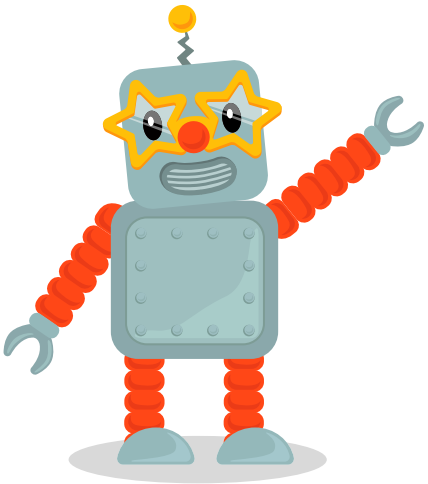
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Activity Types

- Language
- Math
- Physical
- Science & Technology
- Outdoor
- Cooking

Click on an activity to be transported to that page!



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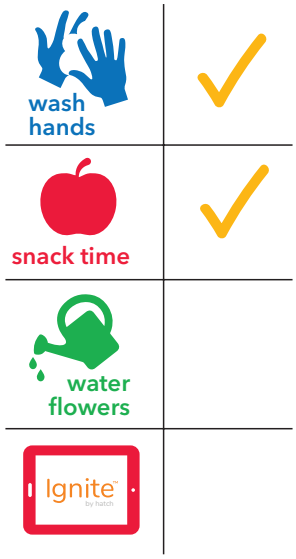
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Routinely Routine



Skill **Identifies daily routine activities.**

A child's understanding of their daily routine activities contributes to a sense of safety and independence. Helping children establish and maintain daily routine activities provides them with consistency which is a key ingredient to happy and helpful learning!

What you will need:

- ☐ Dry-erase board, chalkboard, or paper
- ☐ Magazines, newspaper ads, or grocery fliers
- ☐ Marker or chalk
- ☐ Optional: Stickers, sticky notes

1. **Explain to your child that when they are at home, they have certain routines.**

2. **Create a visual schedule.**
Support your child in identifying daily routines (at home) by creating a visual schedule. Start by making a two-column grid on a dry-erase board, chalkboard, or piece of paper.

3. **Find visuals of routine activities.**
Work with your child to find pictures that illustrate different daily routines in magazines, catalogs, grocery fliers, or other paper advertisements. Place these images on the left side of the grid.

4. **Discuss the importance of each activity.**
As you and your child work together to find images for the visual schedule, talk with her about the importance of each daily routine activity.

5. **Check off activities as they are completed.**
On the blank side of the grid your child can add a small sticker, sticky note, or checkmark next to each daily routine activity as it's completed.

What you can say:

"When we are at home, we will do similar activities everyday just like you do at school! What are some things you do at school?"

"All of those things help you learn and grow. You do so many things throughout the day at school. We are going to do many things at home that will help you learn and grow, too!"

Examples:

Bars of soap (for handwashing); toothpaste/brush (for brushing teeth); fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious food choices (for snacks and meals).

What you can say:

"Washing our hands is very important because it helps to prevent the spread of germs and can remove germs from our hands."

Level Up:
Add more activities to the grid.

Level Down:
Start with a couple routine activities and add more day-by-day.

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Segmenting Savvy



Skill **Segmenting: Identifying separate words within a sentence.**

Sentence segmenting is the first step toward learning how to identify smaller sounds (such as syllables and letters within words), all of which are strong indicators towards success with reading. This experience enables you to practice sentence segmenting with your child in a fun, yet easy and effective manner!

What you will need:

- ☐ Two-word sentences
- ☐ Optional: Three- and four-word sentences

1. **Explain the activity.**
Start by telling your child that you need their help counting the number of words in sentences, and then model how the activity will work by saying a simple, two-word sentence such as, "I run."

2. **Give an example.**
As you speak, hold up a finger for each word: one finger for the word "I", and a second finger for the word "run."

3. **Let your child try.**
After you demonstrate, ask your child to listen to another sentence and to count the words on his fingers like you did.

Examples:

I run.
You go.
He plays.
She sits.
Mom jumps.
Dad says.

Three-word sentences:
I run away.
You go hide.
He plays games.
She sits up.

Level Up:
Continue playing and as he shows comfortability with the two-word sentences, increase them to three- then four-word sentences!

Level Down:
- Shorten the sentence to one word ("Yeah!" "Yes!" Yikes!")
- Stick with two-word sentences, but after you say and count the sentence, ask your child to repeat the sentence and count the words as he says them.
- Instead of asking your child to 'count' each word (with his fingers), you can invite your child to clap his hands as he hears each word.

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Awesome Athletics



Skill **Carrying out a one-step request (in an unfamiliar situation).**

Successfully following directions is an important life skill both at school and in the home. Help your child strengthen listening skills and build verbal processing while playing a game and having some fun!

What you will need:

- [ ] Single-step directions
- [ ] Optional: Toys
- [ ] Optional: three- and four-step directions

1. **Invite your child to participate in a variety of athletic endeavors.**

2. **Give one-step directions.**
Provide your child with a one-step request such as "Jump up towards the sky!" "Do two jumping jacks!" "Run around the tree." "Hop like a bunny."

