



KENTUCKY
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD

READY TO KNOW, READY TO LEARN, READY TO SUCCEED

Family Guides



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CREATED BY
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National Center for
Families Learning

The Family Guides are a companion to the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, housed in the Governor's Office of Early Childhood and first developed in 2003, by a statewide workgroup of representative stakeholders in early care and education. The Standards serve as a framework to assist early care, intervention, and education professionals, administrators, and others in understanding what children are able to know and do from birth through four years of age. The Family Guides align directly to the Standards and the best practices of Kentucky Educational Television's Let's Learn Kentucky.

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READ / TALK TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

I Love to Read!



Materials: Your child's favorite book and a stuffed animal.

STEP 1

Did you know your child will learn to love reading because they love to hear your voice? Make reading part of your family's bedtime or naptime routine to help your child grow. Have your child help pick the book. Use your local library to find new books.

STEP 2

Hold your child in your lap to start your bedtime or naptime routine. Tell your child that you will spend some time reading, looking at pictures on each page, and talking to each other.

STEP 3

Read the book to your child in a warm and loving voice. Make silly voices and have fun together. Use a stuffed animal to help you turn pages and ask questions. You are helping your child learn that reading is more than words on a page.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Start with books that have bright pictures for your child to see. Let them point at the page and show you what they like to look at. Talk about what you see on each page.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have your child read the book back to you. They do not have to read the words like an adult. They can tell you what is happening on each page, show you their favorite part of the book, or ask you questions about what happens in the book.

I Love to Read!

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to link reading with love and connection. Reading to a stuffed toy lets your child grow their imagination!

WHY?

Reading with your child will help grow their speech and language, as well as their pre-reading skills. It is also a great time to practice early literacy skills, such as naming the parts of a book and asking questions.



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READ / TALK TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Family Book



Materials: Paper, writing materials, drawings or photos of family members.

STEP 1

Every family has a special story to tell. Think about some things that make your family special—like where you live, what jobs you might have, who lives with you, and what you like to do together. Talk to your child about how special your family is.

STEP 2

Sit down with your child and use writing utensils and paper to start your family's very own book. Your book may have pictures of your family, where you live, pets, or what you like to do together. Ask your child what they would like to put in your family book.

STEP 3

Add each special piece of information to your family book. Help your child draw and label each photo or drawing. Tell your child that you can read this special family book together at bedtime or naptime, just like their other books.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Younger children may need to focus on fewer items in a book. Start by making a book about the people you live with. Use drawings or photos and label each person. Read this book to your child each day and add more things to your book as they grow.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have your child start to make their own special books. Help them think of what they want to write about. You can help them label pictures and write words.

Family Book

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning how spoken words appear as written words. Written words are used to create books and text. Younger children may not be ready to write on their own, but they can learn to link letters with words and words with stories and information. This is the beginning of the writing process.

WHY?

Your child needs to know that words make up books and books tell stories that entertain and give information.



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READ / TALK TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Writing During Play



Materials: Chalk, stick, paint brush, and water.

STEP 1

Designate a place for creating and introduce your child to the space.

STEP 2

Take writing outside! Your child can write or draw with chalk or old paintbrushes and water on sidewalks or fences. Sticks can become pencils when used to write in dirt or sand.

STEP 3

Take your child's lead by writing about what interests them in their environment.

STEP 4

Demonstrate writing words and encourage them to write alongside you. Then, have them draw a picture to go with the word.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Have them focus only on drawing a picture to go with the word.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Add watercolors to your outside playtime.
- Allow your child to dampen chalk and discuss the difference in the appearance of dry and wet chalk.
- Make a leaf print by placing a piece of paper on top of a leaf. Then use a writing tool to scrape over the paper.

Writing During Play

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Learning to write is a process that begins with an exploration of writing tools, moves to drawing and scribbling—including making letter-like marks—and continues through using recognizable letters to write words.

WHY?

Writing is an ideal way for children to express their thoughts, inventiveness, and originality.



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Let's Make a Blueprint



Materials: Blocks, paper, writing tools, pencil, markers, crayon.

STEP 1

Distribute the blocks in a play area and encourage your child to build whatever they can imagine.

Tell your child you are going to make a blueprint of the block structure they built together.

STEP 2

Ask your child what they have built. Write down what they say.

STEP 3

Ask your child about the features of the structure. For instance, is it tall or short, what color is the structure, and does it have doors or windows? Then have them draw what they've built with blocks.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Practice stacking materials and just describing them to your child. You might say, "This is a blue block. It is a rectangle." Encourage your child to use their own words and babbles to describe the structure.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Use non-traditional building materials found around the house. Such as milk carton caps, toilet paper rolls, boxes, cups, etc.
- Use an old shoe box to create a structure by painting/coloring and cutting the box.

Let's Make a Blueprint

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Learning to write is a process that begins with an exploration of writing tools, moves to drawing and scribbling, includes making letter-like marks, and continues through using recognizable letters to write words.

WHY?

Writing is an excellent way for children to express their thoughts, creativity, and uniqueness.



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Dialogic Reading



Materials: Book.

STEP 1

Prompt your child with a question about the book such as “Where are they going?” or “What are they doing?”

STEP 2

Evaluate the response your child gives by thinking about the answers. Did they give an accurate response? Was it more than one word?

