



Standards Start at Home

A Guide to Early Learning for Parents/Families

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Acknowledgement

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Contents

3 Introduction	28 The Arts
7 Language Arts	32 English Language Learner Home Language Development
11 Mathematics	35 Social/Emotional Development
17 Science	41 Online Resources
21 Social Studies	45 Bibliography
24 Physical Development and Health	



Introduction

Many parents wonder what they can do to ensure that their preschooler will be successful when she enters school, especially now with so much emphasis on state testing and learning standards. Through play and everyday activities such as cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping, your young child is acquiring the information and skills needed to learn more difficult skills, including how to read, write, and solve problems. This guide is meant to help you understand that the lessons necessary to meet state learning standards begin in the home with your child's first and most influential teacher: **YOU!**

What does it mean to be ready for school? The Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS) were developed in collaboration with key Illinois stakeholders in the preschool education field. These standards are for children 3 years old to kindergarten entry. Preschool teachers use these standards to plan lessons and to share progress with parents. The Early Learning and Development Standards are based on the same learning goals and designed in the same format as the Illinois Learning Standards for kindergarten to grade 12. Because the Early Learning and Development Standards parallel the K–12 standards, there will be consistency for children as they move from preschool to elementary school. The Early Learning and Development Standards cover eight content areas: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical development and health, the arts, English language learner home language development, and social/emotional development.

These standards are not to be used to determine if a child is “ready” to enter kindergarten, but they serve as goals for adults to use in supporting the development of preschool children. This guide will provide information, tips, and activities for each of the learning areas. All the activities are things you can do easily and are fun and low-cost. As you do these activities with your child, please remember:

- Children learn best through play and hands-on experiences.
- Children are individuals and develop at different rates.
- Children have strengths in certain areas.
- Development in one area influences development in other areas.
- The child's interests drive learning.
- Learning takes place in the context of the child's perspective.
- Learning takes place in the context of relationships.

For more information on child development, early learning standards, and more resources for parent-child activities, please see the Web resource list and references at the end of this guide.

For Preschool 3 YEARS OLD TO KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT AGE

Illinois Early Learning and Development Activities



Early Learning Area: Language Arts

Language development

Right from birth, talk clearly to your child to help prepare him to read. Listening to your child is important, too. Let him ask questions, tell you stories, and respond to your questions. Playing with the sounds of language will help him prepare for reading. Studies have shown that playing with rhymes and sounds is an important part of reading success. Remember that children develop at different rates, but don't wait to seek help if your child is having trouble speaking.

Often, getting help at age 2, 3, or 4 allows a child to catch up with others her age before she enters school.

Tips for developing language skills

- Talk about things your child likes and ask questions.
- Give directions in small parts.
- Help him make up words that rhyme, for example, “dog, fog, hog, log...”
- Sing the ABC song and other songs that emphasize rhymes, such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” or “This Old Man.”
- Learn a tongue twister together (e.g., Peter Piper picked a peck...).
- Help your child figure out answers on her own; sometimes you can help her understand something new by reminding her of something she already knows.
- Encourage your child to talk with others (“Tell Grandma what we did today”).

Prereading

One of the most important skills your child can learn to succeed in school and life is how to read. Although children don't usually learn to read before they enter school, they do learn the pre-reading skills they will need in kindergarten. Three of the most important things your child needs to know before he can learn to read are:

1. That printed words mean something, and that pages in books are read from top to bottom and from left to right.
2. The names of the individual letters of the alphabet.
3. Words are made up of individual speech sounds.

Tips for reading with your child

- Read with your child often! Offer a variety of books (use your local library).
- Run your finger along the words so she sees you are reading from left to right.
- When reading, stop and ask, “What do you think will happen next?” Help him predict what will happen next using the pictures or what’s been read.
- Encourage your child to “read” a favorite story from memory. Have your child make up a story to go with the pictures.
- Ask simple questions about what the child read (or heard being read).
- Make sure your child sees you reading books, mail, etc. This helps him know that reading is important to you.
- Give your child foam or magnetic letters so that he can hold and touch them. Name the letters for him as he plays.
- Encourage your child to “read” familiar signs such as STOP.

Prewriting

To learn to write, a child needs fine-motor skills to hold and move a pencil. Writing also takes an understanding of the purpose of writing and how letters work together to make words. Most children follow a natural progression as they learn to write, beginning with scribbling. The scribbles will later become letters and finally words.

Tips for developing prewriting skills

- Offer your child a variety of writing materials (crayons, pencils, markers, and different sizes and types of paper).
- Label toy containers or other items in the house with words or words and pictures.
- Include “writing” when you play, such as taking orders in a “restaurant,” writing pretend telephone messages, and playing “school.”
- Put your child’s ideas in print. Write down his own words about a picture he drew or make a list of items he wants for his birthday.
- Use interactive reading skills. Point to the words as you read a book to your child, talking about who wrote the book and who drew the pictures.
- Be sure to expose your child to print in his native language and English if another language is spoken at home. Children can learn more than one language at a time.

Language Arts Activities

ACTIVITY	CATCH-A-RHYME
What your child will learn	Develop phonological awareness by doing rhyming activities; recognize separate and repeating sounds in spoken language
Materials	A ball or beanbag
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have your child say any word, then toss a ball or beanbag to you or another player. 2. You must say a rhyming word as you throw it back. 3. Continue with the same sound for several tosses.

ACTIVITY	PICTURE LABELING
What your child will learn	Expressive language; describing; the relationship between written and spoken language
Materials	Paper and drawing/writing utensils (markers, crayons, pencils, etc.)
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask your child to draw a picture. 2. Ask the child to tell you about his picture (try not to tell what you think it is). 3. Write the child's own words on the paper to show the link between spoken and written language. 4. Date the picture (to help review skill progress over time). 5. Display the picture with words proudly somewhere at home.