3. **Change up the directions.**
Continue providing directions and escalating the number of steps. Switch up the directives to match your child's interests, or to better suit your location.

What you can say:

"I want to see your awesome athletic skills! Awesome athletes must be good listeners. Listen to my instructions and then show me your awesome athletic skills."

Examples:

Location change:
If in a car, ask your child to "clap once" or "pat your knees three times"

Add more steps:

- *Hop two times on one foot and then hop two times on the other*
- *Run to the end of the yard and then walk backwards on your way back*
- *Bounce the ball four times and then throw it in the air*
- *Run to the tree, do a jumping jack, and skip back*

Level Up:
Add more steps to the directions.

Level Down:
Help your child by modeling each direction for him as an example. Children process visual images much faster than they process verbal directions.

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Spill the Beans



Skill **1-to-1 correspondence (for counting sets of 4 or fewer objects)**

If a child is counting three toys and says the number aloud for each toy as it is touched, "One, two, three…" she is demonstrating one-to-one correspondence. It is easiest for children to demonstrate one-to-one correspondence when the objects they are counting are in a line or some other organized arrangement.

What you will need:

- ☐ 4 beans, buttons, paper clips, or other small objects
- ☐ A small cup or container
- ☐ Optional: Use small treats like jellybeans or cheese crackers as the small objects as a bonus!

1. **Set up the activity.**
   Place four or fewer small objects (beans, buttons, paper clips, etc.) into a cup.

2. **Spill the "beans!"**
   Have your child first cover the opening of the cup by placing her hand over the top, then give it a good shake, and finally spill the objects on to a table or the floor in front of her.

3. **Line them up.**
   After the objects are released from the cup, help your child arrange them into a straight line.

4. **Count the objects.**
   Push the objects into a pile as your child counts each object one-by-one.

What you can say:

"Let's practice counting! I am going to place objects in this cup. Please cover the cup with your hand and shake the cup and then we'll pour out the objects and count them!"

What you can say:

"I want you to count how many objects we have. Let's put them in a straight line and count! How many are there all together?"

Level Up:

- Have her count the objects where they land when poured out of the cup, instead of lining them up.
- Have your child leave each object in place after she counts it (do not push it into a pile).
- Add more objects to the cup.

Level Down:

Give support to your child by gently moving her finger along as she counts the objects.

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Word Pairs

Skill **Builds understanding of many different words and how they go together.**

When learning to read, children are often more focused on sounding out the words, rather than the meaning of the words. Understanding the relationship between words and how they work together helps children use context clues to read and comprehend new words. A strong vocabulary supports children's reading comprehension skills. Support your child's vocabulary development by reading books and talking with your child throughout the day.

What you will need:

- ☐ A list of familiar words

1. **Explain the activity.**
Tell your child that you are going to play a word game in which you give him a word and he must think of a word to go with it.

2. **Pick a word.**
Provide your child a word and ask them to think of another word that goes with it.

3. **Change it up.**
Switch roles every few words so that your child is providing you with a word and you are answering. Make a "mistake" every now and then to see if he will correct you!

What you can say:

"Let's play a game that makes us think about words. I am going to say a word and I want you think of a word that either means the same thing, a word that means the opposite, or a word that goes with it."

Examples:

"What word goes with, 'FAST'?"
(he might say, "quick" or "slow").

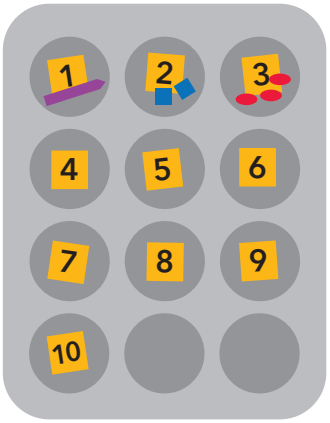
"What word goes with 'PEANUT BUTTER'?"
(he might say, "jelly" or "peanuts").

Level Up:
Ask your child to think of two words that go with each word you say.

Level Down:
Provide your child with two answer options for each word you give him. For example, tell him to think of "banana," ask him if "apple" or "basketball" would go with "banana."

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Counting Cupcakes



Skill **Produce a set number of objects when asked (for counting 10 or fewer objects)**

When learning to count, young children often think the object they touch when they say the number "five" *is* five. They aren't yet able to conceptualize that all the objects they counted collectively represent five, not just the last object they counted. Young children need frequent opportunities to produce a set of objects that correspond with numbers they have been given. This helps solidify their understanding that the last number counted represents the amount in the group—not a single object.

What you will need:

- ☐ A cupcake/muffin pan, or 10 small containers
- ☐ 55 (or more) paperclips, buttons, beans, cotton balls, or other small objects
- ☐ Colored tape or sticky-notes

1. **Set up the activity.**
Write the numbers 1 through 10 on pieces of tape or sticky-notes. Take a cupcake pan (or 10 small containers) and place each number in the bottom of a cup in the pan.

