work done at home with no "cross outs" or heavy eraser marks without making perfect handwriting an issue. Your child may be reluctant to write if pen-ship becomes the major focus.
- Make it a habit that children write their own thank-you notes for gifts. Instead of buying invitations for parties or birthday cards, have children make their own with colored paper, stickers and markers.



- Encourage children to send postcards when you travel. If they send themselves postcards while traveling, when they get home they will have a travel log of their trip! Ask others to write to your children so they can have the experience of sending and receiving mail.
- Buy a blank book for older children to keep journals. This can keep older children in the habit of writing. It is only by practice that improvement is made, and journal entries can also provide ideas for school writing assignments.
- Give writing materials such as stationery and new pens as gifts. Encourage your child to stay in touch with out-of-town friends or relatives through writing.
- If you have e-mail at home, correspond back and forth with your child. Encourage correspondence with friends or relatives who have e-mail.



Children often ask why they need to learn certain mathematics applications and why they need to do some experimentation in the science lab in their later school years. Math and science are all around us and our children in our daily lives. We use math when we shop whether we are comparing the cost of the larger bottle of shampoo over the cost of the smaller bottle, or deciding how many bananas we can buy with the change in our pockets. Our children use mathematics when they draw, and we use it when we sketch out a room arrangement for our new furniture. We use science when we explain the need for sunscreen, when we plant a seed, and when we observe a sunset.

It is important for children to begin early to experiment and to manipulate elements in their environment to better understand their planet and the world they live in. Learning math and science skills early will increase their ability to analyze data and to ask critical questions throughout life.

In the Math and Science sections you will find activities to help enhance your child's skills in these areas. There are also activities in the other sections that overlap into science and math. Your librarian or your child's teacher would be good resources for more books to use to enhance these skills.

- Involve children in cooking activities.
- Play games with calculators and dice. Play board and card games and encourage your child to be the score keeper or banker.
- Encourage collections-shells, stamps, seeds, rocks. This is an excellent opportunity to sort, classify, and organize.
- Involve children in all types of measuring activities with rulers, scales, and any other measuring tools you have.

- Encourage children to make estimates and to use mental math to figure prices, etc.
- Get your child's help in the garden with planting, digging, raking, collecting produce. Encourage older children's involvement by having them do research to learn about landscaping and gardening topics in your area.
- Give your child blank checks and play money to use in pretend play.
- Keep magnets and magnifying glasses on hand and encourage outdoor exploration of soil, leaves, and insects. In the case of observing insects, provide supervision to prevent harm to either the child or the insects.





Preschool through Grade Two

READING/COGNITIVE

In the Kitchen and Around Your Home...

Take advantage of the time your family spends in the kitchen to help children learn.

1. Classifying, Comparing

- What are the names of different utensils? With supervision, even preschoolers can put away items from the dishwasher, sorting silverware into knives, forks and spoons. Are the patterns all the same? Are there two sizes of forks? Spoons? Young children especially enjoy being a part of the household work. Telling a two or three year old to sort out the spoons (or the small spoons/soup spoons) from the dishwasher and then letting them put them into the drawer (however they end up) begins the idea that they can contribute.
- Have the child take pots and pans out and order them by size, and then give them a wooden spoon and maybe a rubber spatula and let them make music. The pots and pans can be hung from a line if they have rings on the handles. Let the children hear the differ-

ences in the sounds produced by banging those hanging and those on a solid surface.

- Use empty food containers for storing letters and numerals cut from magazines and newspapers, etc. They can be used in making cards, pictures, and funny notes. Label the outside with contents for easy storage.
- Find small objects that begin with the first 12 letters of the alphabet. Put one letter in the bottom of each section of an egg carton and have your child place an object that begins with that letter in the section. Use more cartons or different letters the next time.

2. Learning Left and Right

Your child can also be taught left and right directions by learning to set the table.