STEP 3

Expand on what your child said by giving more vocabulary. If your child said that the characters were going to the store, you could tell them there are many types of stores and give examples like grocery or hardware stores to expand their vocabulary. Repeat your child’s response and invite them to say what you said. Your child could say they are going to the grocery store to buy bread.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Focus on asking one type of question. Example: Why do you think that happened?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Thought-provoking questions often ask Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. These types of questions get children thinking beyond the right or wrong answer.
- Try pre-reading the next book you would like to read aloud to your child to see if it helps with dialogic reading.
- Add a twist to reading with your child and take the book outside. Reading outside is fun and families might make a connection between the book and nature.

Dialogic Reading

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

How to extend and expand their vocabulary.

WHY?

This is a powerful and meaningful way for children to develop and practice language. Reading aloud with your child is a powerful bonding experience. When you read aloud to your child, it creates physical closeness that helps your child associate reading with a feeling of comfort.



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READ / TALK TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Storytelling



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Share a story from when you were young.

STEP 2

Work with your child to create a story about a family event—big or small. Write the story with your child. Allow your child to write simple words. Help them find the beginning sound for the simple words.

STEP 3

Draw a picture to go with the story.

STEP 4

Have your child retell the story to you or other family members and friends.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Focus on the beginning sound and write one letter instead of an entire word when writing.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Put pictures you drew for storytelling in an important place such as the refrigerator so you can revisit them.
- Find stories everywhere—even when you are out on an errand.

Storytelling

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Retelling a familiar family story increases your child's ability to remember that story, and it is an important literacy skill. When a child hears a story that is from another person's point of view, it helps them see someone else's perspective and build empathy. Help your child make predictions about what will happen next. This helps children use real world experience in their response.

WHY?

Storytelling is one way we pass information from one generation to the next. Families can connect through storytelling by telling an oral story, by revisiting a written family story, or by reading a book.



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READ / TALK TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Ring, Ring, Ring Telephone Time



Materials: An old phone or any object you can pretend is a telephone.

STEP 1

Pretend to call your child on the phone. Hand them the phone and gesture for them to pick it up by saying, “Hello, _____!” If the child doesn’t respond, pretend to hang up and press the buttons to recall them. Say, “I hope _____ picks up the phone this time.”

STEP 2

Engage in back and forth conversation allowing the child to guide the conversation if possible.

STEP 3

Encourage your child to give you a call and follow their lead.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Set your child on your lap and make a pretend phone call to a stuffed friend together.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Allow your child to use an actual phone to call a family member or friend.
- Point out the numbers on the telephone. Help your child dial their phone number.

Ring, Ring, Ring, Telephone Time

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning how to talk with and listen to other people. However, this skill takes time and practice to master. This activity will provide you with preparation, prompts, and guidance to help your child become a great communicator.

WHY?

Having conversations helps children make friends, be heard, ask for what they need, and develop strong relationships with others.



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Silly Faces



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Make silly faces with your child. Then, encourage your child to make faces with you.

STEP 2

Label and describe the facial expressions and what they mean: happy, sad, disappointed, excited, silly, bored, afraid, etc.

STEP 3

Talk about things that could make you feel happy, sad, disappointed, excited, silly, bored, afraid, etc.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Only focus on two facial features: happy and sad.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Read a book or magazine about feelings and point out various facial expressions.
- Talk about your feelings throughout your day. Express how and why you are feeling a certain way.

Silly Faces

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that making music is a fun way to play. This helps their brain and body grow as they learn how to compare sounds.

WHY?

Your child learns best by playing! Keeping a steady beat helps your child learn how to identify different sounds and rhythms. This helps their brain learn early math concepts like counting, size, and frequency.



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Animal Sights & Sounds



Materials: Any animal representation: animal photo, animal drawing, stuffed animal.

STEP 1

Show examples of animals such as: cat, dog, cow, pig, lizard, bunny, or duck.

STEP 2

Label the animal on a chart or list using writing materials. You can do this, or your child can help you do this if they are able.

STEP 3

Make the animal sound while signing the animal for the child. You can sign the animal if you know the proper sign, or you can use your hands and body to make gestures for the animal. You might use two fingers behind your ears to make a rabbit. Or, you could fold your arms under and pretend to flap like a duck.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Label the animal and make the sound.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Sing “Old MacDonald Had A Farm” and add animal signs.
- Visit a farm or the zoo to learn more about different animals.
- Read a book about animals
- Talk about the other parts of the animal: tail, snout, hoof, etc.

Animal Sights & Sounds

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to respond and engage in verbal and non-verbal communication, such as sign language, animal sounds, labeling animals, songs, and chants.

WHY?

Your child is learning to observe, listen, and respond to the communication of others.



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READ / TALK TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

A Book In a Nook



Materials: Reading materials: books, magazines, newspapers, flyers, menus, and stories your child may have written.

Comfy Seating: pillows, beanbag, etc. Small soft toys. Book bin.

STEP 1

Create a small, comfortable, quiet place to sit and read a book. Read the title of the story out loud. Point out the first letter in the title. Explain that each letter makes a sound.

Example: “Blue Bird Has a Song.” Blue starts with a “B.” “B” says /b/.

STEP 2

Read the story. Point at the first word stating that we read from our left to our right. As you read, help your child find context clues within the story.

STEP 3

Ask your child to tell you what happened at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Read the story and describe what you see in the pictures.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Have your child read the story to you.
- Find the letters in their name within the book.
- Find rhyming words in the book. Note that rhyming words end with the same letters.
- Decorate your reading nook, complete with a book basket, soft seating, and various types of reading material.

A Book In a Nook

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

A book nook helps create a love of reading and good reading habits.