2. **Identify the numbers.**
Encourage your child to say each number as they point to it.

3. **Explain the activity.**
Once your child has identified all the numbers, explain to her that she is going to fill each compartment with the number of objects that correspond with the number on the container.

4. **Pick a number, any number.**
Ask your child to select one number to start with.

5. **Fill all the cups!**
Continue until each cup has been filled with the correct amount!

Tip:

You may want to cover the remaining two spaces with a piece of paper or tape if the pan is made for a dozen.

What you can say:

"We are going to practice counting skills! What numbers do you see on each cup?"

"Now we are going to fill each cup with the number of objects written on the cup."

What you can say:

"Which number do you want to start with? 4? Great! Count 4 buttons to put into the number 4 cup."

Level Up:
Change the order of the numbers on the muffin pan so that they are out of sequence.

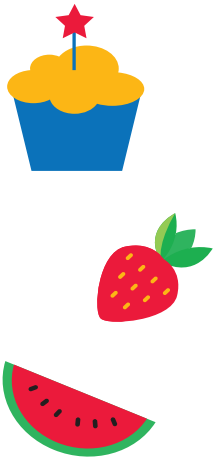
Level Down:

- Start with fewer numbers like 1–5 and gradually build up to 10.
- On a piece of paper write the numbers 1–5 along the bottom then draw the corresponding amount of dots above each number. Have your child place objects on the dots to help them count out the correct number.

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Takeout Takeaway



Skill **Segmenting: Separating compound words without the support of pictures.**

Separating a word from a compound word (e.g. when you take "butter" away from "butterfly" it becomes "fly") is segmenting skill. Segmenting is the ability to divide sounds we hear into smaller sounds. Learning to segment begins with identifying words in a sentence and then moves to parts of words (such as with compound words).

What you will need:

- ☐ A list of compound words for food

1. **Set up the activity.**
Think of several food items that happen to be compound words (e.g. strawberry, watermelon). Focus on some of your family and child's favorite foods.

2. **Explain the game.**
Tell your child that you are going to play a game in which they take away a part of a word to make a smaller word.

3. **Change it up.**
Once your child starts to get the hang of it, ask him to try one on his own!

What you can say:

"Compound words are big words that are made up of two smaller words. We're going to play a game with compound words that are foods, like the word, CUPCAKE! When you take away the word 'cup' what is left of your CUPCAKE? CAKE! That's right. When you take the word CUP away from CUPCAKE, you have the word CAKE."

Examples:

strawberry
blueberry
watermelon
grapefruit
peanut
oatmeal

Level Up:

- Have your child think of other food items that are compound words.
- Come up with new categories of words to explore!

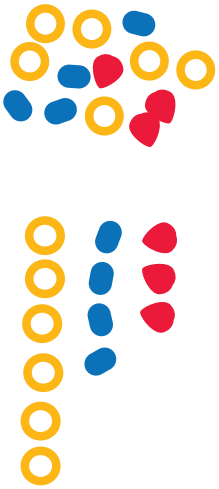
Level Down:

Use two small objects (buttons, cups, etc.) to represent the two words forming the compounding word. Touch each object as you say each word in the compound word. Remove one of the objects to help your child take away a word from the compound word.

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Cereal Line-Up



Skill **Pair objects using 1-to-1 correspondence (for sets of up to 10 objects)**

Children first use one-to-one correspondence to count objects as they say one number for each object they count. As children grow in their mathematical thinking, they then use this skill to compare groups of objects to determine which group has more or less. Pairing objects helps them make concrete connections between different sized groups of objects.

What you will need:

- ☐ Cereal, snacks, or other small objects where the pieces have distinct and different colors, shapes, or sizes that can be sorted into groups.

1. **Explain the game.**
   Invite your child to practice counting, pairing, and comparing groups of objects using cereal.

2. **Sort the cereal.**
   Pour about 20 pieces of cereal on the table and have your child sort them into groups by shape, size or color—whichever makes sense for the food item.

3. **Compare the groups.**
   Ask your child if she can tell which group has the most or least number of pieces (or if they are the same), just by looking at them!

4. **Count the objects.**
   Encourage your child to check her answer by using one-to-one correspondence counting skills to determine the exact number in each group by lining up the pieces in each group. (See **"Spill the Beans" on pg. 5**)

5. **Keep going!**
   Continue playing by changing the number in each group.

Level Up:

- Add more cereal (or objects).
- Leave the pieces in piles when counting.

Level Down:

- Reduce the number of groups to two.
- Reduce the number of objects.

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Two-Step Tasks

Skill **Follow two-step, oral directions (with a familiar activity or situation)**

Your child works very hard on following directions at school. Not only does the ability to follow directions make your child's time at school and home more productive, it is an important indicator of their language and communication development.

1. **Continue to strengthen your child's skills.** To continue strengthening your child's listening and understanding skills, provide several different two-step directions throughout the day.