- Your child can easily learn that the fork is placed on the left side of the plate and the knife and spoon on the right side.
- Have your child count the number of people eating and figure out the number of pieces of silverware he or she will need, and how many pieces will be on the right/left.
- Expand opportunities to learn left and right by using those terms in your speech. For instance, telling her to place the book on the table on the left side of the sofa, rather than just pointing and saying, "that one."

3. Helping with the Groceries

- Have your children create their own grocery list for something they are going to help make. Ask them to estimate the costs of products.
- Ask your child to place the cans or boxes of items that are alike (fruits and vegetables, crackers, cereal, etc.) together in the bags so it will be easier for you to put them away.
- Have children read the pictures on the cans and boxes.

4. Shapes and Sizes and Comparisons

- Examine round plates - dinner, salad, dessert, paper; and soup bowls, baskets, table, etc.
- As the round shape is explored, gradually look for the square, rectangle, etc. in other rooms of the house, in their toys, in art, in the car or other places you go.
- Send your child on a scavenger hunt to find things in your home that are square, round and rectangular, etc. For example: "Find a round clock."
- Help your child learn to recognize and name shapes by pointing them out as you drive, walk, or when you are watching TV together. Make a game by saying, "show me a shape."
- Invite children to make comparisons by asking, for example, what's larger? largest? taller? tallest? etc.

Shopping Activities...

- Show children how to read labels and signs in grocery stores. Show them an item on the grocery list and let them find the aisle it would be found on.
- Explain how food is organized into categories at the store, i.e., crackers and cookies are usually together. Discuss why they think the store organizes things the way they do.
- Give your child a coupon and have him or her find the item shown. Ask them how much the cost of the item is with the price of the coupon taken off the price.
- Bring labels from home. Have the child find the items, once you are on the appropriate aisle.
- Have children help with making the grocery list. At the grocery store children can mark items off the list as the items are put in the cart or basket.

- Before you go shopping together for groceries, have children help look up a recipe and make a shopping list for the ingredients.
- Allow your child to help you cook by following the directions on a recipe. (Someone older can read the directions aloud if your child is too young to read them.) Following directions and learning kitchen vocabulary is an important skill for your child.

On the Road...

Many skills can be learned or expanded while you are on the road. Take advantage of the time you are travelling to build on skills, or to introduce your child to new things.

1. Numeral and letter recognition games:

- Call out a number and ask your child to look until he or she finds one on a license plate, road sign, or mileage marker.
- Play an alphabet game—"Think of all the words you can that begin with the same letter as fox."
- Take magazines and newspapers along on trips and discover word or letter activities you can do together as you travel. Try thinking of a word and seeing how many times your child can find it in the newspaper, magazine or other print source.
- While learning together on long or short trips is important time spent with children, take a book for each person to do silent reading on longer trips. Model this love of reading when it is someone else's turn to drive.
- Count from 0 to 9 using digits seen on license plates or see how many states you see represented on license plates.
- Show children how to use maps around town or on a trip.
- Encourage children to follow your route on a map with their fingers or markers and to say where they've been. Older children can use the key to estimate miles between points on the map.

2. Use travel time to help your children broaden their horizons. Help them to "see" the world around them by:

- Pointing out things in the immediate surroundings, such as the plants and animals.
- Sharing your experiences while you are travelling, for example "I used to look at that hill and think it looked like a dinosaur."
- Bring a single hole-puncher along and purchase postcards that can be strung together as a memento of the trip. Children can write their impressions of the places they've been on the backs of the cards
- Keep the cards to share with others and remember how the trip went, or mail a card to themselves.
- Collect brochures and other souvenirs of sites visited and make a scrapbook.
- Read the number of miles to your destination as posted, check the odometer, and occasionally determine the remaining distance.
- Name places they have already seen during the ride and name these places in the order they were seen.
- Bring materials so children can draw the outline of the state you are traveling in and mark the route with cities, towns, lakes, rivers, and etc
- Look at addresses and see how they go up or down, and how even and odd numbers are on the opposite sides of the street.
- Sing songs and encourage children to change letter sounds and "play" with the words. Making it silly is making learning fun!
- Start an oral story having each child or family member take a turn adding to it. You may end up with some great stories!
- While riding public transportation together, assist your child in reading schedules, use the time to play word games or read together.