ACTIVITY	WALK-A-LETTER
What your child will learn	Identifying letters; making letter-sound matches
Materials	Sidewalk chalk or masking tape
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make large letters on the sidewalk or driveway, using chalk or masking tape. You can spell his name or just choose various letters. 2. Have the child walk on the letter and say the letter. 3. Say the sound the letter makes.

ACTIVITY	WORD GAMES
What your child will learn	Phonological awareness (sounds); letter-sound matches; separate and repeating sounds in language
Materials	None needed. Play these anywhere, including in the car.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play a game listening to the different sounds in words (e.g., map-cap, sat-hat). Do they sound the same? Do they rhyme? 2. Listen to the first sound in each word. Repeat and emphasize the sound for the child. Run, road. Box, button. 3. Clap the syllables in names or words. Su-san (clap, clap).

ACTIVITY	MAKING LISTS
What your child will learn	Different forms of print; print represents written language; print conveys meaning
Materials	Paper; writing utensil; for option 1b: ads or magazines, scissors, glue
Instructions	<p>Ask your child to help you make lists.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If your child is unable to write yet, here are two ideas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When you write a list (e.g., for groceries), ask child for ideas and let your child watch while you write the word. b. Help your child cut pictures of needed items from coupon ads or magazines, then glue the pictures on paper in “list” form. 2. If your child can write: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage your child to help you make lists, even if he can only write a few letters. b. Encourage your child to try to copy words from cans or boxes when making lists. <p>At the store, ask your child to help you read the list. For example, ask, “What letter is this?” (Child says, “B.”) Then ask, “Do you remember what we need that starts with the ‘B’ sound?” (Then make the “B” sound.)</p>

Early Learning Area: Mathematics

Mathematics

Math is much more than learning to count. Children need to learn about patterns and concepts such as bigger and biggest. They need to learn about sizes, shapes, quantity, and number. Math also means being able to think about and solve problems.

Math concepts can be learned through everyday activities and play. Most preschoolers are not ready for worksheets or math class. Children learn best by solving problems that come up in daily life. For example, setting the table with a plate, fork, knife, and spoon at each place helps children learn to count.

Number Concepts

Usually children learn about number concepts through objects and pictures. Later, they can use the names for numbers (count) and then learn the symbols for numbers (1, 2).

Tips for learning about numbers

- Be positive—your attitude about math will help your child.
- Count out loud as you climb steps, button clothes, stack blocks, etc. Use counting books with your child.
- Sing songs or say rhymes that include numbers (e.g., one, two, buckle my shoe).

Shapes and Space

Understanding shapes will help your child learn geometry when she gets older. Young children usually learn about shapes and space in a specific order, such as:

1. Playing with solid shapes, such as round balls and square blocks.
2. Matching real objects to pictures of objects.
3. Identifying shapes.
4. Naming pictures of shapes.

Mathematics is learned in steps. If a child misses a step, it becomes harder to understand later. Parents may start with naming pictures of shapes. If your child hasn't played with solid shapes, she may have trouble naming pictures. Even if your child memorizes the names of shapes, she may not have the understanding that will help later in school. For example, a square is a picture of the surface of a cube.

Tips for learning about shapes

- Provide solid objects that represent shapes for your child to play with—some blocks are cubes, cans are cylinders, balls are spheres, etc.
- Help your child trace around solid objects to see how they look on paper.
- Talk about the location of objects. Use words such as “on,” “under,” “near,” and “inside” to describe where you see shapes.

Classifying

Classifying means sorting things by something they have in common. Figuring out how things are alike or different is an important first step in matching and sorting objects. When a child notices differences in the way things look, sound, feel, smell, and taste, he is learning math skills.

Matching is one way to begin to classify objects. The objects do not have to be identical. When your child brings you her shoes, does she bring two that match? Children learn that shoes are worn as matching pairs.

Once a child can match two similar objects, then he can begin to sort objects. Sorting is grouping more than two objects together based on a similar trait, such as sorting the toy cars from the toy trucks. Children first sort items by one trait (color or size). Then they begin to sort by more than one trait. Later they can sort by traits they cannot see, such as “things we use in the kitchen.”

Tips for learning how to classify

- Match and sort real objects first. When that becomes easy, use pictures of objects.
- Collect interesting things (shells, rocks, leaves, etc.). Talk about how objects are alike and how they are different.
- Classify stuffed animals by movement (hop vs. swim) or home (farm vs. jungle). Have your child help you sort the laundry or match the socks into pairs.

Patterns and Sequences

Determining patterns and ordering, or “sequencing,” are important for later math concepts such as subtraction and division.

Comparing is the first step in patterning. Comparing is looking at two or more objects and finding how they are similar and different. When children compare, they often use words ending in -er, such as bigger or faster. When children order or sequence, they use words ending in -est, such as biggest or slowest.

Children begin sequencing by comparing a trait of two objects. After children understand comparing objects, they can begin to compare pictures. Then they can start ordering three items and move on to four or more. Finally, they can begin to predict the next step in a pattern. For example, they can predict that truck comes next in the pattern “car, car, truck, car, car...” Children also learn about patterns through repetition in books, music, and games. Learning to recognize and continue simple patterns provides a basis for more advanced math, especially algebra.

Tips for patterning and sequencing

- Provide open-ended materials such as blocks, Legos, beads, or dry macaroni to encourage your child to explore and create patterns.
- Play rhythm games with claps, snaps, and pats.
- Collect pairs of similar but different objects, then describe (e.g., “this book is bigger”).
- Use everyday items (shoes, cans, rocks, etc.) and put them in order from smallest to largest.