2. **Play a game.** For a specific game that supports following two-step directions, engage your child in a game of "Simon Says."

What you can say:

"Please take off your shoes and put them in the closet."

"Put your toys in the basket and then put the basket on the shelf."

"Put your trash in the trash can and your cup in the sink."

Examples:

"Simon Says touch your nose and turn around."

"Simon Says put your hands in the air and then jump once."

Level Up:

- Add a third direction, then fourth direction as your child is ready.
- Time how long it takes to complete the tasks.

Level Down:

- Use "first–then"phrases: "First (complete task A), then (task B)."
- Have him repeat the instructions using the "first–then" language and touch a finger as he says each task.

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Nature Walk







Skill **Identifying living things.**

Understanding the natural world helps children develop scientific thinking skills. This is why taking a nature walk with your children is an excellent way to provide you a chance to determine how comfortable they are with their knowledge of living and non-living things.

What you will need:

- [ ] Good shoes
- [ ] Water
- [ ] Optional: Pencil and notepad

1. **Ask your child to join you on a walk.**

2. **Identify at least 3 living things.**
As you walk outdoors with your child, ask your child to identify living things. Try to get her to identify at least three during the course of your walk.

3. **Encourage observations.**
As your child identifies living things, encourage her to pause and study each one and make observations.

4. **Keep track of observations.**
If possible, make a list of the living things your child observes as you go.

What you can say:

"We're going to practice being scientists and search for living things!"

"I see a squirrel! I know it is living because it moves and breathes!"

Level Up:
Encourage and help your child think through how the living things they identify grow and change over time.

Level Down:

- Identify living things for your child and encourage her to name one or two things he notices about the living things.
- Ask your child to identify "which one is a living thing" and provide a choice between one living thing and one non-living thing.

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Outdoor Play Experiences

Outdoor play and exploration provide endless learning opportunities!
The activities in this section teach skills from the following learning domains:

Mathematics
Counting, recognizing shapes, determining distances, spatial positions

Scientific Knowledge
Effects of weather, experimentation, and observation

Social Studies
Community awareness, identify characteristics of neighborhoods

Language Development
Expressing observations, categorizing, identifying and naming objects, places and people

Physical Development
Movement, gross motor development, personal safety, improving sensory skills

Social Emotional Development
Taking turns, sharing, expanding communication and cooperation

Rain or Shine?

No matter the weather, put on sunscreen, bundle up, or throw on some raingear. Outdoor light stimulates the pineal gland; the part of the brain that is vital to keeping our immune systems strong. Spending time outdoors is also associated with improving mood and happiness. As a bonus, children who identify with nature are more likely to become adults who appreciate nature and want to protect the environment!

Precautions for Rainy-Day Activities:

While you won't melt away in the rain, take precautions against hypothermia. Keep in mind you may feel significantly colder once your clothes get wet (especially if there's wind). Also, if you observe shivering, clumsiness, and/or confusion, head inside, change into dry clothes and warm-up!

Be alert to the reduced visibility of traffic and take precautions such as wearing reflective clothing or blinking lights—especially when you are walking outside in the rain.

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Scavenger Hunt



Scavenger hunts are a fun, easy, inexpensive (dare we say, "free?") experience that provide children a guided way to explore the world around them while learning how to make observations. Scavenger hunts can also get your child moving and give you the opportunity to teach her about your neighborhood or community.

What you will need:

- [ ] A list of items to find!
- [ ] Good shoes
- [ ] Water
- [ ] Optional: Pencil and notepad

1. **Prepare for the hunt.**
   Create a list of objects, places, people, etc. in your yard, neighborhood, or local park for your child to identify. We recommend you start with five or six objects the first time you play.
2. **Invite your child to join you on a scavenger hunt!**
3. **Keep focused!**
   While on the hunt, continue to remind your child which items remain on the list.
4. **Record your child's progress.**
   Ask your child to identify what she sees. Engage with her by taking notes on her observations or photographing objects by her request.
5. **Do it again!**
   Scavenger hunts can easily be repeated, while not being boring! Change the scavenger hunt objects, add more objects, or try new locations each time you play.

Examples:

four bushes
eight trees
five cars
two people
two animals
one stop sign
triangle-shaped sign
circles
big trees
tiny pebbles

Level Up:

- Pair mathematical terms with the scavenger hunt items such as "big," "little," "one," "four," "round," or "rectangle."
- Add more objects to find.

Level Down:

- Reduce the number of objects to find.

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Counting Counts



What you will need:

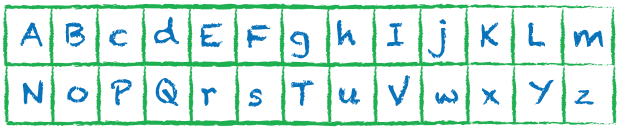
- ☐ Sidewalk chalk
- ☐ Paved driveway or sidewalk
- ☐ Optional: Beanbags
- ☐ Optional: Water-filled spray bottle

1. **Set up the line.**
Using sidewalk chalk, create a number line on your driveway or sidewalk where you child can easily hop or run between the numbers zero and ten.
2. **Identify the numbers.**
Have your child to walk the line, counting each number aloud as he moves.
3. **Find the number.**
Next, have your child stand at the beginning or end of the number line. Call out a number and ask him to run to that number and shout out the number when he lands on it.
4. **Hand-eye coordination bonus round!**
Another fun way to use the number line is to give your child beanbags to toss to numbers as you call them out.
5. **Make cleanup a game!**
When you it's time to clean up, give your child a water-filled spray bottle to spray each digit away as you call out the number.