WHY?

Creating a small, quiet, soft space for reading encourages your children to cozy up with a good book.



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The Artist Within!



Materials: Writing tools and materials: paper, markers, crayon, paint, glue, and scissors.

STEP 1

Ask your child to draw a picture of their favorite place, food, toy, person, or thing to do. You can also show your child a picture of a special event or memory from when they were younger.

STEP 2

Ask your child what they are making. Write down simple words like Walmart, pizza, cars, Daddy, swim. You can also write down what you see as your child babbles and interacts with a photo.

STEP 3

Have your child rewrite the word. Praise them for any marks that they make. They do not need to make the letters correctly. Simple marks and scribbles are a great way to learn how to write.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Use photos of special events or memories to talk with your child and label different parts of the photo.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Make a list of their favorite things and let them trace the words.
- Describe the curves and lines that make letters. Example: “B” Has a straight line and two small curves.
- Write down the sentence they used to describe their drawing.

The Artist Within!

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Retelling a familiar family story increases your child's ability to remember that story, and it is an important literacy skill. When a child hears a story that is from another person's point of view, it helps them see someone else's perspective and build empathy. Help your child make predictions about what will happen next. This helps children use real world experience in their response.

WHY?

Storytelling is one way we pass information from one generation to the next. Families can connect through storytelling by telling an oral story, by revisiting a written family story, or by reading a book.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

A Trip to the Park



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Inform your child that you will be visiting the park. Remind them that we stay healthy by eating a balanced meal and getting exercise. Ask your child if they know how to get to the park. Ask which direction the park is located. Should we go left, right, or straight ahead?

STEP 2

Once at the park, discuss ways that you can stay safe. For instance, look both ways (left and right) before crossing the street. Explain safety guidelines such as stranger danger and what to do if you get lost.

STEP 3

On the way home, discuss community helpers or community buildings that you might see. Then, talk about how community helpers improve our neighborhoods.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Tell your child that you are going to play at the park. Ask is the park close or far away? Should you turn or continue to go straight to get to the park? Talk about ways to stay safe at the park. Point out one community helper.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Discuss safety rules for the play equipment.
- Visit the post office, fire station, police station, or take a ride on a public bus.
- Learn about the different types of equipment that a nurse, veterinarian, lifeguard, janitor, astronaut, farmer, crossing guard, baker, or teacher might use.
- Count the number of trees you pass on the way home.

A Trip to the Park

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning about their community and the neighborhood that surrounds them. They explore directional words and counting while building communication skills and learning safety rules.

WHY?

To explore math concepts and gain knowledge about their environment and the people who live and work in their community.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Storytelling with Puppets



Materials: Stuffed animals or doll. Transportation toy: car, plane, bus, or boat. Paper, writing utensil: crayons, markers, or pencil.

STEP 1

Collect materials and tell your child you will create a story about going on a trip. Let your child decide where you might go, how you will get there, and who should attend. Be sure to add a funny plot twist.

STEP 2

Let your child select which puppet, animal, or doll will be each character in the story.

STEP 3

Chat about obstacles you might face, like wanting to go to the beach in the winter or someone not being able to attend the trip because they have to work or go to school. Ask your child how these obstacles make them feel and what they can do about them.

STEP 4

Reassure your child that it is okay to feel any feeling. Then, help them think of solutions to the obstacles like planning the trip when the person is out of school or off work and planning the trip during a warmer season.

STEP 5

Help your child tell the story using the props for characters and transportation. Be sure to include the solutions to the obstacles you discussed.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Tell a story about a trip you have taken. Discuss how it made you feel and any obstacles you had to endure. Be sure to point out how you came up with solutions to your problems.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Draw a picture about your trip.
- Add a funny plot twist to your trip, like you all discovered a fish driving the boat.

Storytelling with Puppets

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

To promote connection and build upon language and literacy skills

WHY?

Storytelling is one way we pass information from one generation to the next. Families can connect through storytelling by telling an oral story, revisiting a written family story, or reading a book.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Taking Time



Materials: Stuffed animals or toys.

STEP 1

Help your child find a special toy or stuffed animal for this activity. Tell your child that you are going to practice talking and taking turns. Start by saying, “Hello! My name is __. What is your name?”

STEP 2

Give your child time to answer with their name. Then, ask them another question that they can answer. You might ask them their favorite toy, food, or game. Wait for your child to respond.

STEP 3

Help your child ask their toy or stuffed animals the same questions. Pretend to be the toy and answer your child’s questions.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Repeat your questions at different times during the day. Practice the back-and-forth talking your child is learning.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have your child ask you two or three questions in a row. Then, you can ask them the same questions. See how many times you can take turns when talking before you run out of things to say!

Taking Time

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning how to make friends and practice taking turns when talking.

WHY?

Your child will meet many people during their life. Learning how to take turns when talking is important for their brain growth and social-emotional skills.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

What Will We Do Today?



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Think of a three-step routine your family can do each day. You can start with bedtime or when you wake up in the morning. Choose three things you want to do with your child each time you practice this routine.

STEP 2

Sit down with your child and tell them you will practice a routine today. Say, “First we will...” Then, “Next we will...” Finally, “Last we will...” Show your child what you will do during each step. You might choose to get dressed, eat breakfast, and read a book together in the morning.

STEP 3

Make a goal to practice your three steps every day for a week. Your child will start to remember each step and will get excited with you.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Your family can make a routine with one or two steps to start. At bedtime, your routine might be to read a book and sing a song before going to sleep.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Ask your child if they can remember the steps you do each day. Once they have learned all the steps, you can add new ones to help your child become more independent.