Measurement and Time

Children learn about shape, size, volume, weight, and amount as they practice measuring in different ways and with different tools, including the measurement of time. Children are interested in measurements such as how big, how tall, how many, and “how long until we get there?” Children who help in the kitchen can measure ingredients and learn about volume or learn there are steps in preparing food. They can learn to solve problems such as how many napkins are needed at the table or about “one-to-one correspondence” as they give one apple to each person. They can also learn it takes a certain number of minutes to cook macaroni.

Children learn about time through routines and special events. A child learns the steps of routines, such as putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, and reading a book before bedtime. A child may count down the days until a holiday or other special event.

Tips for learning about measurement and time

- Discuss weights of various foods when putting away groceries—the watermelon is heavy, but the popcorn is light.
- Let your child put spoons or bowls in order of size or nest and stack them.
- Talk about how many teaspoons or cups of a certain item are needed in a recipe.
- See how many cups of water it takes to fill a bowl.
- Help your child learn about time by using time words—“*yesterday* we went to the park; we will go to the store *after* lunch.”
- Ask questions to help your child estimate or measure as she plays. “How many blocks do you think it will take to make your road reach the wall?” or “Will it take more rocks to fill up the bucket or the basket?”

Mathematics Activities

ACTIVITY	COUNTING BEAN BAGS
What your child will learn	Counting; comparisons
Materials	Coffee cans or buckets; permanent marker; bean bags (you can make bean bags by putting dry beans in the toe of a large old sock and knotting it tightly); paper and/or tape
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place a large piece of tape or paper on the can or bucket. 2. Make dots on the tape or paper and have the child count the dots. 3. Have them throw that many bean bags into the bucket. 4. Check together to see that the number of objects in the bucket matches the number of dots on its outside. 5. Ask your child which container has more? Which has less?

ACTIVITY	SHAPE HUNT
What your child will learn	Recognizing geometric shapes and structures in the environment
Materials	Four empty toilet paper rolls; tape
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tape two toilet paper rolls together to make “binoculars.” Repeat so you and your child each have one pair. 2. Using your binoculars, go on a shape hunt around the house looking for different shapes. For example, a clock is a circle. 3. Count how many different shapes you can find. Discuss with your child how many circles or squares you found in the room or in the house.

ACTIVITY	SORT THE NOODLES
What your child will learn	Sorting; counting skills; classifying
Materials	Paper plates; crayons or markers; bag of different-colored dry noodles or macaroni; yarn and string (if using macaroni)
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Label the plates with colors by coloring the plate. 2. Ask the child to sort the noodles onto the right plates; that is, all the green noodles go on the green plate, etc. 3. You and the child can count how many green noodles, etc. 4. (Optional) String the macaroni onto the yarn in a pattern. Ask, “What color comes next?” (e.g., green, red, green, red, green). Older children can make a more complicated pattern (e.g., green, red, red, green).

ACTIVITY	WATCH ME GROW
What your child will learn	Gathering data about himself; representing data using pictures or graphs; describing qualitative change
Materials	Pencil; paper (optional)
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Measure and chart your child’s growth by taping up a long piece of paper as a growth chart or just make pencil marks on the inside of a closet door. 2. Date each mark and compare the growth over time. 3. Discuss the child’s growth using –er words such as “taller.”

ACTIVITY	OBJECT MATH
What your child will learn	Solving simple mathematical problems
Materials	Small objects or toys
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use objects to try simple math problems with your child. For example, ask “If I have one red car and one blue car, how many cars do I have?” 2. Move the objects and count them to try and help the child solve the problem. 3. Try subtraction by saying, for example, “You have two dolls, 1, 2. How many would you have left if you gave one to me?”

ACTIVITY	WAITING GAMES
What your child will learn	Gathering data about your surroundings; recognizing geometric shapes; recognizing patterns and order
Materials	None
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you have to wait in line in a public place, help your child notice her surroundings. 2. Count and discuss order (e.g., “we are third in line”). 3. Look for shapes nearby. 4. Find simple patterns together (e.g., the colors of floor tiles).

Early Learning Area: Science

Science

Many skills that help your child learn science come from doing household tasks. By providing everyday materials and asking questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer, you help your child develop science skills (e.g., “Do you think the block will float or sink?”). Be sure to give your child plenty of time to answer; he may need to think about it for a while. Don’t be afraid to point out your own mistakes to your child. Help him understand that we learn from mistakes and they are often starting points for new experiments.

Experimenting with objects and movement helps teach children the basics of physics as they explore how objects fall, roll, and bounce. Even a baby has some grasp of gravity when she drops her rattle and looks down, not up. As children grow older, they can begin to predict the results of their actions. They know that kicking a ball hard will make it go farther than if they just tap it with their foot.

Tips for developing science skills

- Ask your child questions based on the five senses. What do you smell? Taste? Hear? See? What does it feel like when you touch it?
- Discuss the weather with your child; ask “What is it like outside today?”
- Practice recycling; talk about how it helps our environment. Many local agencies offer free information and activities to help children learn about recycling.
- Learn about the seasons through family traditions, books, songs, and community activities.
- Encourage children to classify different living things. How are dogs and cats similar? How are they different? What animals live in the jungle? What lives in the water?
- Discuss technology and what it does for us. Use a thermometer to check your temperature. Use a scale to weigh different items.
- Chart your child’s growth over time, writing down his height, weight, and the date. Take advantage of the many hands-on children’s museums; most offer free days.

