



Smart Cookie Club

S T A Y · P L A Y · L E A R N

Promoting Independence Activity Pack

A key task of parenting is raising independent, self-motivated children who are able to appropriately use the support of parents and friends as they grow. Helping your child develop a healthy sense of independence is an important aspect of your child's early years.

Children have a drive to be independent and do things on their own. Parents and caregivers can help young children by allowing and encouraging them to take responsibility for themselves whenever possible. It can be faster and less messy to do things for children, but they learn so much from doing things for themselves.

Set your child up for success by providing appropriate sized materials for them to use to help you out in your daily tasks or play independently.

When children practice self-help skills such as feeding and dressing, they practice their gross and fine motor skills, and develop confidence, self-esteem and pride in their ability to attempt and master new things.

Developing Independence is certainly worth the time and effort. The secret to success is to give your child ample time, age-appropriate experiences and provide support to help them be successful.

Remember that adults are important role models - your child learns so much from watching you!

Click the titles below to follow the circle-time links!

[Magic Picture Experiment](#)

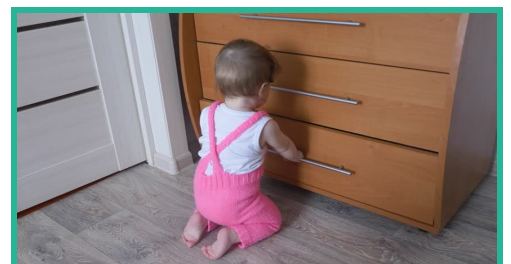
[Mortimer - Story](#)

[Punchinello - Action Game & Song](#)

Introduce the topic with a magic drawer!

Materials needed: Mix-matched socks, odds and ends (for example, fabric squares, bottle caps or other recyclables, safe kitchen tools such as a ladle or whisk, missing toy pieces, etc.)

Activity instructions:



1. Choose a drawer at your child's level that will be safe for them to access. Alternatively, use a large tupperware bin or shoe box if a safe drawer isn't available.
2. Fill a few mix-matched socks with odds and ends from around the house. Consider some of the options listed above.
3. Place the filled socks in the drawer.
4. Invite your child to discover their surprise drawer independently. As your child manipulates to explore and discover the sock contents, they will use their imagination and begin to think of creative ways to use the toys or materials inside of the socks.



[SEE AN EXAMPLE VIDEO HERE](#)

Questions and conversation during this activity:

- “What could we use this for?”, “What else could we use this for?”, “How could we use these two thing together?”
- “How many items did you find in the sock(s)?”
- “What is your favourite item here? Why do you like it?”

Keep in mind your child's skill level and make sure to set them up for success while challenging their abilities. Your child will be excited to find familiar items as well as explore a new object or material. Make sure to keep safety in mind and disclude any possible choking hazards.

Checklists (Literacy)

Materials needed: Paper, markers or pencils.

Activity instructions:

1. Introduce checklists! It could be as simple as "3 things to do before bed" or "what to do when we come in from outside".
2. Create a checklist with your child using your markers and paper [\(or print this one\)](#). Make sure to include pictures and words.
3. Show your child how to check off each item using their marker or pencil.
4. Invite your child to use their checklist at the appropriate time to ensure all tasks have been taken care of.



Creating and referring to lists together will develop your child's ability to strategize tasks and organize time. For **younger children** start with 3 simple items on your list. As your child develops, you can add more and more items to the list.

Bag of Books (Language):

Materials needed: Cloth bag, books (try using different types of books such as familiar books your child has outgrown, magazines, or photo albums)

Activity instructions:

1. Fill a backpack or cloth bag with 5-10 books. Consider some of the options listed above.
2. Invite your child to explore the bag. Open it and discover the books inside and then explore each book.



Jobs to Do (Math)

Materials needed: Everyday items.

Activity instructions:

1. Give your child chores that involve sorting or categorizing. Emptying the dishwasher, sorting socks or shoes, cleaning out a closet, and other chores that involve pre-planning, making lists, or arranging things are great choices.
2. Show them the steps and the order for those steps to be done. Try making a picture chart to illustrate the steps for your child. For example, when emptying the dishwasher you would; 1. take items out, 2. find their place and 3. put the items away.
3. Invite your child to independently follow the steps to complete the task. Make sure to give support or instruction as needed in order to set your child up for success in completing the task.



For **younger children**, start with 2 step instructions and increase the amount of steps and difficulty of the task as your child develops.

Button, Snap, Zip and Tie (Fine Motor)

Materials needed: Sewing materials or fabric glue, zippers and snaps and button links and buckles, a piece of cardboard or material.

Activity instructions:

1. Sew or glue zippers, snaps, button links, and buckles to another piece of cardboard or material.
2. Invite your child to practice their fine motor skills and strengthen their hand muscles.



Of course, if you aren't up for the task of making your own, there are toys and resources available to support this area of development.

[Click here to see a toy recommendation.](#)

This simple activity is great in the car or at quiet time. Attach to your child's bedside or to the back of the car seat to encourage exploration and development of key fine motor skills in preparation for printing and more complex tasks.

