

STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Health & Social Services
Department of Education & Early Development

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

Goldbelt Place
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200
P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
(907) 465-4862
(907) 465-2806 Fax
Paul.sugar@alaska.gov

April, 2009

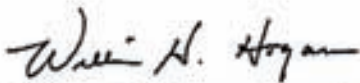
Dear Alaskans:

We are excited to provide you with this activity booklet for parents and providers based on the *State of Alaska Early Learning Guidelines*. Please join us in using this document to improve the well-being and school readiness of Alaska's children. We believe these activities and interactions will help guide our children to school success and healthy and productive lives.

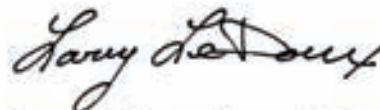
In addition, these activities will serve as a tool for discussion, sharing, and decision-making between parents and local early childhood professionals. They, along with the Early Learning Guidelines, can also serve as a source that can inform parents, care givers, and educators about expectations related to our children's needs for active intentional interactions, and interventions with adults, other children, and the world around them to enhance their learning and development.

As you use and adapt these activities, we hope they and the goals, indicators, ideas and strategies found in the Early Learning Guidelines will help guide your decisions and interactions with the children in your homes, early care and education settings, and communities across Alaska.

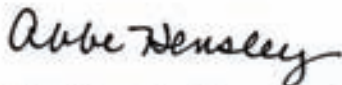
Sincerely,



William H. Hogan, Commissioner
Health & Social Services



Larry LeDoux, Commissioner
Education & Early Development



Abbe Hensley, Executive Director
Best Beginnings

Acknowledgments

This project was supported by the Alaska Departments of Education & Early Development (EED), Health and Social Services (HSS), and Best Beginnings.

We thank Gail Trujillo for researching, compiling, and classifying 165 activities based on the *Alaska Early Learning Guidelines*. The Guidelines publication is available by calling 907-465-2800 or online at:

www.eed.state.ak.us/pubnstats.html

www.hss.state.ak.us/publications/EarlyLearningpweb.pdf

www.BestBeginningsAlaska.org

We also would like to thank the Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center (SERRC) for their work in editing this first in a series of English language activity booklets for parents and providers.



BEST BEGINNINGS
Alaska's Early Childhood Investment



Introduction

Whether you are a parent, grandparent, doting aunt or uncle, admiring friend, or child care provider, you can help a child's development by offering these simple activities. At the same time, you can observe the child's own special way of interacting with the world.

This booklet includes activities for five areas of child development. These correspond with the domains described in the *Alaska Early Learning Guidelines*. The activities do not require special equipment or expensive materials. You can use things you already have in your home or child care center.

It is not the intent of this book for you to 'teach' your child a new skill or to 'push' him along to the next step in development. Just as you can't force a child to get taller, you can't rush him to develop in other ways. Your child's inner timetable helps decide when he will learn to grab objects, sit up, walk, speak, or develop his thinking abilities.

This booklet is divided into six sections by age: 36 to 42 months, 42 to 48 months, etc. Each age group provides suggestions for activities that are designed to aid in your child's development in one of these key areas:

Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

The suggestions in this area are designed to help develop your child's large and small muscle control, her coordination, and her overall physical fitness.

Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Activities in this area target your child's ability to make and keep social relationships, both with adults and with other children. He will learn to recognize and express his own feelings more effectively. He will gain experience understanding, and responding to, the emotions of others.

Area III: Approaches to Learning

Children differ in how they approach new tasks, difficult problems, or challenges. These activities will spark your child's curiosity, interest, attention, and ability to stay on task. Research suggests strong links between positive approaches to learning and children's success in school.

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

The suggestions in this area help your child figure out how the world works and how things are organized. Your child will experience 'learning how to learn.' As a result, she may have better problem-solving abilities and better abstract thinking.

Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

These ideas will help your child learn to express himself and to understand what others say. Early reading and writing skills are also targeted.





Suggestions for All Activities:

1. SAFETY FIRST!

Materials:

- When making materials, smooth off or tape any rough edges.
- Check other homemade items often for safety. For example, you may need to re-glue or re-tie some materials.
- Small items may pose a choking hazard.
- Be careful with string, yarn, ribbons, scarves, etc. Your child may accidentally become tangled in them.
- Keep your hot glue gun, sharp scissors, and other 'grown-up' tools away from curious fingers!

Activities:

- Always supervise your child!
- Make sure he knows how to handle all materials and tools safely.
- Use child-safe scissors whenever your child cuts.
- Wash your child's hands after he paints, glues, uses play dough or soap products, etc. Be sure to wash up before he handles food!

2. HAVE FUN!

Focus on playing and having fun rather than on improving one particular skill. A single activity can promote learning in many areas. When a child is playing, she is learning!

Don't do too much for your child. Sit back and allow her to explore materials in her own way. Remember that there are no 'wrong answers' for these activities!

3. AGE RANGES

Although each activity has an age range, you don't need to follow it strictly. Observe what your child is already doing. Use your own judgment and knowledge of your child to determine if the activity is appropriate.

As we know, each child develops at his own pace. It is not a good idea to compare one child to another of the same age.

4. DO THESE ACTIVITIES OFTEN

Don't hesitate to offer the same activity (or variations of it) over and over again. Young children thrive on repeating familiar activities. This helps them learn the new skill well.