Example:

You say, "Find the number four," and your child should toss a beanbag to the number four.

Letter Line-Up



1. **Set up the line.**
Similar to the **Counting Counts** activity above, use sidewalk chalk to make an alphabet line on your driveway.
2. **Identify the letter.**
Have your child to walk the line, saying each letter aloud as she moves.
3. **Find the letter.**
Next, have your child stand at the beginning or end of the letter line. Call out a letter and ask her to hop to that letter and shout out the letter when she lands on it.
4. **Make cleanup a game!**
When you it's time to clean up, give your child a water-filled spray bottle to spray each letter away as you call it out.

Tip:

To make it easier for your child to learn either use all uppercase ("A, B, C..."), all lowercase ("a, b, c..."), or pair both upper- and lowercase letters together ("Aa, Bb, Cc...").

Level Up:

- If more than one child is playing, turn it into a race or competition.
- Scramble the letters/numbers.

Level Down:

- **Counting Counts:** Start with fewer numbers (e.g. 1–5).
- **Letter Line-Up**: Work on one section of the alphabet at a time (e.g. start with "A"–"E" then "F"–"J" the next time).

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Natural Counting

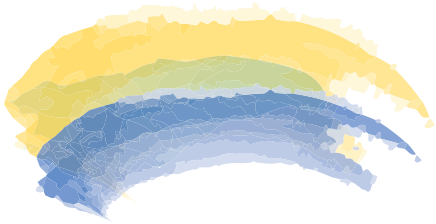


What you will need:

- [ ] Sidewalk chalk
- [ ] Paved driveway, sidewalk, bricks, or stepping stones
- [ ] Outdoor natural area

1. **Set up a workspace.**
   Using sidewalk chalk, write the numbers one through five on an accessible workspace for your child.
2. **Match the numbers.**
   Ask your child to gather natural items (seeds, leaves, flowers, etc.) from your outdoor space and to match the number of items to each respective number you've written with the chalk.
3. **Level up!**
   If your child is comfortable counting one through five objects, add six through ten and assist your child as you see fit.

Homemade Rainbows



What you will need:

- [ ] Sidewalk chalk
- [ ] Paved driveway, sidewalk, bricks, or stepping stones
- [ ] Paper plate
- [ ] Food coloring
- [ ] Sheet of paper

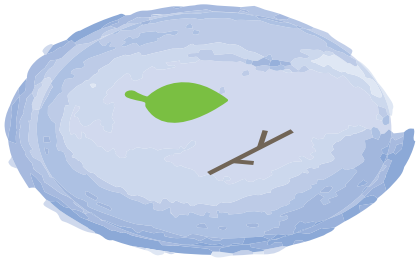
1. **Rainbows with chalk.**
   After a rainstorm have your child use sidewalk chalk on wet pavement. Point out how moisture intensifies and blurs the colors. The effect is very different from coloring with chalk on dry land!

   As the colors blur, ask your child to describe what they see as the colors mix ("What happens when yellow and blue blend?").
2. **Rainbows with food coloring.**
   While it's raining, sprinkle a few drops of food coloring onto a paper plate. Have your child take it outside and watch the rain make watercolors!

   Encourage your child to swirl the liquid around to make designs. Bring the plate inside to dry, or press another piece of paper on top and peel it off to make a print.

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Float Your Boat

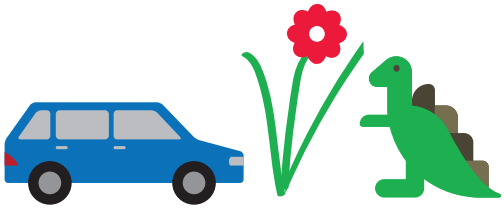


What you will need:

- [ ] A shallow water source such as: puddle, rimmed cookie sheet, plastic tub, or a large bowl
- [ ] Outdoor natural area

1. **Set up a workspace.**
   Find a puddle or bring a shallow container filled with water outside.
2. **Explore and gather.**
   Encourage your child to explore nearby and bring back a variety of small objects like leaves, twigs, and acorns.
3. **Does it float?**
   Have your child select one of the items he found and ask him if he thinks it will float or sink and then have him place it on top of the water.
4. **Sort it out.**
   Have your child group the items that do float into one pile and those that do not float in another pile. Ask him how the items are similar, and how they are different.

Inside Out



When children are encouraged to utilize toys in different ways, inspiration blossoms! A change of scenery may help your child see and use her familiar toys in very different and imaginative ways!