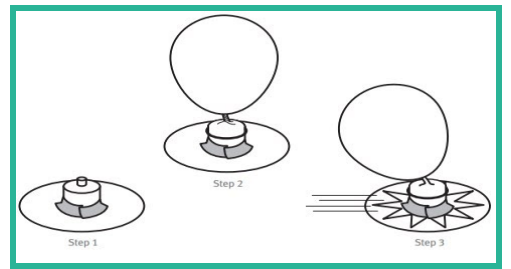


(Science)

Materials needed: Balloon, pop-out bottle cap (often found on a sports drink or dish soap), glue gun (or duct tape), an old CD.

Activity instructions:

1. Glue the bottom of the bottle cap to the shiny side of the CD, making sure that the hole in the cap and CD are aligned. Hold for a few seconds or until the glue is dry.
2. Put the balloon over the top of the bottle cap.
3. Blow up the balloon through the CD.
4. Once the balloon is full of air, close the bottle cap by pushing it in the top.
5. Invite your child to place the hovercraft on a smooth flat surface and open the pop-up bottle cap to watch it magically move around.
6. Try it again and again to discover the science behind motion and friction. Encourage your child to try and blow-up the balloon independently.



Dried Cereal Bin (Sensory)

Materials needed: Dried cereal (such as cheerios or rice krispies), sensory bin, scoops and spoons, bowls and tupperware with lids, empty water bottles, XL funnels which fit the cereal you're using.

Activity instructions:

1. Add your cereal to the sensory bin.
2. Add all other items such as containers, scoops, funnels, etc.
3. Invite your child to scoop, pour, fill and dump independently.

The experience facilitates exploration and the use of scientific and mathematical processes while they play, create, investigate and explore.

Since the cereal is an edible material, children can explore independently with limited supervision.

*Make sure to be aware of your child's allergies before offering a new 'food' product for sensory play.



Planner or Notebook (Creative)

Materials needed: Planner or notebook, pencils or markers, stickers.

Activity instructions:

1. Offer your child a planner or simple notebook.
2. Invite your child to personalize it by adding stickers, printing their name, or scribble and draw pictures inside.

Use this to play games such as copying each other's pictures, colour in your scribbles or connect lines and dots. Practice making lists of things to buy at the grocery store or of chores to do.



Start a Project (Building):

Materials needed: Blocks

Activity instructions:

1. Start by building a house or building with your child. Perhaps it is where you live, or maybe your child has another idea about what this building could be used for.
2. Invite your child to expand on the building. "Let's turn this into a town/city! We will need to add the CN Tower, the post office, the grocery store and grandma's house!"
3. Keep this activity set up when tidying. Even if you need to move it to a more suitable area.
4. In the following days, invite your child to continue to work on building new aspects of their town or city by adding roads, cars, trucks, hospitals, community helpers, vegetation, animals etc.



There are tons of ways to expand on building a city. When you run out of blocks, incorporate other building materials such as recyclables boxes, egg cartons, or tupperware containers.

Baby Care Corner (Pretend or Cooperative Play):

With a few simple props, your child will use their imagination to play out some of the actions they have encountered and develop independence as they become an expert in performing these tasks on their own.

- Set up the scene with small beds, a toy kitchen, tea towels for blankets and folded tea towels for pillows.
- Include a diaper changing station with change mats and baskets filled with feeding toys, soft toys, dolls clothing, pretend diapers, empty cream bottles and wipes containers. You should have lots of appropriate recyclables left over from your own use with your child.
- Use your child's old baby clothes to dress the dolls. Practicing these steps with their doll will help them to master the skills and



understanding needed for them to dress and care for themselves.

- Pretend to wash your baby in the toy kitchen sink or tuck your baby into bed with a small stuffed toy. Perhaps the baby needs to have a bottle of milk, some dinner and be burped before being put to bed.

Imaginative play is a time for kids to role play and play out opportunities they have experienced or are interested in as they make sense of the world around them. For example, if you are practicing potty training at home, adding a potty element into play will allow your child to explore and enhance their understanding and overall comfort in participating in the new experience.



Foot Mopping Game (Gross Motor)

Materials needed: Mop slippers (or glue a cleaning cloth to the bottom of a pair of socks).

Activity instructions:

1. Invite your child to put on their mop slippers to help out with some cleaning.
2. Turn on some music and slide your feet across the floor to the beat. "Let's pretend we are skating!"
3. Point out dust or dirt and encourage your child to slide across those areas until the dust disappears.

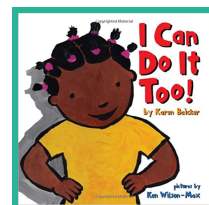
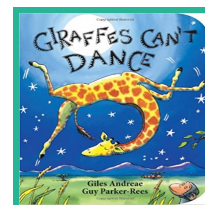
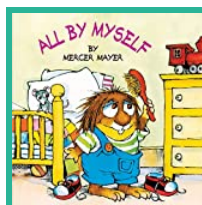


Book Recommendations: (Click the titles below to follow the Amazon links)

[All By Myself - by: Mercer Meyer](#)

[Giraffes Can't Dance - by: Giles Andreae](#)

[I Can Do It Too! - by: Karen Baicker](#)



We hope you have enjoyed these activities!

Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions and feel free to share and tag us in your photos and stories!

Activity Pack created and produced by Mary Wolff
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LEARNING THROUGH PLAY WITH
Smart Cookie Club
EVERY DAY!