

# Footsteps

*Following the child's lead to purposeful learning through hands-on practical activities.*

The following activities provide fun and family-friendly activities and information to support and enrich your child's learning.



Dear Parents,

Your preschooler is growing and changing every day. He is beginning to explore his environment more and is constantly trying out his independence. Play is the child's work, therefore, it is very important for your child to have a wide variety of experiences. Many of the following activities can be done with minimal planning or preparation and many of the necessary materials may already be in your home. The young child loves to imitate adult activities, so try to involve him in all that you do. The following activities are designed to be incorporated into your daily routine, so should be easy and fun.

Encourage any and all of your child's efforts. You are your child's first teacher. MODEL desired behaviors and skills. Turn off technology and talk and listen to your child. Remember to follow your child's lead. There are many easy activities for you to replicate on the Internet. Enjoy your child's uniqueness and his learning.

HSD2 Child Find Team



# Home Activities for You to Do With Your Preschooler

**Body Awareness**-The following activities are designed to be fun for you and your child to do together and to start recognizing his body parts:

- Use a small paintbrush and a bowl of water and have your child “paint” the body part that you ask him to locate. For example, “Jake, paint your leg.” Your child will use the wet paintbrush to touch his leg with the wet paintbrush. You also can have a paintbrush and “paint” your body parts too! Modeling for your child may be necessary.
- Place masking tape on your child’s body parts and have your child remove the tape when you request him to do so, “Jake, take the tape off of your leg.” “Put the tape on your knee.”
- Stand in front of a mirror, have your child locate body parts as you request him to do so, “Jake, touch your nose.”
- Find and identify the source of sounds (such as an alarm clock that ticks, alarms on phones, or a kitchen timer, etc.). Hide the clock or timer in various places within a room and ask your child to find it.
- Use a washcloth, felt, carpet sample, or other cloth and have your child rub a body part that you ask him to locate.
- Parent or child rub lotion on designated body parts.
- Draw simple happy faces and stick figures. Ask child what is missing or what part is needed to complete the picture. “Let’s see, he has one arm, now what does he need?” you can also draw a circle and have child copy that shape, add a line for a body, have child copy, etc.

**Gross Motor**-The following activities are to help your child develop the use of their large muscles. Your child will enjoy using his arms and legs while doing these fun and interesting activities:

- Use kitchen chairs to set up an obstacle course for your child to crawl or walk through. Have him crawl under/over/between chairs.
- Spread pieces of felt (foam, paper, etc.) on the floor and pretend they are puddles. Have your child jump with both feet from one to the other without touching the floor. Place the pieces of felt close enough so that your child will have success. Make sure that the materials do not slip on the floor before having your child jump.

- Have your child imitate animal walks. Look on the Internet for different ways to walk like an animal.
- Use a scarf, small soft ball or small pillow for your child to toss and catch.
- Play bouncing games to music in which your child must bend and straighten their knees. This leads to jumping movements.
- Have child roll to a destination. For example, have child roll to a favorite toy or person. Have child roll back to starting point. Encourage your child to roll on various surfaces, i.e. grass, carpet, floor, etc. Use pillows, rolled up blankets, etc. as obstacles for your child to roll over.
- Use scarves, streamers or ribbons and have your child imitate your arm movements. For example, move the material up and down or in large circular motions. Add music of different speeds and tempos for variety.
- Use empty liter size soda bottles as bowling pins. Have your child roll a ball towards the targets (bottles) to knock them down. Start with three bottles at a time.
- Have child throw beanbags, balls that are soft, or crumpled pieces of newspaper at a designated target, like a mark on the wall or a trashcan.
- Fill a white kitchen trash bag with old rags or crumpled newspaper (your child will be using his fine motor muscles by crumpling the newspaper for the bag). Tie the bag and play "Catch the Cloud." Toss the bag back and forth to each other.
- Help your child walk along curbs, the garden hose, or a line of masking tape on the floor like a balance beam.
- Have your child lift heavy/light things, such as a bucket of sand or the milk jug full of milk, an empty box, or tub of blocks, etc.

**Fine Motor**-The following activities will help your child develop the small muscles in his hands and fingers needed for writing. Set up activities left to write to help train eye muscles for reading.

- Play in beans, water, sand, mud, rice, macaroni, etc. Have child dump, pour, scoop, etc. Large bowls and old plastic swimming pools are great to use. This is a nice sensory activity too.
- Fill a small bowl with water. Show your child how to use a small sponge to soak up water and then twist the sponge into an empty bowl thus transferring the water from one bowl to the other.

