

Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is learning new words every day, and he enjoys playing with language by rhyming words. He may use very silly language and laugh at his own jokes. He uses a lot of inflection (changes in his voice) when he describes events. He knows the difference between day and night, today and tomorrow. He can carry out three or more simple directions. He knows that printed letters and words mean something to others.

Putting on a Play

Create a story or a play with a few puppets. Have a conversation with them, taking turns asking and answering questions. Put on a puppet show of a familiar story or folktale. Talk about the characters, assign roles, and enjoy a wonderful play!

Adventure Pals

Take a special trip someplace new. Visit a museum, a park or outdoor area, a store, or a library. Plan with your child. Talk about what you will be seeing and doing. After you come home, ask questions about what she saw and what she did. Encourage her to tell other family members about the outing. If you have a camera, take photos to show others what you saw on your adventure.

Dramatic Storytime

Read a favorite story to your child. Ask him what happened at the beginning, middle, and end. Have your child act out the story and be different characters. If you read a story about farm animals, he could pretend to be a cow, chicken, pig, or horse. Encourage him to act out the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story.

All About Me

Have your child make a book about herself. Staple or put together several pieces of paper with tape, yarn, or ribbon. She can glue pictures of family members on a *family* page and things she likes on a *favorite things* page. She can trace her hand or draw pictures. Have your child plan her book, make it, then "read" you her story or tell you about each picture.

Cleanup Helper

Your child will enjoy helping you around the house. At mealtime, he could help set the table. Ask him to help sweep an area or put toys away. Be sure to allow plenty of time. In the morning, your child can put his own nightclothes into their special place. Look around for little tasks in your own home. Your child will be proud of helping the family!

I Can, I Can, I Can!

Challenge your child to remember and do three things in a single direction. Ask your child to go into the bathroom, flush the toilet, and bring your toothbrush! You can also ask her to find your fuzzy blanket, wrap it around a book, and put it on the sofa. Or ask her to find a shoe, put a block in it, and put it under the table: "Can you do it? Yeah!"

Cloudy Friends

This activity is fun on a day when the sky is filled with puffy clouds. Go outside and lie on your back and take turns pointing out different cloud shapes and patterns. Ask your child what the clouds look like: "Look. There's an ice cream cone! What do you see?"

Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.

Gross Motor

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Your child is continuing to develop and refine her gross motor skills. She can ride a tricycle or bike with training wheels, weaving in and out of obstacles, and stopping and turning with skill. She can kick a ball you roll into her path. She is learning to run and change direction without stopping and to somersault and gallop. She can keep herself going on a swing by pumping her legs back and forth and can throw a ball overhead about 10 feet.



48-54 months

Air Balloon

Play this game with your child and a couple of his friends. Keep a balloon in the air by tapping it up. As it comes down, it's someone else's turn to tap it. See how long you can keep the balloon from falling to the ground.

Target Practice

Cut a few 8- to 9-inch holes in a big piece of cardboard to make a target. You also can draw a target with chalk on a sidewalk or pick a target, such as a tree. Let your child try to throw a bean-bag or ball through the holes or at the target. Have your child start very close to the target and then move back a few feet. Let him try throwing underhand and then overhand. Be sure to cheer when he hits the target!

Ball Games

Your child is ready to practice ball skills. A basket on a chair can be a hoop for a basketball. Use a big ball and show your child how to dribble and shoot to make a basket. Play soccer using any two objects for goals and kicking the ball to get a goal.

Scarf Dancing

On a rainy day, turn on some music. Your child can dance while holding and waving scarves or dishtowels. Try different kinds of music. Encourage her to listen and move to the rhythm and mood of the music.

Circle Catch

It's fun to play catch with your child and a few friends. Use a beach ball or something a little smaller. Show the children how to hold out their arms to get ready for the ball. Stand in a circle and throw the ball to each other. Get ready. Now catch!

Playground Time

Bring your child to a neighborhood playground, park, or open grassy area as often as possible. He will enjoy climbing, running, swinging, sliding, and learning new skills. Keep a close watch. He might be very daring!

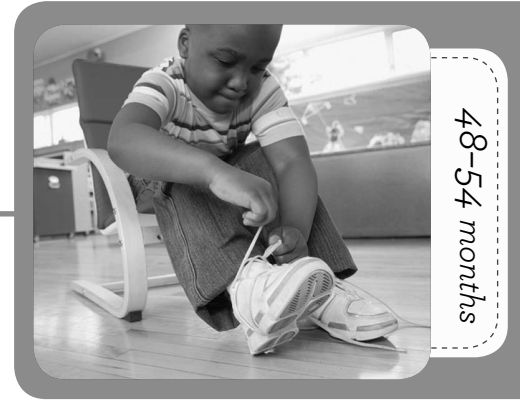
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Fine Motor

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Your child's finger movements are more controlled now. He can put small toys together and build a tower of 8 or more small blocks. He is learning how to draw shapes if you show him how first and may be learning how to write some letters. He can cut out circles and shapes with curved lines using safety scissors. As he gets more control over his hands, he is able to do more by himself.

Pudding Fun

Make a batch of pudding. Place a few spoonfuls on a cookie sheet or plate. (You may want to cover the table with newspaper first.) Have your child wash her hands and then finger-paint in the pudding. Draw pictures and practice drawing shapes or letters in the pudding. The best part is cleaning up! Yum!