What Will We Do Today?

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that there are some routines that happen each day. Routines help your child feel safe and connected to you! A routine might be “wake up, change clothes, eat breakfast.” Every family has different routines during their day.

WHY?

Talking about daily routines helps your child think about events in order. By using the words “first,” “next,” and “last,” they are learning what a series is. This will make changing tasks easier during the day and give them social–emotional skills they need for school.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

How Do You Feel Today?



Materials: Mirror.

STEP 1

Help your child learn how to identify the four basic emotions: happy, sad, scared, and angry. Sit close to your child when they feel one of these emotions.

STEP 2

Use the mirror to show your child what emotion they are feeling. Say, “Your face looks sad. You are crying. This is what sad looks like.”

STEP 3

Help your child with their emotion. Have them take deep breaths, pat them on the back, or hold them close until they are calm. Explain that everyone has emotions.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Place a mirror on the floor during tummy time for your child to see themselves as they play.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have your child point out different faces in books, magazines, and newspapers. Ask your child what emotion you think each person is feeling and why. Have your child make each face and pretend to feel that emotion.

How Do You Feel Today?

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to connect feelings with face expressions and body movements. They are also learning how to name feelings using their own words and actions.

WHY?

Feelings are not good or bad. Helping your child learn different feelings and how to manage them in a healthy way is a skill needed to be ready for school.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Calming Breaths



Materials: A stuffed animal or soft toy.

STEP 1

Once your child has practiced naming emotions they feel, they can practice calming themselves. Tell your child that taking deep breaths helps our brain and heart calm down, which helps our body feel safe and peaceful.

STEP 2

Lay down on the floor with your child. Take a soft toy or stuffed animal and place it on your stomach. Tell your child that when you take slow, long, and deep breaths the stuffed friend will move up and down safely on your stomach. Have your child practice breathing slowly with their own toy.

STEP 3

Show your child how your stuffed animal moves quickly and falls off when you breathe short and fast. Ask your child to practice short breaths to see what happens. The next time your child is having a big emotion like sadness or anger, have them try the calming breaths with their stuffed animal.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Younger children will need you to show them how to breathe slowly. You can pick them up, place them on your chest, and breathe deeply and slowly with them when they are upset.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have your child make up breathing games to help calm down when they are upset. They might place a stuffed animal on their head and take three deep breaths to calm down, all while keeping the animal from falling.

Calming Breaths

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to regulate their body and breathing. This is an important skill when your child is upset and needs help to calm down.

WHY?

Taking calming breaths when your child is upset is an important school readiness skill.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Look What I Can Do!



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Children enjoy helping and feeling independent. Think of some things your child can do to help you at home or when you are out and about. They might put on their shoes, carry an item, or hold your hand when crossing a street.

STEP 2

Tell your child that you need their help during the day. Ask them to help you by doing one thing you know they can do, like put on their shoes. As they put on their shoes, be sure to tell them what a big helper they are being.

STEP 3

Think of a new thing you would like your child to do. Once they can put on their shoes, they may be ready to put on their socks AND shoes. Show them how to do their new skill first. After a few days, have them try to do it on their own. If they get upset, gently help them and practice more.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Your child may need you to show them how to do something new many times before they are ready to do it on their own. Try this process: you do it for them, you help them do it, then they do it on their own.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Ask your child to help you by doing two or three things in a row. You might ask them to put on their socks, put on their shoes, and stand by the door to get ready to leave. Following more than one instruction at a time is an important school readiness skill.

Look What I Can Do!

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to follow instructions and build resiliency when a task is hard. Resiliency is how well your child handles things that don't go their way. Sometimes children may want to give up. You can help your child keep going by practicing and doing tasks again and again.

WHY?

Following instructions is a life skill your child will need to be ready for kindergarten. It is natural for your child to need help or not have the skills needed for some tasks. Encourage them to keep trying, and they will get better and learn resiliency.



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CONNECT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Our Community Map



Materials: Writing materials.

STEP 1

Explain to your child that you are part of a community. There are many types of communities, such as schools, neighborhoods, and places of worship. Tell your child that today you will explore a community that is special to your family.

STEP 2

Sit down with your child and tell them that you are going to make a map of your community. Start by drawing where your family lives. Write your family's name or address by your drawing. Choose two or three special places in your community—like a store, library, school, or place of worship. Label those on your drawing, too.

STEP 3

Make a plan with your child to visit these places in your community over the next few weeks. When you visit, take your map with you. Have your child draw any new places they see on the map. Ask your child what place they like to visit in your community.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Start with a map of where your family lives. Draw the people who live with you and a few things around your home such as trees, cars, buildings, or pets.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Ask your child to think of the different people who live and work in your community. Begin to add them to your map and label them.

Our Community Map

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that they are a part of many special, beautiful communities! This will be true for the rest of their lives. Everyone has a community where they belong.

WHY?

As your child starts to understand life beyond their own body, they will start to see how they connect to others. This builds how they understand the world around them and helps them to think about life in different ways.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Process Art



Materials: Materials found outside or inside the house including sticks, rocks, shells, acorns, seeds, tape, scissors, glue, box, plastic container, or bottle cap.

STEP 1

Think about the process of making art instead of the product. Try to focus more on the experience. Choose an area that can get a little messy. Outside is always an excellent place to create art!