Outdoor Scientists

Outdoor play offers many natural opportunities to learn science. Encourage your child’s natural desire to explore and experiment when playing outside. Use words such as *wonder*, *predict*, *find out*, *try*, *tell*, and *observe* when talking. This will help to help your child begin to think like a scientist.

Tips for learning science through outdoor play

- Discuss the effects of the elements (“What did the wind do to our leaf pile?”).
- Trace your child’s shadow on the sidewalk with chalk, then do it again a few hours later. Why is it different? Notice shadows of other objects.
- Let your child have a small area to dig in and see what he can find living in the dirt. Look together at the roots of the grass she digs up.
- Plant flower seeds together in a pot or in the yard and watch them grow. Discuss what the plant needs to survive; observe the plant’s parts and how they change.
- “Paint” with water outside, in sun and shade. Which dries faster? What happens to the color of whatever object he “paints”?

Water and Science

Water play helps your child learn about science, including the different forms water takes (solid, gas, liquid). Water play also offers an opportunity to teach about safety (steam can burn; drowning can occur in only a few inches of water).

Tips for learning science through water play

Offer items to use in water play, such as strainers, scoops, measuring cups, corks, etc. (Use whatever you have. For example, if you don’t have a strainer, poke holes in a plastic cup. If you don’t have cork, use a ping pong ball or anything that floats.)

- Compare—what floats and what sinks?
- Observe which drains faster—a cup with a hole in the bottom or on the side?
- Blow or fan objects that float across the water. Can you make it change direction or make it move faster or slower?
- Experiment with different objects used to blow bubbles—a straw, a wire bent into an enclosed shape, etc. What happens if you blow soft or hard? What does the wind do to your bubbles?

Bubble recipe

Mix together the following:

1/4 cup liquid dishwashing detergent, such as Dawn

1/2 cup water

1 teaspoon sugar or corn syrup

Science Activities

ACTIVITY	COLORED CELERY
What your child will learn	To describe information; to use senses to observe; to make comparisons
Materials	Celery stalk; one glass; water; red or blue food coloring; scissors or a knife (for adult use only)
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fill a glass half full with water. 2. Add 15 drops of food coloring and stir. 3. The adult should snip off the end of the large celery stalk. 4. Put the stalk in the water. 5. Leave the stalk in the water for 48 hours and observe the celery occasionally. (Optional—write down observations.)

ACTIVITY	TASTE TESTING
What your child will learn	Use the senses to explore tastes
Materials	<p>Paper and pencil</p> <p>A variety of foods:</p> <p>salty—saltine crackers or pretzels; sweet—chocolate or cookies; sour—lemon or pickle; bitter—unsweetened chocolate; spicy—nacho cheese or salsa; crispy—potato chip or lettuce; soft—bread or oatmeal; hard—carrot or cereal</p>
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put the variety of foods in a bowl or on a tray. 2. As the child tastes each food, ask her to describe it. 3. Divide a paper in half; label one side “Likes” and the other side “Dislikes.” 4. As the child determines likes and dislikes, record the food in the appropriate column, then review the lists together.

ACTIVITY	FREEZER FUN
What your child will learn	Collect, describe, and record data; become aware of changes in the environment
Materials	Paper cups; water; a pen; a freezer
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fill three or four paper cups with different amounts of water, marking the water level on the outside of each cup. 2. Put the cups in the freezer. 3. Check the cups every 15 minutes for an hour. Observe changes. Ask questions such as “Which one freezes faster?” “Where is the water compared with the mark on the cup?” 4. (Optional) Chart the results by drawing pictures on a graph.

ACTIVITY	NATURE TREASURE HUNT
What your child will learn	To collect and describe information; to use senses to observe; to make comparisons
Materials	Sack or masking tape (Optional: paper and glue)
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go on an outdoor treasure hunt, collecting nature items in a bag or on a wide piece of tape placed upside down on your child’s wrist. 2. When you are done, take each item and ask the child to describe it. 3. (Optional) Sort and classify the items (e.g., things that grow on trees—leaves, twigs, etc.). 4. (Optional) Make a collage of the items by gluing on paper.

Early Learning Area: Social Studies

Social Studies

Social studies are about people and how they work and play together. We don't often think of teaching a preschooler social studies; however, learning to get along with others and how others may affect our lives will help prepare your child for social studies in school. A preschooler can learn to think beyond himself and about other people around him.

Having rules at home and specific results if they are broken will help your child adjust to school later. It will also start her on the path to being a good citizen. Explain values and rules clearly and simply ("We share our toys so that everyone has fun"). You can also help your child begin to understand democracy by allowing her (when appropriate) to vote as a way of making choices ("You can vote for pizza or chicken for dinner").

Tips for learning social studies

- Develop a concept of history by discussing events in your child's recent past ("Remember when we went to Grandma's house?").
- Encourage children to negotiate and compromise when they play together ("OK, I'll let you play with my doll if I can use your book").
- Play "follow the leader" with your child; take turns being the leader.
- Teach your child about money and how it is used ("Let's choose the chicken because it is on sale. We'll have enough left to buy some ice cream").
- Teach your child her phone number and address. Teach your child a proper way to answer the phone.

Your conversation and actions teach your child to respect people. Help your child notice community workers (firefighters, mail carriers, nurses, etc.) and what they do to help others. You can also help your child recognize that although everyone belongs to a family, not every family is the same. Discuss the ways people or families are similar. Help your child understand that you can respect a person and still disagree with something that person says or does.

As you travel around your neighborhood, talk about the geography of your environment ("Do you remember where we went yesterday to mail our letter?"). Books, television programs, and movies can also help your child realize that people live in many different places around the world and that those places look different and people live differently. The weather is different in other places; the

types of houses people live in and the type of clothes they wear are different. Make sure your child understands that even though people might dress or speak differently than she does, they are similar in many ways, too.