Remember, travel may not mean going far; it could be to the other side of town!!

Fun Ways to Promote Thinking...

The following activities can be done when you have some “down” time. Whether you’re waiting, driving or lounging, you can turn extra minutes into productive learning time. No advance preparation is needed; no materials are required. Some may need to be modified for older or younger children, but generally these can be done with a wide range of ages.

1. Edible ABCs

Think of food words for each letter of the alphabet. Parent and child(ren) take turns naming something delicious to eat for each letter - this may take some creativity for difficult letters like X and Z (try x-ray fish and zucchini).

2. Names

Parent and child take turns, each giving the name of a boy or girl as you start with the letter “A” and continue through the alphabet to the letter “Z”. Mention the names you know of that both boys and girls use.

3. I’m Going To...

Play this word game by starting with “I’m going to Disneyland. I’m taking Angry Alligators...Big Bags...” etc. Continue through the alphabet, with each person taking turns thinking of words for the next letter. Modify with your own version.

4. Miss Monroe Makes Money

The object of the activity is to come up with a four-word sentence with all first letters the same. The parent begins by saying, “Miss Monroe Makes Money.” Then, the child says, “Miss Monroe Makes _____” and fills in the name of an object beginning with the letter “M”. The game continues in this way, alternating between parent and child, each thinking of other things Miss Monroe could make. Change your sentence to start with other letters like “Wally Watson Wants _____.”

5. Words that Rhyme

Family member and child take turns, each giving a word that rhymes with the following words (or any other words):

cake	news	cup
treat	peach	free
jaws	street	snow
jump	play	sleep

6. Opposites Game

Help children develop vocabulary and concepts by playing the opposites game. Parent starts with known pair of opposites like night/day or in/out. State one half of the pair and have child give you its match. Encourage children to think of their own opposite pairs. Some common opposites are:

in/out	right/wrong	good/bad
up/down	light/dark	on/off
open/closed	hot/cold	over/under
yes/no	boiling/freezing	winter/summer

7. Sound Matching Game

Parent selects a letter sound and says the letter, makes the sound and gives an example of a word using the sound. The child then thinks of words having that sound. Example: “My letter is ‘D’. It is the sound in Dad and Dog.” Think of some words that begin with that sound. Use other letters and sounds. If your child is ready for something more difficult, use the letter sound in the middle or at the end of the word. Be sure to use letter combinations such as br, cl, sh, and others.

8. Sound Substitution Songs

Help children become aware of letter sounds in words. Choose a song like “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” and have the child substitute a new beginning sound for “Fe Fi Fiddly I-O” in the chorus. Examples are “Be Bi Biddly I-O” or “Bre Bri Briddly I-O”. Other songs that work well in this activity are “Old MacDonald Had a Farm”. Once you start doing this, you should discover lots of songs that you can use this way!

9. Analogies

- Give children a chance to practice seeing the relationships between words by playing with analogies. Some examples are:

Kitten and cat are like puppy and _____ (dog).

Airplane and sky are like car and _____ (road).

Pine tree and forest are like cactus and _____ (desert).

Leaf and tree are like petal and _____ (flower).

Up and down are like off and _____ (on).

- Think of others or have your child come up with some on his own.

10. Categories

Have children add their own words that fit into a category you start. Then have them identify the category. For example:

car boat bike _____ _____ (transportation)

dog goldfish cat _____ _____ (pets)

MATHEMATICS

1. Sorting/classifying

Egg cartons are easy to get and can be useful for learning in lots of ways.