- Tear pieces of newspaper into strips or shapes. Crumple newspaper into balls.
- Start a collection of different sized plastic jars with lids. Show your child how to twist off the lids. Then show your child how to match up the lids to the jars and have your child twist the lids back on. (Please keep all medicines out of the reach of your child.)
- Have your child paint with edible "paint." Painting with pudding or whipped cream is a wonderful, but messy experience for your child. Keep the "painting" contained to one area.
- Keep lots of crayons and paper available for your child to draw with. Scribbling is the beginning stage for writing. Remember instead of saying, "What is it?" say, "Tell me about your picture." You may want to break the crayons in half to promote a three finger pencil grasp. No large markers.
- Stack blocks. Have child replicate model designs such as a three cube bridge, six cube tower, six cube pyramid, etc.
- Place pegs in holes. You can use an empty margarine/butter container and punch holes in the top. Use golf tees to put into the holes.
- Hammer golf tees into Styrofoam. Use an old Styrofoam cooler or packing materials and a small wooden mallet or hammer and have child hammer tees.
- Allow your child to participate in the kitchen by peeling eggs, mashing potatoes, tearing lettuce for salads, or adding premeasured ingredients while cooking or baking.
- Cover the bottom of a cookie sheet or soda pop case with salt. Trace simple shapes or letters in the salt and have your child repeat the design. Shake the tray to erase the design.
- Allow your child to cut with scissors. Keep a basket available of old playing cards, index cards, thicker paper (old scrap booking paper), etc. that your child can practice cutting. Keep scissors out of reach when you are not supervising.
- Place pennies into a piggy bank slot.
- Use small tongs and tweezers to transfer objects from one bowl to another or transfer small objects to an ice cube tray. Walmart sells short handled tongs in the cooking section. They have mini hands on the ends and are about \$1.99. Use cotton balls, pompoms, small animals, or anything else of interest.
- Place small objects the floor or table and have your child use his two fingers (middle finger and forefinger) and thumb to pick up small objects.

**Communication**-The following activities are to help your child develop speech, understanding language skills, and listening skills. Please remember to model appropriate speech. Children are like “sponges” and absorb everything. If they hear inappropriate words, they will more than likely repeat these words.

- Ask your child simple questions that require more than a yes or no response. For example: Who did you play with today? What did you eat for lunch? Why do we have beds? What do you think will happen if I keep the water running in the sink? Where do we go when we are sick? How do I make a PBJ sandwich? What do we wear on our feet? etc. Young children can usually “who” “what” and “where” questions before they can answer “why” and “how” questions, so ask accordingly to age.
- Explain to your child what you are doing. For example, during bath time or cooking meals. “I am filling the bathtub with water, now I am adding the bubbles, getting a towel,” etc. Ask, “What else do we need?”
- Attempt to answer all your child’s questions whenever possible. This may be difficult, but background knowledge is necessary for successful reading skills.
- Look and talk about books, family photo albums, etc. Describe the expressions on peoples’ faces, what they are doing, where are they.
- Sing simple songs or recite finger plays with your child. (Itsy, Bitsy Spider, Patty Cake, Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, Open, Shut Them) etc.
- Have your child sit and listen to simple stories while you tell/read to them. Ask them to point out certain things on each page. Ask your child what is happening, predict what he thinks will happen next. Have your child retell the story. Look for colorful, simple picture books. There does not need to be a lot of words. Tell or read the story several times. Children love repetition. If your child does not yet have the attention span to sit for an entire story, follow his lead. Try to build on attention span each time you read. Make reading enjoyable.
- Put two common objects under a towel, for example, a ball and a spoon. Describe to the child what object you want. Have your child reach under the towel to get the requested object.
- Engage your child in pretend play, as well as practical activities. A block can be a car or a baby’s bottle in a child’s imagination. Use YOUR imagination too!
- Play “Mother” or “Father” Says, like Simon Says or any other Copy Cat game. It can even be as simple as, “Do this...” and have child repeat action. Clap, tap head, etc. Take turns. Great activity while waiting in line or at an appointment.

- Give your child an item and have them demonstrate position words such as, in, on, behind, in back of, beside/next to, in front of, etc. For example, “Put the doll on your head.” “Put the doll behind your back.”
- Have your child name different items of furniture around the house. Ask questions such as, “Where do you sit?” “Who sleeps on this bed?” “Why do we have stoves?”
- Follow 2-3 step verbal directions by laying out two or three items and asking the child to follow your directions. Tell your child that you are going to tell them to do something with the items, but not to do anything until you say “GO”, for example, “Put the doll in the bed and the crayon under the box. GO!”