STEP 2

When creating art together, ask open-ended questions like:

- Tell me about what you made.
- Where did you get your idea?
- How did you make those lines?
- What made you decide to use those colors?

Then, encourage children to add their answers to their artwork.

STEP 3

Help your child create a story about what they made.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Use materials found around your house or in nature to create art. Focus on the process and ask questions about the art piece. Remember, it's not about what they make but the process.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Try adding paint to glue, salt, flour, shaving cream, or cornstarch to paint.
- Think of ways you can recycle unused materials.

Process Art

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that there is a process to creating art. They learn to talk through the process and build their cognitive and language skills while strengthening their connection with you. Keep in mind there isn't a right or wrong way to create art.

WHY?

Process art helps your child use their imagination to create. They also take risks and try new things while exploring around them. Also, they will get the chance to use problem-solving skills and flexible thinking.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Open-Ended Materials



Materials: Open-ended materials such as box, bottle tops, sticks, buttons, cardboard, wooden blocks, and recycled materials.

STEP 1

With your child, collect open-ended materials such as sticks, natural items, buttons, cardboard, wooden blocks, and recyclable items.

STEP 2

Box the items and add labels together. Your child can begin to sound out words and eventually write them.

STEP 3

Work as a team and use your imagination to create new things with the materials. Maybe a car, building, purse, pool, or a swing set. Let your child take the lead. You can help increase their vocabulary by adding new words. For instance, if they are building a tower, use words like moat, spire, or structure. You can also make musical instruments or practice drumming. Together, use your phone or computer to look up fun facts about your creations.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Collect materials and have your child help you find the beginning sound. Write the words for your child.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Think back to when you played with open-ended material like a box. Then work together to retell the story of how you played.
- Add art materials to your activity and color or paint your new creations.
- After making your creations, talk about how the pieces make you feel. Play music that expresses that feeling for you. Dance and enjoy your new creations.

Open-Ended Materials

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is exploring things found in their world while using technology and being exposed to musical concepts.

WHY?

Open-ended materials allow children to use their imagination to dream up new stories and situations.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Box Play



Materials: Boxes, writing tools, stickers, scrap fabric.

STEP 1

Designate a place for creating and introduce your child to the space.

STEP 2

Provide one big box or several boxes of different shapes and sizes. Discuss the differences in the shapes and sizes.

STEP 3

Observe how your child interacts with the box and ask questions like:

- How big is it?
- Can you fit inside?
- What does it remind you of?

STEP 4

Make suggestions about what you could create. Let your child take the lead. Offer materials like paint, stickers, paper, or scraps of fabric.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Limit the number of boxes and materials.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Build a car or a playhouse using a box.
- Open both ends of the box and turn it sideways to make a tunnel.
- Pretend to be a jack-in-the- box.

Box Play

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is developing their creativity, testing ideas, and solving problems.

WHY?

When we allow children the freedom and opportunity to explore, create, fail, and reassess, we are helping them form connections in their brains. All engaging experiences—even ones from cardboard boxes—help children learn about the world around them and how they influence it.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Water Play



Materials: Optional: funnels, strainers, squirt bottles, cups, spoons, old pump soap bottles, and food coloring.

STEP 1

Tell your child that you are going to be playing with water today! Use a plastic container of water, a bathtub or sink filled with some water, or an outdoor baby pool for this activity.

STEP 2

Show them a bottle of food coloring. Ask your child what they think will happen if you add a drop. Then, explore the changes in the water.

STEP 3

Pour and scoop the water while filling containers and explore words like more, less, full, and empty.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Leave the food coloring out and explore measurement.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Consider using different cups or other objects and fill them with different amounts of water. Tap them with a spoon or other object to make different types of music.
- Splash in a puddle or talk about splashing in a puddle. Ask your child what they think would happen and why the water flies in the air.

Water Play

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning measurement, making predictions, and expanding their thinking skills while playing with water.

WHY?

Through this type of play, children build on their knowledge of the scientific process and nature and develop an appreciation of the arts.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Bodies of Water



Materials: Funnels, strainers, squirt bottles, cups, spoons, old pump soap bottles, and food coloring.

STEP 1

Ask your child if they would like to take a trip to the beach, lake, or other body of water nearby.

STEP 2

Talk about things you might take with you. For instance, you might take the shovel, sifter, sand wheel, fishing pole, bait, tackle box, or life vest.

STEP 3

Discuss things you might see, like: people swimming, tubing, fishing, boating, building sandcastles, starfish, seashells, seaweed.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Sit with your child and explore the items immediately around you. What can your child reach? Ask them how it feels in their hands and help them use descriptive words like wet, rough, smooth, bumpy, warm, and sticky.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Use different materials like sand, dirt, packing peanuts, or pebbles instead of water.
- Show your child a bottle of food coloring. Ask them what they think will happen if you add the liquid to the water.
- Move water from one place to another with a pump or bucket.

Bodies of Water

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Water play goes well beyond splashing your child; learning math, science, language, and creative thinking skills can all occur while playing with water.

WHY?

Your child learns best when playing. This activity is designed to help your child become creative and learn how to solve problems.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Shadow Play



Materials: Flashlight, toys, paper, pencil, camera.

STEP 1

Point out shadows in your home. Use a flashlight if you need to create some. Ask your child questions like:

- What is that?
- How did that get there?

STEP 2

Trace or draw the shadow with a finger or onto a piece of paper. Talk about how you have to use curved and straight lines to trace a shadow.