Little Author

Ask your child to make his own book. Identify a theme and find materials. Attach together a few pieces of paper. Your child can draw pictures or paste magazine photos to illustrate a story. Encourage him to tell you his story: events he remembers, his likes and dislikes, and who his friends are. Help him write his words on each page.

Signed by the Artist

Have your child paint or draw a picture. When your child finishes, help her write her name. She may need help at first, but then she can try to do it by herself. Encourage her to make marks on the paper, even if they don't look "just right." Your child will learn by doing activities on her own!

Paper Chains

Cut paper into strips about 1 inch by 5 inches to make paper chains. Show your child how to make a loop by gluing or taping the ends together. Start a chain by inserting the next strip through the first loop. See how long you can make the chain. Use this chain to count down to an important event by removing the links, one day at a time!

You Have Mail

Let your child open the junk mail. He can exercise his fingers opening the mail, and he may find some little surprises inside. Help your child write and mail letters to family members or to a favorite performer or athlete.

Water Pictures

On a dry, warm day, give your child a plastic bucket of water, a paintbrush, and an old sponge. On a safe paved driveway, fence, or sidewalk, let her paint pictures with the water on the cement or wood. Watch the pictures disappear as the water evaporates: "What happened?"

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Problem Solving

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Your child's attention span is growing. She can attend to an activity she enjoys without supervision. She is starting to sort according to shape, size, and length and can match items that look alike. She is learning how things go together on the basis of function. For example, she can point to "things for drawing" in a picture of multiple objects. Your child loves to read stories and is learning how to make up stories or story endings by herself. Wild stories and exaggerations are common.

Riddle, Riddle

Tell your child to use his brain and solve these riddles. "Can you name an animal that gives us something to drink?" (cow) "Can you think of something that flies but doesn't have wings?" (flag, rocket, kite) "Can you think of something that rolls but doesn't have wheels?" (ball, orange) If your child can't think of an answer, give hints until he gets it. Now, ask your child to make up a riddle for you.

Grouping and Sorting

Gather together a lot of little things in a small container: paper clips, rubber bands, barrettes, or odds and ends. Talk with your child about ways to group the things together. Sort rubber bands by color, size, or length. Line up five items, and point to each one as you count. Now let your child try.

Waiting Game

As you wait for something, count together to see how long it will take to happen. When you are on the bus waiting for the light to change to green, count how long it takes to change. Your child will learn how to count, and it may help her become more patient.

Feely Bag

Gather small familiar objects from outside or around your house and put them in a paper bag. Try a small leaf, a baseball, or your child's toothbrush. Let your child reach into the bag and pick an item without looking. When your child's hand is in the bag touching the item, ask him to guess what it is. Help him if he has a difficult time naming the item.

Number and Letter Search

Play number and letter searches at the store. Encourage your child to find numbers or letters on walls, pictures, and signs. When she spots one, say, "You found the number 5. Good for you!" Point out numbers or single letters of the alphabet. She can start to learn the sounds of letters. "You found an A. It makes an 'ah' sound. Aaapple...apple!"

What Comes Next?

Make a simple repeating pattern with your child with small toys, blocks, utensils, pasta, or shoes. Line up items to start the pattern. Have him help you finish it. Encourage your child to complete the pattern and help if he gets stuck: "This pattern starts with a shoe, then a block, then a noodle. What do you think comes next?"

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Personal-Social

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Your child is becoming more independent in dressing. He can put his shoes on the correct feet. He uses the toilet without help and can brush his teeth with a “touch up” from you. He is eating different types of foods and can serve himself at the table, pouring and scooping without spilling. He can play cooperatively with other children and will comfort a playmate in distress. He plays games with rules and can follow directions.

Game Time

Your child may enjoy learning games that have rules. You can play card games and board games with your child. If other children join you, play with them at first to help them learn about rules and taking turns. Start a family game night: one night a week after dinner!

Super Chef

Your child will love to help you cook or make her own snack. She can learn how to pour, stir, spread, and cut soft foods with your help. You might try mini-pizzas. Your child can scoop spaghetti sauce on an English muffin or bagel, sprinkle on some cheese, and add toppings that she likes. Cook the pizzas in the oven for a few minutes (you do this part). Yum!

Tent Safari

On a rainy day, ask your child if he would like to invite a friend over to play. Have the children build a tent by draping old sheets or blankets over furniture. Once they make their tent, they can play in it or read books with a flashlight. What fun to have a secret hideaway! Children this age can help pick up. They can help you fold the sheets by finding a corner and bringing it to you!

Teddy Bear Picnic

Have your child bring stuffed animals or dolls on a picnic. Make a basket with a blanket, napkins, pretend food, and plastic plates and tea cups. Your child (and the bears!) can get “dressed up” for the picnic. Your child can help clean up after a wonderful picnic.

Everybody Loves a Letter!

Have your child write a letter to someone he knows. You can write the words he wants to say, or your child can try writing. He can also draw a picture. Help him write his name at the end of the letter. Show him how to address an envelope (you may need to do this part). Let him add the stamp and really mail the letter. Watch the mail for a happy reply.

Rub-a-Dub

Keep a footstool in the bathroom so that your child can step up and see herself in the mirror. Give your child her own washcloth and towel, and teach her how to wash her face. Give her a big kiss on her clean and shiny face! At bath time, she can wash and dry herself, too. Don't forget to have her brush her teeth with your help.

Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety. Always watch your child during mealtime and bath time.