Tips for promoting community and cultural awareness

- Encourage pretend play—grocery store, beauty/barber shop, post office.
- Use a map to show your child the street you live on and how to find where you want to go.
- Have a treasure hunt in the house and/or yard and use a map to help the child find clues. Use pictures and arrows instead of words if the child is not yet reading.
- Teach your child to say hello and goodbye in different languages.

Social Studies Activities

ACTIVITY	WHICH ROOM IN THE HOUSE?
What your child will learn	Locating objects in the environment
Materials	Laundry basket or a box; items from around the house
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gather common objects from different rooms in the house.2. Ask your child to identify each object and in which room it is usually found.3. Let the child put the item back where it belongs.

ACTIVITY	PEOPLE WHO HELP US STAY WELL
What your child will learn	Names of health care professionals and what they do in the community; simple practices in caring for personal needs
Materials	A stuffed animal or doll; a toy doctor kit or objects from the house, such as a toilet paper roll to look in the nose or ear and a stethoscope made using yarn and a circle of construction paper
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Let your child choose a doll or stuffed animal. 2. Ask the child to pretend the toy has a physical problem—a bad cold, or toothache, or an upset stomach. 3. Ask your child who would help the toy and then allow her to pretend to care for the toy the way that person would (e.g., the dentist for the toothache). 4. Talk about specific visits to the doctor, dentist, or hospital by asking your child to finish a story starter such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —“When I went to the doctor...” —“When I was sick at home...”

ACTIVITY	OUR TOWN
What your child will learn	Identify community workers and the services they provide; begin to understand the use of trade to obtain goods and services; develop an awareness of the role of leaders
Materials	Many options: old used clothes, hats, shoes, aprons, paper, cardboard boxes, play money, a basket or bag, and empty, clean food boxes
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play town or any element of your town. Ask “Who helps in our town? How? What do they do?” 2. Use paper for signs, taking orders, making play money, etc. 3. Use big boxes for furnishings or buildings, smaller boxes for cash registers, space helmets, etc. 4. Show your child how to barter or trade. It might be two things (one toy for another), or play money for objects, or even for a service: “I’ll fix your toy truck for two play dollars.” 5. If there are several children playing, encourage them to take turns as a leader. Ask “What does a leader have to do? How?”

Early Learning Area: Physical Development and Health

Physical Development

The physical development of children is often referred to as gross-motor and fine-motor development. Gross motor refers to the development of the large muscles of the body, such as those used for walking, running, jumping, etc. Fine motor refers to the development of the small muscles of the body, including hands, fingers, toes, mouth, lips, tongue, and sphincter muscles that control elimination.

When your child has good control of his body, he feels confident to explore new ways to move and try more complex activities, including interacting with other children. Physical activities also provide an outlet for energy and a release for tension. Gross-motor activities help burn calories and develop muscles, which gives your child better health. Fine-motor activities help your child refine skills that will be necessary for school success such as writing, tying shoes, buttoning, etc. Both gross- and fine-motor activities require much practice over time to become smooth and fully developed.

Tips for developing motor skills (gross or fine)

- Keep activities enjoyable and safe! Enthusiasm is more important than skill level.
- Allow your child to do well with one skill before trying a harder one. Provide lots of chances for practice.
- Show your child how to do a new skill if he is nervous or has a hard time with it. Don't criticize or constantly correct your child. Mistakes are part of learning.
- Join your child in motor activities as often as possible.
- Provide opportunities for group physical activities, which help your child learn to follow rules and cooperate with others. Such activities may be available through preschools or day cares, the park district, library, YMCA, parent center, church, or synagogue.
- Remember that it is not good for children to sit still for long periods of time when practicing fine-motor skills.

Activities for developing gross-motor skills

Throw and catch balls and/or beanbags. Have your child throw harder and farther, in different directions, and at targets (chalk marks, big or little baskets, etc.).

Count together the number of times your child can bounce a ball or jump up and down.

Provide chances for your child to balance on surfaces that are different sizes and heights. Watch closely to prevent falls.

Have your child imitate animals, vehicles, or machinery (e.g., hop like a bunny, crawl like a turtle, or move like a car with a flat tire).

Provide rocking or riding toys at an appropriate height for your child.

Try jumping in different directions, over small objects, down from surfaces that are of safe heights, and up onto sturdy surfaces.

Build structures with large, hollow blocks. You can make them with taped-up cereal boxes. Play in sand or dirt. Digging, building a castle, and pushing trucks all build motor skills.

Activities for developing fine-motor skills

Encourage your child to scribble, draw, and “write.” Provide different types of paper (plain paper, index cards, cardboard) and writing tools (pencils, crayons, chalk, nontoxic markers, pens).

Cut with blunt-end safety scissors. Cutting is a complex skill that requires much practice. It is easier to cut play dough, stiff paper or cards, or plastic straws than regular paper.

Paint with water, tempera paint, watercolors, or finger paint. Different brush sizes and paper require your child to use different muscles.

String spools, beads, Cheerios, macaroni, etc., on a shoelace, yarn, or pipe cleaner. Use play dough or clay, alone or with cookie cutters or other utensils.

Play with blocks of various sizes and shapes. Block play enhances muscle control, eye-hand coordination, and perceptual and sensory motor development.

Choose puzzles that are easy for your child and then build up to harder ones. Some libraries have puzzles that can be checked out just like books.

Sort small objects. Picking out small items such as coins, beads, or pieces of yarn from a tray of sand or salt is a fun “treasure hunt.” Supervise to make sure items don’t go in the mouth.