1. Use the cartons for storing numerals cut from magazines and newspapers, etc.
2. Place a numeral in the bottom of each section - left to right and in sequence.
 - Give your child a box of materials such as old buttons, small rocks, dry beans, tooth picks, coins, etc. (Beware of choking danger). The child is to put the correct number of objects in the bottom of each section. (One object in the section labeled 1, two objects in the section labeled 2 and so on.)
 - When the child is able to complete the carton with numbers in order, move on to another carton where the number have been mixed up. This will continue the learning process.
 - Help reinforce addition and subtraction facts by writing problems on small pieces of paper. The child is to find the answer and place it in the proper slot. Example: $2 + 3$ would go in the 5 slot, $5-2$ would go in the 3 slot.

2. Estimating

- Count the steps from the table to the sink and talk about the distance. Practice the same task with other items in the kitchen.
- Talk about which object is closer or farther away.
- If you drive, clock how many miles it is from your home to the grocery store or school. Have your child compare that distance to other places you go; is it closer or farther away?
- Have child select the correct size of containers the family usually uses, such as a gallon of milk, a 28 ounce can of baked beans, a liter of pop, a one pound loaf of bread (emphasize ounces and the metric equivalent).

- Compare sizes and let children identify which cost more or less.
- Let children look through racks of clothing for their size.
- Plan a shopping trip with some money for the child to spend as he or she wishes.
- Develop a grocery list. Discuss why your family needs things on the list. Estimate cost of each item on the list before shopping and have your child compare estimates with actual costs.
- Help kids practice using measuring cups. Point out where it states the fraction and the metric equivalent. Ask them to show how many $\frac{1}{3}$ cups will make one cup. Talk about fractions when you cut up fruit, vegetables, and sandwiches. Have them measure the water for rice, the nuts for cookies, etc.
- Ask questions that make children aware of fractions by asking questions like “would you rather have your sandwich in halves or fourths. Lead them to see that one half and two fourths are equal.
- Cut pies and pizzas into eight or ten pieces and ask family members to tell what fraction of the whole pie or pizza they are eating. For example, “I cut the pie into eight pieces. I’m eating $\frac{1}{8}$ of a pie.” How much of the pizza are you eating?
- Help your child practice measuring with rulers and tape measures. Show them how to use other tools for measuring such as using a piece of string to mark the length of something so they can compare its length to the length of something else.
- Offer children an allowance, no matter how small, in order to teach them the necessity of making simple choice decisions around money. Try to separate this allowance from any chores they may do around the house. Children will benefit from seeing that household work is a shared task and a shared responsibility of all members of the family.

SCIENCE

1. Use egg cartons for starting seedlings to be transplanted later.
2. Supply magnets and encourage children to find things they will pick-up or that the magnets will cling to. Discuss what magnets will be attracted to/repelled by.
3. Allow children to care for plants, maybe in their own rooms. Watch for the effects of light and water on their growth.
4. Watch habits of birds, bugs, and insects together. Keep your fears to yourself! Talk about the food chain and the contributions of each.
5. Study the food pyramid with your child and discuss why we eat the foods we do, and why we choose healthier foods over others.
6. Purchase a kit for growing crystals together or purchase the ingredients at a local pharmacy.





Grades 3-6

READING/COGNITIVE

- Encourage children to read and follow package directions and recipes for baking and preparing simple dishes. Encourage them to write down their own variations and experiments.
- Have children prepare one dish for a meal or plan and prepare one simple dinner a week. If they are old enough, have all children plan and prepare the meal together. Don't forget to have them make the shopping list, do the shopping, and estimate the cost. For the older children, have them stretch costs across a month to get an idea of what this one meal a day costs for a family the size of yours.
- Have older children read to younger children. This can be a wonderful way for them to improve their oral reading abilities.
- Encourage projects that involve following instructions, such as putting together models of cars, planes or animals. To better understand your child, pay attention to the particular learning needs, for example: your child may need to write instructions down, make a mental picture, read instructions, hear them, or all of the above.
- If your child at this age seems "turned off" by reading, don't make an issue of it. Encourage reading by checking out library books in

his or her area of interest. Select books that are a little too hard for him or her to read and read them aloud. Your child will hear the book and get the message that reading is important to you. This is a particularly good age to look for and encourage the series books like Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys or the more recent Goosebumps. If your child likes one, the series can pull them into reading the rest in the series and may hook them on reading for pleasure for life.