What you will need:

- [ ] Plastic animals, dinosaurs, cars, or other nature-resistant toys
- [ ] Optional: Bath toys

1. **Bring the inside to the outside.**
   Ask your child to gather a collection of nature-resistant toys, and take her outside for open-ended play.
2. **On a rainy day, invite your child to bring bath toys outside.**
3. **Give the toys a bath!**
   Before bringing the toys back inside, fill a plastic bin with soap and water so your child can give the toys a bath!

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Ready, Set, Rain!

1. **Make a rain gauge with a Mason jar.**
Using a ruler, mark inches vertically on the outside of the jar.

2. **Use a plastic 2-liter bottle.**
Cut the top off of the bottle about a fourth of the way from the top; turn it upside down and tape it to the inside of the bottom of the bottle; add stones to keep the bottle from being blown over; then use a ruler to add the measurement marks on the outside.

3. **Place the rain gauge outside.**
Work with your child to place the rain gauge in a place that will capture the rain.

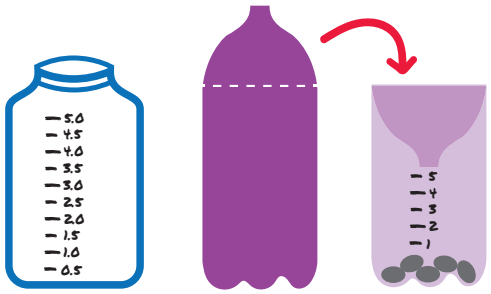
4. **Keep a log.**
Create a log that outlines the measurements (for example, Monday- 1 inch, Tuesday, 1/3 inch). Talk with your child about the differences in the rainstorms, using language such as "this is a lot of rain", "there is less rain today than yesterday", "there is more rain today", etc.

5. **Make two!**
Make two rain gauges so you can measure ongoing rainfall. One gauge to collect continuous rainfall, and the second to collect daily (or hourly) rainfall to compare against each other.

What you will need:

- ☐ A Mason jar or plastic 2-liter bottle
- ☐ Ruler
- ☐ Permanent marker
- ☐ Tape*
- ☐ Small rocks*

*if using the 2-liter bottle



Making Beautiful Music!



What you will need:

- ☐ Pots, pans, or other containers

1. **Find unexpected instruments!**
Ask your child to help you scout out household items that can make music: pots, pans, spoons, plastic containers (really anything will work!).

2. **Line up and listen.**
Take the items outside during a rainstorm, and line them up to listen to how raindrops sound as they drop onto various surfaces.

3. **Play with the instruments.**
To make other rainy sounds, invite your child to swirl water inside a pot, to pour water from one container to another (from way up high, or from close-by!).

4. **Sort it out.**
Have your child to arrange the musical household items from their favorite, to their least favorite. Or, from smallest to biggest (or, biggest to smallest).

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Simple Rainy Day Fun!

1. Follow the rain when it falls on the ground. Where does it flow to? Down the street? To a drain?

2. Explore the earth: the dirt, the sand, the grass. How does the rain change these things?

3. Go for a walk in your neighborhood and ask your child to tell you about how the rain makes things look different. Also, what is the same?

4. Don't just jump in the puddles; skip, hop, run, gallop, or walk through them. Who can make the biggest splash?

5. If there are puddles, toss rocks into them. Who can make the biggest ripple? What size rock makes the loudest sound?

6. Listen to the rhythm that the rain makes and have a dance contest. Give a prize to the person who comes up with the silliest rain dance.

7. Instead of jumping in the puddles, try jumping over them!

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Cooking with Kids

Did you know that cooking with your child can build innumerous life and learning skills? Here are just a few:

Increasing Language & Communication Skills

As you and your child go through the recipe, list the ingredients and the measurements (this is a great way to increase vocabulary).

Recipes require us to follow directions, which enhances listening and understanding, receptive language skills.

Encouraging your child to make predictions about steps and/or ingredients, and repeating steps, instructions and ingredients leads to even greater language development!

Enhancing Fine Motor Skills

Mixing ingredients, rolling dough, pouring, and measuring are all great ways to enhance a child's fine motor strength and control.

These skills are important to develop academic skills such as writing, cutting, coloring, drawing.

Increasing Math Skills

Cooking involves a great deal of measurement; liquids (volume), solids, as well as exposure to spatial relation terms such as less than, more than, equal to.

As we cook and prepare, children are also introduced to fractions (1/2 cup, ¼ teaspoon, etc.), as well as addition and even subtraction skills.

Introducing Scientific Concepts

Cooking is one big scientific experiment! Children learn what happens when ingredients are mixed (liquids with solids, color-mixing), can practice identifying cause and effect, identify and utilize different forms of measurements, and discuss observations and predictions (what will the food taste like, look like, smell like; will we like it, dislike it, etc.).

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Cooking with Kids

Improving Pre-Reading Skills

Show your child each recipe and as you read through the instructions and ingredients, use your finger to track the words as you read them aloud; this is an excellent way to build awareness and understanding of letters, words, symbols, numbers, and other important print concepts.