Find things such as sponges, turkey basters, and play dough to squeeze. Squeezing increases hand and finger strength.

Health and Safety

It is important to teach your child good health and safety practices from an early age and to model good health practices. This includes healthy eating, regular exercise, proper hand washing, and tooth brushing. You can teach your child the names of body parts, talk about what different parts do, and how to keep his body healthy.

Good health also includes emotional health. Help your child learn good ways to express his needs, wants, and feelings as well as good ways to resolve problems.

It is also important to teach your child to avoid danger. Basic lessons such as “don’t touch a stove” and “don’t cross the street by yourself” help keep your child safe.

Tips for developing good health and safety practices

- Sing the alphabet song together while your child washes his hands. It takes 25–30 seconds for soap to kill germs, about the same amount of time the song takes.
- Wash hands before eating, after toileting, and very often when anyone in the family is ill.
- Make a game of naming body parts. Discuss what each part does. “Our ears help us hear—what do you hear?”
- Teach your child to cover his coughs and sneezes, with a tissue whenever possible.
- Check with your local health department for free resources to help your child learn good health habits.

Physical Development and Health Activities

ACTIVITY	LET IT RIP (PAPER TEARING)
What your child will learn	Develop hand muscles for future writing and cutting
Materials	Any of the following: typing paper, construction paper, waxed paper, wrapping paper, tin foil, paper bags, or tissue paper (Optional: school glue, glue stick, or paste)
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have your child tear the paper—tear big pieces, little pieces, skinny pieces, round pieces, square pieces, very small pieces, and long pieces. 2. Pick up all the pieces. 3. (Optional) Have your child glue the pieces onto a large piece of paper or posterboard.

ACTIVITY	OBSTACLE COURSE
What your child will learn	Large muscle control; following rules when participating in group physical activities
Materials	Some (not necessarily all) of these: boxes, ropes, string, chairs, table(s), plastic jugs, yard sticks, objects to jump/crawl over, etc.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arrange an obstacle course in a large circle as space allows. 2. Have child follow you, the leader, as you move through the course and do what you do. Be creative! 3. Try some of the following: step over a box, hop on chalk marks, walk between chairs, jump on masking tape shapes, crawl under a table, crawl around jugs, walk on a string.

ACTIVITY	SMILING FACES AND HEALTHY TEETH
What your child will learn	Independence in caring for personal needs
Materials	Mirror; toothbrushes; toothpaste
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standing in front of a mirror, help your child name and touch all the parts of her mouth: lips, teeth, tongue, gums. 2. Ask your child to try to smile without opening her mouth. 3. Brush your teeth together and share this rhyme: “Even if you’re in a rush, don’t forget to swish and brush.” 4. Remember to rinse well. 5. Smile and show off your clean teeth!

Early Learning Area: The Arts

Fine Arts

Children generally love fine arts: dance, drama, music, painting, drawing, etc. The process of doing art is much more valuable for children than the final product. That is, what your child learns by doing art is more important than the piece of art itself. Participating in the arts helps her develop self-confidence as well as attention and problem-solving skills. It also helps her express feelings, be creative, and look at things from other people's point of view.

Music and Dance

Children have a natural desire to move to music. This movement has a positive effect on brain development. Both listening to and making music help children. Listen to different kinds of good music with your child. Classical music is more complex and is thought to build more connections in the brain. Music from different cultures can help your child learn about different people and places. Encourage your child to experiment with singing, dancing, and using simple instruments.

Tips for exploring music and dance/movement

- Sing to your child. This is fun and helpful, even if you “can’t carry a tune.”
- Encourage your child to move or dance along to all types of music.
- Provide many types of music, via radio, CDs, or TV. There are many sing-along tapes, CDs, and videos for children. You can check these out at your public library.
- Public television stations often show ballets, operas, symphony concerts, etc. Sit down with your child and enjoy a show you might not get to see somewhere else.
- Play soothing music at naptime or bedtime.
- Play marching music in the morning when getting ready or during cleanup time.

Drama

Encourage your child to act out a part, either as an actor or using a puppet. Drama gives children a chance to be creative and to think about how other people act and feel. Whether the character is real or pretend, you can help your child begin to think about how others feel. Ask “How would you feel if you had to move to a new town?” Your child can also explore different jobs or family members' roles (“What would you do if you were the daddy?”).

Tips for exploring drama

- Listen to tapes that combine music and stories.
- Make puppets out of socks or other household items and put on a play. Some libraries have puppets available to use while you are there.
- Read a favorite book together and then act out the parts of people in the book. Develop a “prop box” with old used hats, jewelry, etc., to encourage dramatic play.
- Larger cities and many universities offer free or low-cost plays or concerts just for children.

Visual Arts

Visual arts are a natural favorite for most children. Playing with play dough or clay, coloring, and painting are all great ways for children to explore their world and express themselves. However, do not confuse this “process art” with adult-directed crafts, such as a paper plate snowman.

While such crafts may have some value, such as developing fine-motor skills, they should not replace open-ended, child-directed art opportunities. With process art, there is no right or wrong final product. Allow your child to solve problems, such as how she can get her paper to stick to the cardboard or how to draw a puppy so everyone will know it is happy. Allow the child to tell you about the picture if she wants; sometimes she may prefer to keep her visual/emotional experience to herself. Remember, process is more important than product. Don’t worry about how it looks when she is done.

Tips for exploring visual arts

- Provide different art materials on a regular basis. Many paints, crayons, etc., are found at discount stores. Play dough can also be made at home. Remember, there is no “wrong way” to do art.
- Try different ways to do art. If your child usually uses crayons, ask if she would like to use watercolors instead or try watercolor over crayon on a picture.
- Involve your child in cleaning up; that is part of creating art.
- Go to children’s museums or art museums; many offer free days.
- Help your child notice the art in the world around him (“Wow! Those flowers have really bright colors” or “Did you see the painting on this ceiling?”).