- Encourage the writing and addressing of greeting cards, invitations and thank-you notes. Write notes to your children with instructions or appreciation for a job well done.
- Ask children to look up phone numbers to practice using alphabetical lists. Encourage your child to compile an alphabetical list of friends with their addresses and phone numbers.
- Have your child list birthdays of family members and friends. Keep paper and writing materials on hand for creating birthday cards.
- Find a book of silly riddles and enjoy them together! Have the children make up riddles of their own!
- During family meals, have one member introduce a new word each day, and then define it for everyone. Have a different family member use the new word in a sentence. If the word has a different meaning, discuss that other usage too.
- Do age appropriate crossword puzzles together. Try word searches too. Create your own, together.
- Acquire an inexpensive blank book and help your child start a journal for sketches and thoughts about school and friends. The child can draw a picture depicting a character they may have seen, heard or read about. Have them show feelings in the picture, labeling them with the appropriate adjectives. Use this idea in a travel bag, or as an alternative to TV viewing or when having quiet time.

MATHEMATICS

- Play games like Scrabble, Monopoly and Yahtzee, and have your child be the scorekeeper. Make up games with dice such as "Who can roll two dice the fewest times to reach 100?" This involves children in addition, as well as with quickly recognizing the numbers on the dice. Modify by using a calculator or using three die.
- Give your child practical experience in using mathematics at home. Mention the size of containers, such as pints of ice cream and half-gallons of milk. Encourage children to help when you bake or measure things around your home. Involve children in home improvement projects by letting them help use math to figure the amounts and quantities of needed supplies whether gallons of paint or yards of fabric.
- Estimation is a math skill that adults use frequently. Ask your child to estimate "about" how much items will cost, "about" how much distance or time to certain landmarks. Because adults estimate in different ways, talk to your child about how you estimate.
- Estimate the length, width, and area of a room by pacing it off. Using a yardstick or measuring tape, have your child check to see how close his or her estimates were.
- Children at this age can be actively involved in cooking activities that involve fractions and measuring. Perhaps check out children's cookbooks from the library, or assist children in creating their own cookbook.
- If you have a thermometer, have your child compare outdoor temperatures at different times, or at the same time everyday. Make a graph of the temperatures.
- For a challenge, have your child estimate the total number of blades of grass in the yard by measuring, counting blades in small, scattered samples and multiplying.

- Time can also be measured. Discuss time and urge thinking about it by asking questions such as "I need to be to work by 9:00 a.m. and it takes about 30 minutes to get there. What time should I leave to be on time?"
- Ask your child to use a calculator if necessary to figure his or her age in months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes.
- Watch your child balance your check book and monthly statement.
- Discuss decisions around loans or charge accounts for purchases from houses to smaller items in terms of interest rates, and the wisdom of borrowing, with or in front of your older child. Help them to learn how to manage and protect the future sweat of their brow, early.
- As they get older the things children want to buy often cost more, so increase your child's allowance appropriately, as you are able, in order to continue to teach him or her the necessity of making choices around the use of money.

Shopping...