STEP 3

Compare your shadow with your child's shadow. Use math and shape words like larger, smaller, taller, shorter, circle, triangle, square, and rectangle.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Play "I Spy a Shadow" around your home.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Ask your child what a shadow reminds them of and share what you think.
- Take pictures of the shadows you make. Discuss how shadows change depending on where the light hits the object and how close the light is. This idea leads to conversations about how the Earth moves around the Sun.

Shadow Play

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning prewriting skills by drawing, comparing, and discussing shapes. Also, they are exploring technology, math, science, and language skills.

WHY?

This activity encourages persistence by sticking to a plan. Explore and compare experiences and build upon knowledge of the scientific process, tools, and technology.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Games Galore



Materials: Soft items such as socks, washcloths, small stuffed animals, dish towels, and other small clothing items.

STEP 1

Tell your child that you can play games anytime, anywhere. Have your child help you collect small soft items, such as stuffed toys, socks, or even washcloths for this task.

STEP 2

Show your child how to make a ball with these items. Some items will be small enough to be a ball. Tell your child that you will now take turns tossing the soft item back and forth to each other.

STEP 3

Take turns tossing your ball with each other. Toss different items and see if they are smaller, larger, or the same. You can use your arms to make a “basket” and practice tossing your soft items into the hole.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Help your child develop their hand muscles by making a soft ball together. Some children may just wad up the item and hand it to you. That is fine!

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have your child count the number of times you toss your item back and forth. Can your child catch the item three times in a row? Count and see!

Games Galore

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that normal objects can turn into items for play. Play can happen anytime or anywhere.

WHY?

Your child learns best through play. This task may help them grow the muscles in their hands and their eyes and hands work together for playing and writing. They may also learn basic math ideas like counting and shapes.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Keeping a Beat



Materials: Use pots and pans to strike. Make wood or plastic spoons drum sticks. Use items that rattle and other open-ended materials for making music.

STEP 1

Tell your child that they can help you make music anytime and anywhere! Find some items to tap and sing your child's favorite song. Tap on the items you chose while singing.

STEP 2

Encourage your child to sing and tap along with you as you sing. The alphabet song is a great example of a song with a steady beat.

STEP 3

Have your child pick the next song that you will sing together. Have them choose which item they want to use to tap, drum, or shake while singing.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Start with songs that have a slow and steady rhythm. Hold your child in your lap and help them tap, sing, shake, or drum along with you.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have your child make their own music toys with found things like string, a washcloth, and an empty bowl or box.

Keeping a Beat

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that making music is a fun way to play. This helps their brain and body grow as they learn how to compare sounds.

WHY?

Your child learns best by playing! Keeping a steady beat helps your child learn how to identify different sounds and rhythms. This helps their brain learn early math concepts like counting, size, and frequency.



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PLAY TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

All About Me



Materials: Paper, mirror, writing materials, photos of your child at different ages.

STEP 1

Tell your child that there is no other child like them in the world! They are special and loved by you. Show your child pictures or drawings of them when they were a baby.

STEP 2

Tell your child that they are always growing and learning. Talk about one or two special things they did when they were younger, like when they rolled over, sat up, walked, jumped, or talked.

STEP 3

Tell your child that you are going to create a special book about all of the amazing things they have learned to do. Use drawings and pictures to talk about what your child did when they were younger and compare that to what they are doing now. You might write, “First you learned how to walk. Now you are running races at home!”

MAKE IT EASIER:

Focus on one or two special things that your child has recently learned how to do.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Ask your child what special skill they want to do when they are older. If they are running now, they might want to run a race at school or play a sport. Make a goal and draw a picture of your child learning that skill. Place it on your refrigerator so they can remember how special they are.

All About Me

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that they have unique skills that make them special! Focusing on what your child is great at will help them grow and learn even more.

WHY?

Children learn best by playing and connecting with their family members. When you show your child that they have great skills, you are building their confidence.



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COUNT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Bath Time Fun



Materials: Water and a tub or container. Optional: bath toys, safe kitchen tools like measuring cups.

STEP 1

In the bath or in a bowl or container, play in the water with your child.

STEP 2

In the bath, try using different toys or safe kitchen tools to play with and explore the water. You could try measuring cups, funnels, bowls, or strainers.

STEP 3

Talk with your child about what they are doing. “You’re using the spoon to splash the water!” Ask questions like “Will it float or will it sink?” This is a great time for math talk—try using words like more, less, full, empty.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Infants will enjoy just playing in the water and exploring how it feels. Follow their lead!

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

In a container of water, you might add items from nature to explore differences. What happens to sand, rocks, or twigs when they are placed in water? Do they sink or float? Explore after a rain shower and find puddles for jumping.

Bath Time Fun

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that routines can include fun activities like playing, counting, and learning.

WHY?

Your child learns best through play and interaction with their surroundings. Bath time is a great way to incorporate water play and learning with your child, while making the task more enjoyable.



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COUNT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Little Helper



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Toddlers love to help! Ask your child to be your big helper as you get ready for the day.

STEP 2

Ask your child: What do you need to get ready? Shoes, phone, car keys, diaper bag? Invite them to bring you what you need.

STEP 3

Do you have everything you need? Thank your child for their help in getting ready!

MAKE IT EASIER:

Start by getting ready for a short walk and ask your child to find shoes and a jacket.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Invite your child to brainstorm with you what you might need for a trip to the park or the grocery store. Make a list together and let them take the lead!

Little Helper

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that activities during the day often occur in sequences. Socks must go on before shoes and you need to arrive at a playground before you can play on it together.