Enhance your child's comprehension skills by asking them to recall details of a recipe (i.e. "Eli, what was the ingredient I said we needed to add next?").

After finishing the recipe (and tasting the final product), talk with your child about what ingredients or measurements you might do differently next time. Work with your child to enhance early writing skills as you work together to create a new recipe card or add notes to your current recipe!

Teaching Life Skills

Cooking provides opportunities to teach child important health and safety lessons such as how to use utensils correctly, what foods are nutritious and healthy, what foods are less nutritious, handwashing, and the importance of clean-up.

Boosting Self-Confidence

Upon completing a recipe, your child will likely feel a sense of pride and confidence! In addition, as children cook more, their level of independence increases, which in turn boosts their level of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Family Bonding

Cooking is something for the entire family to enjoy, so whenever possible, make cooking a routine part of your weekly schedule! Family cooking time is a great way to bring multiple generations together, but even when it is only you and your child working together, bonding experiences and memory-making moments are abundant!

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The Nitty Gritty of Cooking with Your Child



Working with your child in the kitchen provides parents with an excellent opportunity to teach handwashing and handwashing is an easy, cheap, and effective way to prevent the spread of germs and keep you and the rest of your family healthy!

The Center for Disease Control recommends five steps for handwashing—wet, lather, scrub, rinse and dry.

Before you and your child begin cooking and kitchen-time, use these five steps to WASH THOSE HANDS:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap..

2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end, twice.

4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.

5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

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The Nitty Gritty of Cooking with Your Child



prep time

After a recipe is decided on, invite your child to help you gather the appropriate materials and ingredients. This is a great way to provide your young one practice in following single or multi-step directions, identify objects, and to get to know the kitchen!

Work with your child to arrange the materials and ingredients in an assembly line (of sorts). For example, the first step in the recipe asks that you use scissors or a butter knife to remove the crust from bread slices. The second step asks that you use a rolling pin to flatten the bread. Therefore, the assembly line starts with the bread and scissors (or knife) first, the rolling pin and cutting board second, etc.…AND, what an amazing way for children to practice ordering and seriation (important math skills), in a meaningful way!

In our kitchen, we are big fans of a "trash bowl". Set a bowl next to your assembly line and as you prep, rather than walking to the trash can repeatedly, toss your trash into the bowl (eggshells, bread crusts, carrot shavings, etc.), and at the end of prepping, you (or your child) only have to make one trip to the trash can (or the compost pile).

As you and your child work together in the kitchen, take advantage of the opportunity to talk with them about the benefits of some foods.

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Sandwichy Sushi

Ingredients:

- 2-4 slices of bread
- Peanut butter (or, depending on nut allergies, almond or sun butter)
- Jam (or fresh fruit such as berries)
- Butter knife or kitchen scissors (No kitchen shears? No biggie! Thoroughly clean some child-safe scissors and use those! You may be amazed at the handiness of prepping with scissors!)
- Rolling pin (no rolling pin? No big deal! Use a heavy-duty water bottle, or a tall glass!)
- Cutting board or plate
- *Optional: Chop sticks*

Directions:

1. Use a butter knife or scissors to assist your child in removing the crust from each slice of bread

2. Place the bread onto the cutting board and show your child how to use the rolling pin to flatten each slice (one at a time).

3. Next, work with your child to spread the nut butter and the jam onto each slice of bread.

4. Tightly roll each slice of bread and use the butter knife to cut the roll into 2-3" slices (or, whatever sushi-sized slice you prefer!), and ENJOY!

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Dairy-Free Peanut Butter Ice Cream

Ingredients (for 1 serving):

- 2, bananas (which, you will end up slicing and freezing for the recipe)- this is another great recipe to utilize when you have bananas that are a little too ripe or are on the verge of being too ripe!
- 2 Tablespoons, nut butter
- 3 Tablespoons, chocolate chips (optional)
- 1-2 Teaspoons, honey or agave syrup
- Pinch of salt
- Paper plate
- Blender (or food processor; don't have either? No biggie! You can chop or smash bananas with your hands!)

Directions:

1. Work with your child to peel and slice the bananas. Place the banana slices onto a paper plate or bowl and freeze for an hour (or more). If you do not have access to a blender or a food processor, smash the bananas with your hands before placing the smashed bananas into the freezer.

2. If you do have a blender or food processor, place the frozen slices into the machine and blend until it resembles a 'smashed' consistency.

3. Add the peanut butter, chocolate chips (optional), honey, and a pinch of salt, and blend the machine until you reach an ice cream consistency. Or, using your hands, smash the ingredients together until you reach your desired consistency. You can place the mixture back into the freezer, if you want.

If there are peanut or nut sensitivities, you can replace with any type of yogurt.

The options for ice cream ingredients are endless! Brainstorm with your child to come up with a variety of options, explore, and ENJOY!