- Weigh vegetables and fruits and estimate the cost based on price per pound.
- Help your child make decisions around spending his or her allowance including ideas on how much to save and what to spend to purchase something he or she really wants.
- Teach your child alternative ways of buying items that cost more than they have available, by introducing them to Lay-away. This can be done in a couple of ways. If the store where they wish to buy the item doesn't have lay-away, you can offer to buy it and then you lay it away. Set up a payment plan for your child. Remember, you haven't taught them the desired lesson if you give it to them before the last payment. This system can teach children how to portion out their funds to meet their needs on a weekly or monthly basis.

- Arrange for a shopping trip to buy a special item for which the family has saved in order to purchase.
- Give your child an amount of money to spend for a family meal and help him or her buy the food. Try this when you go out for dinner.
- If you have a calculator, let your child use it when you go shopping to make quick decisions on best buys or keep a tally on what you are getting.
- Compare prices of the same items in different places; for example, at the gas station mini market and the discount store.
- Have children make out your grocery list as you dictate it to them.
- Before a shopping trip, have your child read newspaper ads and price the cost of items to be purchased. Encourage comparison of prices and quantities marked on containers to determine the best buys. Allow your child to purchase an item and figure out the change to be received.
- Comparison shop from catalogs and mailbox ads. Let a child imagine he or she can buy something for everyone in the family. Have the child fill out an order for the items and total up the cost including shipping and any other costs listed on the form.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Have children think of questions to ask grandparents, great-grandparents, and other older adults, and tape record their responses to create oral histories. Topics might include, "Where were you when JFK was assassinated?" "What was WWII like for you?" "What was it like having your first TV?" "Where were you when I was born?" Ask children to write the stories down.
- Schedule a time to play games in the home. These might include board games, or they could be guessing games like the following:
 - a. Who am I? Give some facts about a character in a book, historical figure, or famous person in sports, etc. and let the child identify the person. As the child advances, he or she may provide the clues and let you tell the character.
 - b. Where do I live? Repeat the process above except use clues to identify state, countries, climate, people, etc.
- Keep an atlas or globe within easy reach to use whenever world affairs come up in family discussion. Locate places in the news.
- Teach your child the importance of being a good citizen by discussing local candidates for public office, issues, and problems of the community at the dinner table. Emphasize the need to look at each candidates political views rather than by forming opinions by their race, gender, or some other group descriptor. If you vote, take your child with you. Tell child of your values but allow the child to explore issues and express ideas without concern for expressing their views which may be different from your own.
- Volunteer as a family in a nursing home, or perhaps in a soup-kitchen.
- Teach your children respect for the environment by throwing yourselves whole-heartedly into a recycling effort.

SCIENCE

- Stimulate your child to make use of all senses in discovering the surrounding world. Encourage curiosity about the feel of textures and materials, characteristic smells, sounds, tastes, weights and sizes of things.
- Work with your child on projects such as making bird feeders.
- Encourage children to offer to care for neighbor's pets or plants of while they are out of town. Participate with them to teach them to treat this responsibility seriously and to do the job well.
- Be alert for special opportunities to observe solar events. Occasionally, observe the night sky together and name familiar constellations.
- Work on landscaping projects together. Have children do research on the best plants for your region and soil including best locations on your property regarding exposure to the sun. While they are looking at locations, teach them that living things tend to grow and make sure that plans include future size in relationship to other plants and your house!
- Prepare and work a family vegetable garden together. Allow some age appropriate decisions about which vegetables you will grow, and again, older children can check into what vegetables will do well in your climate and soil.
- Give a birthday gift of a favorite fruit tree (or other tree). First, do this if it is practical for the child. If you are moving in a year, or your child isn't interested in having his own fruit tree it makes little sense. Then, make sure it will do well in your environment. If it's a surprise, you would do this research yourself before purchasing a tree, but be sure and share your findings and reasons for the decision with your child.