WHY?

Understanding basic sequences will help your child develop a sense of independence and autonomy. It will also help them learn valuable social and math skills.



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COUNT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Nature Walk



Materials: None. (Optional: Found items from nature)

STEP 1

Take a walk with your child and have fun with math talk! There are many opportunities to compare (Which stone is bigger?), assess (How many acorns did we find?), note similarities and differences (Does the duck have fur like the bunny does?), and categorize (See if you can find some red leaves). You can also talk about size (Which tree or house is taller?), estimate distance (Is the park close to our house or far away?), and practice counting (Let's count how many steps until we get to the corner).

STEP 2

Collect small twigs, shells, acorns, or pebbles that can be used to practice counting with your child. They can also be sorted based on shape, size, color, or item (for instance, all the leaves in one pile and the twigs in another).

STEP 3

Encourage your child to count the different objects they have collected throughout your walk. Make a prediction the next time you walk to see if you will find more or less of those items.

MAKE IT EASIER:

It's okay if your child isn't ready to engage in a conversation yet. Count steps aloud as you walk together, or simply talk aloud using math words as you play together. (You found a big leaf! Look, the one I found is smaller than yours.)

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Start a nature collection from items you and your child find on your walks. They can use these items for continued math play, pretend play, or making art!

Nature Walk

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that there is a process to creating art. They learn to talk through the process and build their cognitive and language skills while strengthening their connection with you. Keep in mind there isn't a right or wrong way to create art.

WHY?

Process art helps your child use their imagination to create. They also take risks and try new things while exploring around them. Also, they will get the chance to problem solve and show flexibility.



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COUNT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Shape Scavenger Hunt



Materials: A list of shapes (circle, square, rectangle, triangle, heart, star, oval, octagon, hexagon, and diamond).

STEP 1

Tell your child that you are going to go on a shape hunt today. You will have a list of shapes you want to find throughout the day. You can focus on a few different shapes or all of the shapes on your list.

STEP 2

Begin by searching for shapes in your home. Can you find shapes where your child plays? Encourage your child to show you the shape and practice saying its name.

STEP 3

Now, look outside for shapes. Can you find shapes like the ones you found inside? Are there different shapes outside? Make a list of the different shapes you saw today and look for them in the future.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Focus on just one or two simple shapes like a circle and square. Have your child practice pointing to the shape and tracing it with their fingers. They can also practice saying the shape names.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Have a shape race! Tell your child you want them to find a certain number of shapes (three triangles) or a list of shapes (triangle, square, circle) in a set amount of time. Can they beat the timer?

Shape Scavenger Hunt

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to identify basic shapes and their characteristics. Shapes can be found anywhere and everywhere!

WHY?

Your child will need to know basic shapes as a part of school readiness. Being able to identify shapes and compare their characteristics helps your child learn important math and cognitive concepts.



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COUNT TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

What Comes Next?



Materials: Blocks, stackable objects, books, and assorted toys.

STEP 1

Tell your child that you will practice making patterns by building. Patterns are repeated designs. You can make a pattern of blocks by repeating colors, size, or shapes.

STEP 2

Make a simple pattern using the items you chose with your child. Have your child help you repeat the pattern by adding the next item. You might make a pattern by color, using red and yellow blocks. If the pattern is red-yellow-red-yellow, the next color would be red. Help your child repeat the pattern correctly.

STEP 3

Have your child make a simple pattern for you to follow. They can stack them side-by-side or one on top of the other. Repeat the pattern with your child's help.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Start with simple patterns that your child might recognize. Colors and shapes are easier for younger children.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Make harder patterns by using other designs. Instead of a pattern with just colors, you might have one that is both colors and size.

What Comes Next?

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning the value of patterns while playing. Patterns can be hard to learn because there are so many ways to make them: shape, size, and color are all examples.

WHY?

Children need to learn not only how to count and point out numbers but also how to find, sort, and make patterns. This activity helps your child learn these math concepts in a fun way.



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MOVE TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Outdoor Play



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Head outside with your child and follow their lead. Notice what your child likes when they are outdoors. Birds, trees, dirt, and bugs are fascinating topics for children.

STEP 2

Have a conversation with your child about things your family finds in nature. There are many opportunities for science and nature discoveries outside.

STEP 3

If your child is interested in bugs, find one they like, and have them draw and color it. Then, later as a family, you can look up bugs matching the description to learn more about them. If they aren't interested in bugs, try leaves or anything else that catches their attention.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Have a conversation with your child about things they like to do outside. While outdoors, you can ride a bike, race, toss a ball, or blow bubbles with your child.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

- Reflect on your feelings about the outdoors. Think about how you feel being outside and how that feeling transfers to your child.
- Take activities outdoors. Consider taking activities like painting, reading, journaling, and playing with your child outdoors.
- Reflect on how you felt after spending time with your family outside. Think about what was interesting to your child, what you played, and how you played. Think about ways the game or activity could be continued in either environment—indoors or outdoors.

Outdoor Play

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to encounter situations that involve risk like balancing on a log or curb, or climbing a tree or hill. Children thrive and engage their higher-order thinking skills when they manage risks themselves. Also, they are working on locomotor skills and writing skills.

WHY?

Being outside is the perfect environment for children to move. Fresh air and sunshine can do wonders for our well-being. Spending time outside with your family has numerous benefits for physical and mental health. It also creates learning opportunities. Outdoor play helps children develop movement skills that strengthen their muscles. Physical activity is important to help children grow healthy and strong.