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Frozen Banana Pops

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup, yogurt
- ½-1 whole banana (per person) -- this is a great recipe to use when you have bananas that are about to be too ripe to enjoy otherwise!
- 1 cup, any type of cereal
- Butter knife
- 2 shallow bowls
- Waxed paper
- Cutting board, paper plate, or baking sheet

Directions:

1. Work with your child to peel and cut the bananas (crosswise, in half), and insert the toothpick or popsicle sticks through the cut side of the bananas.
2. Place yogurt and cereal in separate shallow bowls.
3. Dip each banana in yogurt, then roll in cereal to coat. Transfer to waxed paper-lined surface (cutting board, baking sheet or paper plate) and freeze until firm (typically, this takes about an hour).
4. Remove from freezer and enjoy this delicious, healthy treat!
5. Talk with your child about ways you can change the recipe. For example, strawberry yogurt and sliced strawberries; vanilla yogurt and Cocoa Pebbles?! Encourage their creativity!
6. To save any leftover banana pops, transfer to an airtight freezer container and return to the freezer.

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Tortilla Roll-ups

Ingredients:

- Flour tortillas (one per person)
- Lunch meat (1-2 slices per person)
- OPTIONAL: Cheese, shredded or sliced
- OPTIONAL: Cream cheese (1 T per tortilla), shredded carrots, lettuce, pickles, cucumbers, green/red/orange peppers
- Butter knife or spatula
- Plates

Directions:

1. It will be helpful if you and your child work alongside one another as you make the tortilla roll-ups
2. Invite your child to spread a thin layer of cream cheese over the center of the tortilla (leaving a little bit of space around the edges). Using knife or spatula as a spreader is a VERY difficult fine-motor skill, so please plan to assist your child as needed!
3. Ask your child to place one or two slices of lunchmeat over the cream cheese, and, if you choose to add them, sprinkle the shredded carrot on top. Work with your child to add any additional toppings (i.e. cheese, pickles, etc.).
4. Show your child how to fold the edges of the tortilla over (about an inch), towards the center of the tortilla and then, starting with the edge of the tortilla closest to you, roll up the tortilla.
5. If you or your child have a gluten allergy (and/or don't like or want to use tortillas), you can substitute with a romaine or iceberg lettuce leaf. Delicious!
6. Some people prefer to refrigerate their roll-up before they eat, but if you and your child can't wait, dig in right away and enjoy!

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Simple Salad

Ingredients:

- Lettuce (Any type, not pre-bagged)
- Vegetables, any type
- Fruit (berries, apples, orange slices, pears, etc.)
- Optional: Cheese (feta, shredded, goat cheese, bleu cheese), Croutons (which you can make croutons by cutting toasted bread into cubes), Sunflower seeds, Dried cranberries, etc.
- 1-2 Tablespoons, olive oil
- ½ lemon (or 1-2 tablespoons, lemon juice)
- Optional: Salt & pepper
- Large bowl, small bowl
- Cutting board
- Peeler
- Butter, or plastic knife (one per person)

Directions:

1. Throwing together a simple salad for meals or a snack provides your child opportunities to try vegetables she may not eat otherwise)! Children are typically more apt to experiment with food when they are 'in charge' of adding it to their meal/snack, so invite your child to explore the kitchen for any vegetables (or other toppings) she can find for the salad.

2. Wash and dry all fruits and vegetables.

3. Work with your child to tear the lettuce into bite-sized pieces and place in a large bowl.

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Simple Salad

Directions Continued:

4. Next, peel any vegetables that need to be peeled (zucchini, carrots, etc.). If you have a child-friendly peeler, assist your child in removing the skin. If you do not have access to a child-friendly peeler (typically these have a 'guard' around the sharp peeler part of the tool), invite your child to count as you peel (ask questions such as "How many peels will it take to remove the skin from this zucchini?")!

5. Work with your child to 'chop' the veggies and fruits into the salad bowl. It is helpful to choose ingredients that can be cut with a butter or plastic knife, and if you are adding carrots, use a peeler or grater to shred them into the salad.

6. To make the dressing, add 2 tablespoons olive oil and the lemon juice (whether you are squeezing from a half-lemon, or using pre-bottled lemon juice) into a small bowl (remove lemon seeds as needed) and mix, mix, mix! Add salt and pepper for flavoring and mix once more before adding the dressing to the salad.

7. Personally, I prefer to use a salad bowl that has a lid so that when the dressing is added to the salad, I put the lid on and shake, shake, shake to mix all the ingredients before serving. Enjoy this crunchy, yummy, green treat and talk with your child about any ingredients they think would be a good addition to the next salad creation!

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Wash Your Hands Often to Stay Healthy

You can help you and your loved one stay healthy by washing your hands often. It is especially important to wash hands during these key times:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

When You Can't Use Soap and Water

In most situations, washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol with a quick review of the product label.

- Sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.

How to Use Hand Sanitizer

- Apply the gel to the palm of one hand *(read the label to learn the correct amount).*
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

Caution! Swallowing alcohol-based hand sanitizers can cause alcohol poisoning if more than a couple of mouthfuls are swallowed. Keep it out of reach of young children and supervise their use.

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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