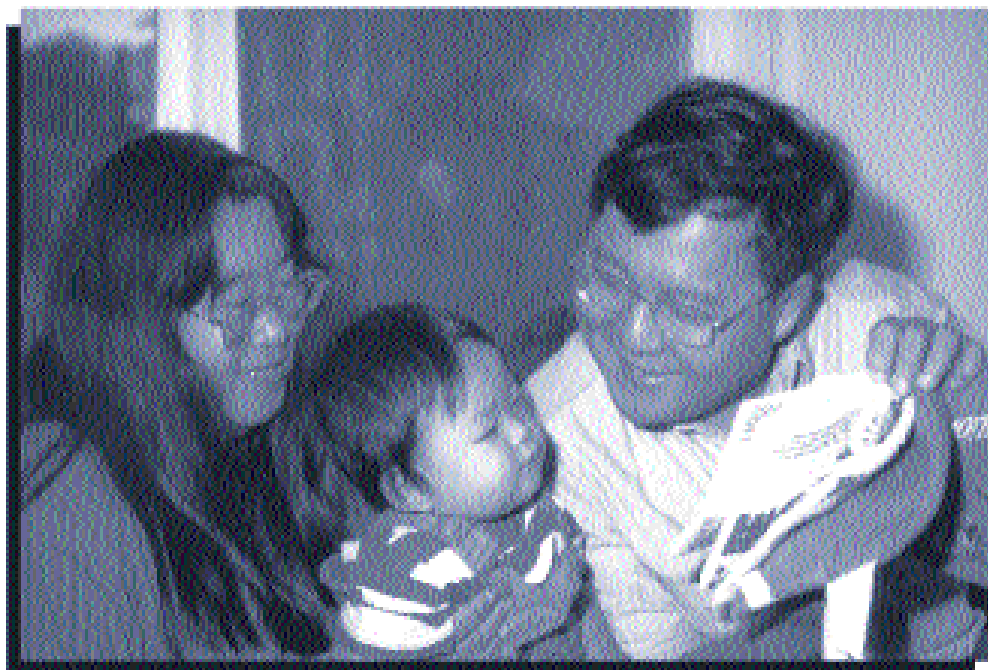
Around the house...

- Involve your child in projects such as cooking; sewing; working on machinery; rearranging furniture; changing light bulbs; and installing new appliances, always with safety and correct supervision in mind. Your child will feel that his or her help and ideas are important and will be actively thinking, planning, and learning.
- Let your child manipulate and learn about familiar objects: household plants and gardens; a dripping faucet; the household water system; a nutcracker; an old doorbell; locks and door hinges; discarded appliances; etc. For older children: before throwing away broken or old appliances in a land fill, encourage child to take them apart (safely) in order to explore them. Encourage any interest he or she may show in fixing things — if necessary check out library books that will assist him or her in understanding.
- Encourage your child to be a “collector.” Provide a place for collections, even if it is just a dresser drawer, a soapbox, or a shelf in the bookcase.

On the Road...

- Many skills can be learned or expanded while you are on the road. Take advantage of the time you are travelling to build on skills, or to introduce your child to new things. Use travel time to help your children broaden their horizons. Help them to “see” the world around them.
- Pointing out things in the immediate surroundings, such as the plants and animals.
- Bring a single hole-puncher along and purchase postcards that can be strung together as a memento of the trip. Children can write their impressions of the places they’ve been on the backs of the cards, keep the cards to share with others and remember how the trip went, or mail a card to themselves.

- Collect brochures and other souvenirs of sites visited and make a scrapbook.
- Read the number of miles to your destination as posted, check the odometer, and occasionally determine the remaining distance.
- Name places they have already seen during the ride and name these places in the order they were seen.
- Bring materials so children can draw the outline of the state you are traveling in and mark the route with cities, towns, lakes, rivers, and so forth.
- Sing songs and encourage children to change letter sounds and “play” with the words.
- Start an oral story having each child or family member take a turn adding to it. You may end up with some great stories!