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MOVE TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Tummy Time



Materials: Toys to reach for.

STEP 1

Lay your child down on their stomach on a firm, safe surface, like a floor or mat.

STEP 2

Put some interesting toys near your child and encourage them to reach for them.

STEP 3

If you can, get down and do tummy time with them—playtime is more fun with you!

MAKE IT EASIER:

If tummy time is frustrating for your child, try putting them on your stomach and hold up toys for them to reach and grasp.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

When your child is getting close to crawling, place interesting toys a little farther away to encourage children to crawl to them.

Tummy Time

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning how to control some of the most important muscles in their bodies. Developing strong core muscles in the stomach and arms will help your child grasp and reach for items and gain the necessary skills needed to sit up, crawl, or walk in the future.

WHY?

Tummy time exercises your baby's core muscles and gives them important practice with reaching and grasping objects.



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MOVE TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Animal Walk



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Let's move like different animals! Ask your child, "Which animal do you want to move like first?"

STEP 2

You might hop like bunnies, stomp like dinosaurs, or even slither like snakes. What movements can your child recall?

STEP 3

Continue trying different animal movements. Which did your child like best? Which movements were harder?

MAKE IT EASIER:

Start with movements you already know your child can do in order to build their confidence. Let them lead the way in deciding what movements to try next.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Take turns playing "follow the leader" and mimic each other's movements. Or, play charades and try to guess which animals you are!

Animal Walk

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning how to use larger sets of muscles in their body, in a fun and interactive way. Pretending to be different animals also encourages your child's imagination and creative thinking skills.

WHY?

Animal movements are a fun way for your child to exercise and learn new ways to move their body. They are learning how to balance, to make movements in a certain order, and to use movement to express themselves!



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MOVE TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Obstacle Course



Materials: Furniture.

STEP 1

Brainstorm some fun movements: crawling, hopping, jumping, climbing, stomping. What others can you think of?

STEP 2

Set up or move furniture and other household items to mark where your child should make each movement. They might crawl under chairs, then make big steps over some shoeboxes, then hop until they get to the wall.

STEP 3

Make your obstacle course your own and teach your child what to do. Then let them see what they can do!

MAKE IT EASIER:

Try starting with just a few stations in your obstacle course. When they have mastered those, add more stations and more challenging movements.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Add more challenging movements like skipping or walking backward. Then encourage them to complete the course faster and beat a timer!

Obstacle Course

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning how to navigate the world around them by using larger muscle groups. This activity also helps them learn how to think creatively and problem solve in different situations.

WHY?

Completing an obstacle course helps your child learn balance and physical control. They are learning new ways to move their body and improve their coordination.



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MOVE TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Cereal Art



Materials: Cereal. Optional: glue, paper, tweezers.

STEP 1

Spread out cereal on a table and make a picture with it!

STEP 2

Model for your child how to use a pincer grasp (first finger and thumb) to pick up cereal pieces and place them where you want them for your picture.

STEP 3

Try making a circle, a smiley face, or even a tower. Encourage your child to keep using a pincer grasp to pick up the cereal pieces.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Practice using a pincer grasp to eat cereal or other finger foods at mealtime.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

For older children, try using tweezers to pick up cereal pieces. They can use glue to make cereal art on paper, too!

Cereal Art

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning to use the small muscles in their hand during this activity. They are also learning how to be creative and problem solve.

WHY?

Play that uses your child's small muscles (in their hands and fingers) strengthens the muscles they will need to use a fork, pencil, scissors, and more.



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MOVE TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

At the Playground



Materials: None.

STEP 1

Visit a playground and play with your child!

STEP 2

When something is hard, encourage your child to keep trying. Cheer them on when they are persistent!

STEP 3

Try playing “follow the leader” to help your child feel more confident exploring new areas of the playground. They can watch how you climb or slide before trying it themselves.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Hold hands on tricky areas or when your child feels nervous. Remember that children should always go down the slide by themselves!

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Challenge your child to try new activities. Can they climb the rock wall? Go down the tallest slide? Swing by themselves?

At the Playground

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning important movement skills like climbing stairs, balancing, and controlling their bodies. Activities like monkey bars and swinging will strengthen their arm and leg muscles, too!

WHY?

Your child is also learning to react to what is around them—their environment. You are also teaching them to be persistent, or keep trying, when they face challenges.



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MOVE TOGETHER FAMILY GUIDES

Kitchen Helper



Materials: Child-safe items from your kitchen or pretend food.

STEP 1

Pick a day and meal for your child to help make during the week. Tell them they will get to be your kitchen helper while you prepare a meal.

STEP 2

You can let your child mix, measure, and stir while you cook. You could also give them a plastic spoon and pot to pretend to cook with you if they are not ready to cook real food.

STEP 3

Talk to your child while cooking. You can use number words to talk about how much you need to add, or you can use color words to talk about the ingredients you are using.

MAKE IT EASIER:

Some children enjoy pretending to cook alongside you. They can pretend to cook on the floor or at the table while you cook a meal.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

Some children may be ready to help you measure each item as you add it to your dish. You can talk to them about how much of each item will go into your meal. They can also help you count and set timers to know when a meal is ready.

Kitchen Helper

WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

Your child is learning that their body can help your family! Meals are a great way to connect with your child while they learn about cooking.

WHY?

Your child learns best by playing and doing things with you! Making a meal with you will help them learn skills in math, science, literacy, and fine motor skills.



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