### For articulation skills (pronunciation of speech sounds):

- Pay attention to your child’s facial expressions, gestures, and body language as all of these may help you better understand what he is trying to communicate.
- Take your best guess of what child has said and repeat it back to him.
- Have child show you what he is talking about.
- Ask for repetition of word
- Ask for more information. For example, child says, “Are we doin to the pot? (Are we going to the park?” You say, “Pot? Can you tell me more?” Child says, “Doin to the pot to swing and slide.” You: “Oh, going to the park? Yes, we are going to the park.”
- Have important conversations in a room with reduced noise, away from siblings and TV.
- Give your child your complete attention.
- TALK and LISTEN to your child. Turn your phone off and spend quality time talking to your child.
- Give your child simple directions to follow, such as: “Find the ball. Touch your nose.” Add more complicated verbal directions as child learns the skill. For example, “Put the ball on the table and clap your hands two times.”
- Model, model, model correct and appropriate speech.
- Emphasize targeted sounds. For example if child says, “I want a tookie.” You say, “Oh, you want a K k(c)ookie.

### For receptive language skills (understanding of language):

- Speak in short, clear sentences. You can always check for understanding. For example, you say, "We are going to the store. Where are we going? Child answers, "to the store."
- Use build ups and break downs: Build up: Shoe. Shoe on. Put shoe on. Breakdown: I see a car. See car. Car.
- If a verbal direction contains more than one part, say each part of the direction separately. For example, "Find your shoes." Then "Pick up your toys." Instead of, "Find your shoes and pick up your toys."
- Use the same words in a variety of situations. For example if learning "in" provide as many experiences as you can with that concept. Say "in" as you get in the car, pour juice "in" a glass, or put your toys back "in" the toy box.
- Label objects. Teach clothing names while dressing or undressing, label body parts while taking a bath, etc.

### For expressive language skills (use of language):

- Be at child's level when talking and playing with child.
- Use play to reinforce the words you are working on throughout your day. For example, if child is learning to use the word "eat" or learning the names of common foods, reinforce the use of those words through pretend food shopping, preparing meals, playing tea party, or restaurant.
- Have fun in your interactions, and use fun words like, "Whee, Wow, Oh boy, Yeah! etc. If you're having fun, your child will have fun.
- After you say a word or phrase, wait to allow time for your child to repeat if he chooses to do so. Try not to tell child, "Say \_\_\_\_\_."
- After you say a phrase, you can pick out one or two words and repeat them and wait. For example, you could say, "Let's eat. Eat."
- Use words and make accompanying faces to explain feelings. Have him look at your face and guess your feelings.
- Discuss the function of an object. "A spoon is used for eating and stirring food."

**Cognitive**-The following activities will help your child develop his thinking/problem solving skills:

- Play sink or float in the bathtub. Collect some objects that will sink or float and discuss the idea with your child during bath time.
- Collect big and little objects and have your child sort them into two groups. This can also be done for long/short and rough/smooth.
- Sort similar and different objects (such as laundry, silverware, blocks)
- Match simple picture cards or match like objects (have your child match socks after you have removed them from the dryer or taken them off the line)



- Sort and identify shapes (use felt, cardboard, or poster board cutouts of circles, squares, rectangles and triangles).
- Stack large and small boxes (collect from grocery stores).
- Put together 5-10 (depending on child's age) piece puzzles (use old calendar pictures glued to cardboard and then cut into pieces).
- Count objects (use your imagination, but an example might be to count cups, forks, spoons, plates, while setting the table for dinner, etc.)
- Rote count. Have your child count how long it takes for him to put on his shoes, etc.
- Have your child arrange canned goods from smallest to largest.
- Show your child several familiar items (no more than 5 objects) such as a comb, spoon, ball, cup, etc. Make sure that your child can name the items. Cover the objects with a piece of cloth and remove one of the objects without your child seeing which one you have removed. Play "What's missing?" Your child will guess which object has been removed. Take turns having you and your child close his eyes and remove object.
- When introducing letters, talk about the letter name and the sound that the letter makes. For example, "This is 'M' and 'M' says 'mmmmmmmmmmmm'." Give some examples of words that start with that sound.
- Write color words on flashcards, (one color word per card and written in the corresponding color on one side and written in black on the other side). Ask your child to put the word red by something red, etc. Allow your child to use the color word side of the card until he is able to recognize the color word written in black.
- Have your child sort a bag of colored marshmallows, buttons, beads, beans, or any other group of small objects. An egg carton works well for sorting activities.
- Use pompoms or colored blocks (whatever you can find) to make a (AB) pattern: "red, blue, red, blue, \_\_\_\_\_," etc. You can extend the pattern as your child learns the AB pattern, "red, blue, yellow, red, blue \_\_\_\_\_."
- Find different sized bowls and have child "nest" bowls from biggest to smallest.
- Collect objects that have the same function, such as a spoon and a fork, a brush and a comb, a pencil and a crayon, etc. Have your child match the objects that have the same function.