Fine Arts Activities

ACTIVITY	HOMEMADE RHYTHM BAND
What your child will learn	Participation in music activities; concepts of rhythm and beat, such as fast, slow, loud, and soft
Materials	Various, depending on choice of instruments: pot lids, coffee cans, oatmeal or salt canisters, paper plates, Pringles cans, film canisters, juice can, rice, dry beans, paper towel or toilet paper rolls, rubber bands, craft bells, tissue boxes, wax paper, wood blocks, sandpaper, tape, and glue. You also can decorate these with art supplies.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make your own instruments. Be creative, but here are some starter suggestions: Shake: Put beans or rice or even pebbles in a closed container (film or juice can) and tape it up securely. Drums: Remove both ends of an oatmeal or salt canister, stretch balloons across the top and bottom, and secure them with rubber bands, or you can simply tape a canister shut to make a drum. For drumsticks, use an empty paper towel roll stuffed with newspaper and tape it shut. Guitar: Wrap rubber bands around a tissue box, over the hole. You can attach a cardboard tube for the handle. Kazoo: Wrap wax paper tightly around one end of a cardboard tube, securing it with a rubber band. Poke a hole 1 inch from the wax paper end of the tube and hum into the opposite end. 2. Play your instruments while singing simple songs; march around the house or yard. 3. Practice playing loud and soft. 4. Practice playing different beats and rhythms.

ACTIVITY	YOUNG DECORATORS
What your child will learn	Painting for self-expression and creativity; helping around the home
Materials	Area to paint; water-based paints; cleanup equipment
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you have an old basement or other little-used area or even an old piece of furniture, let your child help decorate it with various colored paints. 2. Try primary colored handprints over a white or light blue base or sponge paint white clouds on a blue base—or simply let your child use her creativity in making a design!

ACTIVITY	STREAMER PLAY
What your child will learn	Participate in the elements of dance, music, and possibly drama; describe her creative work or the creative work of others
Materials	Streamers, yarn, or old fabric cut into strips; music; player
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play different types of music (fast, slow, classical, rock, country) and encourage your child to move and dance to the music. 2. Talk about the similarities and differences in the types of music. 3. Encourage your child to talk about which music he likes best and why, including how it makes him feel or what it makes him think about. 4. Your child may want to act out a part (e.g., “That music makes me think of elephants walking...boom, boom, boom. I can walk like an elephant!”).

ACTIVITY	TRANSITION SONGS
What your child will learn	Using creative arts for self-expression and self-direction
Materials	None
Instructions	<p>Use songs to help with difficult transitions, including cleanup time, waiting your turn, etc. Use the following songs or make one up and sing it to a familiar tune such as “Row, row, row your boat.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cleanup song: “Clean up, clean up, everybody everywhere. Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share.” 2. Waiting song: “Wait, wait, wait your turn. Waiting can be fun! Patience, patience, patience everyone. Waiting can be fun!” (Sing to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”)

Early Learning Area: English Language Learner Home Language Development

Dual Language Learners (DLL)

If you or someone else in your home speaks a language other than English, your child has an excellent opportunity to become bilingual. Speaking two languages is a skill that parents can promote. The early childhood years are especially critical for children learning two languages. Each child is unique in his development of two languages, and all children can benefit from being bilingual.

Advantages of being bilingual *(see Baker, 2000, p. 2)*

- Wider communication (extended family, community, international links, etc.)
- Literacy in two languages
- Broader cultural advantages, including less racism and greater tolerance
- Better working memory
- Raised self-esteem and security in identity
- Increased curriculum achievement
- Easier to learn a third language in the future
- Future employment benefits

There are several ways parents can help their children become bilingual:

- Use two languages from the start. Many children grow up learning two languages at the same time.
- Use only one language at home. Your child can learn the second language at school and in the community.
- Give your child many opportunities to hear and practice using both languages in everyday situations (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2014).

Tips for raising bilingual children

- Use your home language. Your child can learn your home language and English.
- Share your culture and family practices with your child's teachers.
- Make language learning fun and natural.
- Provide many different language experiences in each language, including music, drama, and other activities.
- Provide books, DVDs, and games in the home language to promote learning more words.
- Engage in conversations with your child about special topics of interest to him.
- Be patient if one or both languages develop more slowly than other children who have only one language. This is common, and most catch up by third grade.
- Make sure your child knows if he is expected to speak a certain language to a certain person, in a certain place, or at certain times.
- Find other people who speak your native language, as well as other resources, by using the Internet and/or your public library.

Resources for parents raising bilingual children

Books and articles

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Learning two languages*. Available at <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/BilingualChildren/>

Baker, C. (2000). *A parents' and teachers' guide to bilingualism* (2nd ed.). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

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Websites

Center for Early Care and Education Research—Dual Language Learners

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu

¡Colorín Colorado!

A bilingual site for families and educators of English language learners.
www.colorincolorado.org/

Head Start Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic

National Association for Bilingual Education

www.nabe.org

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

www.ncela.us

Early Learning Area: Social/Emotional Development

Emotional Development

Social development is being able to relate to other people. Emotional development is being able to understand and show feelings. Social/emotional development is a key part of learning. To be a good learner, it is important that your child:

- feels secure,
- develops a positive self-image,
- learns to express emotions, and
- interacts with others in a positive way.