TV & MOVIE VIEWING

There are many research studies showing that TV and movie viewing can promote violent behavior and expose children to the adult world before they are ready. Also, new knowledge of how the brain grows and develops shows that watching a lot of television may make it hard for children to learn to read and do well in school. Another concern is that when children spend hours watching television they are not spending time playing, reading, writing, or studying.

While parents do their children a favor by limiting how much TV they watch, they should be ready with alternative activities and materials to make these other activities attractive and inviting. The following tips might be useful for managing TV viewing time in your home:

Limit television viewing.

Help children budget their viewing time by selecting shows from weekly TV listings instead of watching whatever comes on TV. Include movies, computer time, and video games in this allotment of screen time, too.

Watch television together and discuss what you see.

Young children often cannot tell the difference between what is happening on TV and reality. Ask questions of your children about what is happening on the television shows you watch. Explain and discuss what you are seeing in movies you watch with your child, too.

Say "No" to programs/movies with inappropriate language, sexual explicitness or violence.

There are wonderful shows on public television (Reading Rainbow, Wishbone, Ghost Writer, Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?, Square One,) and family shows on commercial and cable television that are entertaining and "educational." Insist that your children make good choices and help your child by making good choices, too!

Encourage related activities and reading.

If your child shows an interest in the topic of a TV show or movie (deep sea diving or horses, for example), your local public library probably has books your child could read about it. There may be museums that have low- or no-cost exhibits on a topic of interest that you could visit also.

Be a positive example.

Children follow their parents' lead. If you are spending a lot of time watching TV and movies, your children probably will also. Remember, you are your child's first and best teacher! Time spent watching TV is less time spent talking with your child, playing, reading, and studying.



Television Viewing Time Chart

Date _____

Total Viewing _____

Hours: _____

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							

Games for Fun and Learning

Playing games can help your child develop skills at being a team player, build arithmetic and problem solving abilities, and improve reading skills; games are also a good source of family entertainment.

When playing games together teach children how to be the scorekeeper for extra computation practice. You can teach your children that it doesn't matter who wins or who loses, but rather that the point is to spend time having fun together. Be sure you demonstrate this by handling both winning and losing in a casual way.

Backgammon

Monopoly

Bingo

Boggle

Ball and Jacks

Card games

Checkers

Chess

Clue

Concentration

Connect Four

Cribbage

Dice games

Dominos

Uno

Jenga

Life

Yahtzee

Brain Quest

Hi Ho Cherry Oh

Othello

Parcheesi

Chutes and Ladders

Pictionary

Scattergories

Scrabble

Sorry

Spill and Spell

Pick up Sticks

Tanagrams

Tri-Ominos

Trivial Pursuit

Jr. Trivial Pursuit

Jr. and regular Concentration

Where in the World?

Chinese Checkers

Tools for the Home: Reading, Writing and Mathematics

Reading

- Reading materials - read aloud books, information books, poetry and nursery rhymes, magazines, comics, newspapers
- Library card
- Bookshelves
- Bedside lamp

Writing

- Writing surfaces - tables, floors, concrete, chalk boards
- All types of paper - recycled computer paper, used work paper, “roll ends” from print shops and newspapers, construction paper
- Crayons, pencils, markers, chalk, pens, erasers
- Stapler, tape, ribbon, string, paste, scissors (for making books)
- Envelopes (new or used) of all shapes and sizes
- Blank books and inexpensive notebooks
- Keyboards - old typewriters, computers
- Dictionary, thesaurus

Mathematics

- Measuring tools - yardsticks, measuring tape, rulers, scales, string
- Kitchen equipment - measuring cups and spoons, containers (pint, quart, liter and gallon)
- Clocks, timers, stopwatches
- Calculators
- Dice, cards, board games
- Newspapers - sports statistics, graphs, classified section, ads
- Time schedules for buses, trains, tides, television
- Catalogs (price comparisons)

- Checkbooks, play money
- Small shovels
- Magnets
- Magnifying glasses
- Buckets or other collection containers