A secure child will show curiosity as a learner and will try hard to solve problems. Give your child a chance to try things herself instead of doing it for her. Give her chances to make choices and safely explore her environment. Set guidelines to help her learn to respect herself, others, and property. Your child also needs a chance to talk about what she wants and how she feels without fear that she will be criticized or put down.

A child with a positive self-concept feels loved and secure. Show your child you love and respect her in a variety of ways: tell her, hug her, give small gifts, spend time with her, and give her your full attention.

Tips for healthy development of self

- Encourage your child to describe herself.
- Have your child fill in these blanks: When I _____ I feel _____.
- Use books to explore emotions. Ask a librarian for help in finding such books on your child's level.
- Talk about your child's feelings. Don't put your child down for feeling a certain way. (Remember children will react to things in different ways than adults.)
- Be aware of situations that may cause stress for your child, including changes in routine, fears (real or imagined), a new baby, moving, absence of a family member, divorce, remarriage, or death in the family. Conflict or tension at home, feeling unloved, or physical or verbal abuse also cause stress.
- Talk about values you care about: caring, cooperation, courage, fairness, honesty, respect, or responsibility.
- Make a list of things your child can do by herself and put it on the refrigerator. Praise your child for trying new things.

Social Development

To do well socially, a child needs to be able to get along with others. Children learn about other people as they interact with them. They learn from their parents, other adults, brothers and sisters, and friends.

Encourage your child to cooperate with a friend as they play. When there is conflict, you may need to help them talk about their feelings and show them how to settle their differences. But when you can, allow the children to work out their problems on their own. Sometimes a question will help them to figure it out themselves. For example, you might ask, "What can you do so that you both have a turn to play with the doll?"

Researchers remind us that a child's personality will affect how social they are; some children have lots of friends while others prefer one or two. An emotionally healthy child will show positive skills on a fairly regular basis. Here are some signs of healthy development:

- A positive mood
- A positive relationship with one or two peers
- Actions that show she really cares about others
- Not severely or always lonely
- Ability to express frustration and anger without harming others or property
- Not drawing too much attention to self
- An ability to show humor (McClellan & Katz, 1992)

Tips for promoting healthy socialization

- Provide times for social interaction and coach your child on how to act. Give positive feedback for good behavior (e.g., “You and Jon are taking turns”) and redirect negative behavior (e.g., “You use this blue truck while Jon uses the red one, or else you can do a puzzle until he is finished”).
- Check into free play groups if your child isn’t usually with other children her age. Local parent centers, YMCAs, religious groups, or park districts offer play groups.
- Role-play sharing and turn-taking with your child during a game of “Let’s pretend.”
- Help your child transition from one activity to another by singing a song that signals the next activity or setting a timer with a bell. (“You and Crystal can play until the bell rings in five minutes, then you need to wash your hands for lunch.”)

Social/Emotional Development Activities

ACTIVITY	PUPPET PLAY
What your child will learn	Self-expression; listening skills
Materials	Hand puppets. To make your own at home, use a variety of scrap art materials such as socks, aluminum foil, paper bags, mittens, plastic spoons. You can accessorize them with yarn, markers, buttons, etc.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make puppets with one or more of the above. Have fun! 2. Put on a puppet show together with your child or take turns watching and listening.

ACTIVITY	FEELINGS BOOK
What your child will learn	Describe the feelings of oneself and others; motor-skill practice
Materials	Magazines or advertisements that can be cut up; scissors; glue; heavy paper or cardboard; hole punch; yarn or ribbon
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have the child cut or tear out pictures of people showing different emotions. 2. Glue the pictures onto cardboard squares or stiff paper. 3. Punch holes on one edge of each “page.” 4. Tie the book together with yarn or ribbon. 5. Let your child “read” the book and discuss how these people feel and how she feels at different times. 6. Remind your child that feeling a certain way is not wrong, but emotions must be talked about and acted out in good ways.

ACTIVITY	ROLLING WITH LAUGHTER
What your child will learn	Working together to cooperate and solve problems
Materials	No materials needed; allow plenty of space
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You and your child should lay on your backs, arms at your sides and feet flat against your partner’s feet...then roll. 2. Try several times because practice makes perfect. 3. Next, try it holding hands instead of touching feet. 4. Ask your child, “Is it easier or harder this way? Why?”

For Preschool 3 YEARS OLD TO KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT AGE

Online Resources



Online Resources

The Internet is a valuable tool for finding all kinds of information, resources, and activities to help you as a parent or caregiver and your child as a learner. If you do not have Internet access at home, please remember that nearly all libraries and many schools offer free Internet access to parents and children. The following are some excellent websites with resources for parents:

Academic Development Institute

www.adi.org

Department of Education**Early Learning Resources**

www.ed.gov/early-learning/resources

Family Education

Tips, activities, and more.

www.familyeducation.com

Foundation for Early Learning

Provides information, publications, and more.

<http://www.earlylearning.org>

Get Ready to Read!

Information for parents and activities for children.

getreadytoread.org

Illinois Early Learning Project

Tip Sheets, videos, and resources in English and Spanish.

illinoisearlylearning.org

Illinois Parents

Provides resources for Illinois families on raising and educating their children.

www.illinoisparents.org

KidsHealth

Has information about health for parents, kids, and teens.

kidshealth.org

NAEYC for Families

The National Association for the Education of Young Children offers resources for parents.

families.naeyc.org

National Center for Families Learning

www.familieslearning.org

The Parent Report

You can search for information by age group.

www.theparentreport.com

Parents as Teachers

The Parents as Teachers National Center has information for parents and can help you locate a PAT program in your area.

www.parentsasteachers.org

PBS Kids

Has activities for children related to PBS shows and a link for parents.

pbskids.org

For Preschool 3 YEARS OLD TO KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT AGE

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