5. SHARE YOUR FAMILY'S CULTURAL HERITAGE WITH YOUR CHILD

Sing songs and tell stories from your family's culture. If you are bilingual or multilingual, talk to your child in the languages you know.

Encourage others — grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and friends — to engage in activities with your child.

6. DELIGHTFUL LEARNING

Enjoy these activities with your child! Through positive adult attention and interaction, children learn that it is fun to be with other people.





Table of Contents

Letter of Introduction	1
Acknowledgments.....	2
Introduction.....	3

Preschoolers 36–42 Months

Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

Polka Dot Flowers	9
-------------------------	---

Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Busy Buddies	10
--------------------	----

Area III: Approaches to Learning

Touchy Feely Box	11
------------------------	----

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Nature Walk Art	12
-----------------------	----

Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Let's Rhyme!	13
--------------------	----

Preschoolers 42–48 Months

Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

Basketball Game.....	15
----------------------	----

Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Choices Chart.....	16
--------------------	----

Area III: Approaches to Learning

Carrot Top.....	17
-----------------	----

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Math Activities for the Home.....	18
-----------------------------------	----

Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Tell Me About It!	19
-------------------------	----





Preschoolers 48–54 Months

Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

String Art.....21

Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Helping With Family Chores22

Area III: Approaches to Learning

Block Parade.....24

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Science in the Home25

Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Alpha-Bags26

Preschoolers 54–60 Months

Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

Rubber Bodies29

Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Making a Train, Boat, Etc.....30

Area III: Approaches to Learning

The Weather Report31

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Measure It Scavenger Hunt.....32

Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Jumping Jack Syllables.....33

References.....35









Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

Polka Dot Flowers

Give your child practice using one of his hands more than the other. This will help him prepare for other tasks, such as painting a picture or cutting with scissors.

Materials:

- Plastic eyedroppers or other clean medicine droppers
- Food coloring dye
- Small cups or other containers
- Coffee filters
- Paper towels or tissue paper (optional)
- Cardboard or colored paper (optional)
- Old ice cube tray (optional)
- Containers that have twist or pull lids (optional)

What to Do:

1. Show your child how to squeeze water in and out of the eyedropper. Be sure he uses the pads of his fingers when squeezing. Let him practice this by himself.
2. Once your child understands how to control the eyedropper, fill several small cups half full of water. Let him help you squeeze 1 to 3 drops of food coloring dye into the water. Use more drops for darker colors. This will show your child the contrast between the colored water and the clear eyedropper tube.
3. Use the eyedropper to drip different colors from the cups onto the coffee filters. These make beautiful tie-dyed 'flowers' to use as decorations or gifts!

Variations:

- A. Drip colored water onto paper towels or tissue paper. Frame these 'pictures' with cardboard or glue them onto colored paper. Put them up on your refrigerator or wall. Be sure to hang them at your child's eye level.
- B. Use an old ice cube tray to offer different colors of water. Your child can use the eyedropper to mix colors together or to do other projects.
- C. Put small amounts of colored water in containers that have twist or pull lids. Show your child how to hold the container with one hand as he twists or pulls off the lid with the other hand. Spills are OK — just clean them up quickly!
- D. Use the eyedropper and plain water to give toys a 'shower.'

Preschoolers 36–42 Months





Preschoolers 36–42 Months



10

Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Busy Buddies

At this age, children begin to develop friendships. Sometimes they want to play with the same child or group of children each day. Encourage your child to interact with different children. Try these activities to help develop new friendships!

Materials:

- Favorite toys, games, etc.
- Paper
- Non-toxic crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Camera (optional)

What to Do:

1. Talk to your child about friendship. Ask her to think of a friend she knows from home, child care, or other places. Share your own feelings about your friends. Explain how you can make new friends by doing things together.
2. Invite a new child and his parent for a visit.
3. Introduce the children. To help them remember who their new buddy is, say their names several times during the introduction.
4. If you'd like, give the children matching stickers or written nametags.

5. Give the children several play choices. These should be activities they can do together. Here are some examples of items that are good for this kind of play:

- Blocks, toy vehicles, toy animals or people
- Art supplies, such as paper and non-toxic markers or crayons
- Stuffed animals, puppets, or dolls
- Household play items such as dishes, a telephone, or dollhouse
- Outdoor play equipment such as a sandbox or swings
- Favorite books, games, or puzzles

6. Later, ask the children to draw pictures to show what they did together. Talk about their pictures. Encourage them to share a happy memory or to tell a nice story about their new friend.

Variations:

- A. Help each child take a photo of the other. Take some pictures of them together. Make copies so everyone can keep some photos.
- B. Put photos or drawings up on the refrigerator, wall, or bulletin board. Try to place them at your child's eye level.
- C. Make and decorate a folder or box to store the drawings and photos.





Area III: Approaches to Learning

Touchy Feely Box

Here is a fun way for your child to practice describing and comparing objects. She'll also learn to ask good questions!

Materials:

- Shoebox or other box with lid
- Scissors
- Two different items from the same group, such as:
 - Two shells of different sizes or textures
 - Two balls, one hard and one soft
 - Two rocks, one smooth and one rough

What to Do:

1. Cut a hole in the end of the box. Make it bigger than your fist.
2. Show your child two of the items. Place these in the box and put the lid back on.
3. Show your child how to play this game:
 - Slowly spin the box around.
 - Without looking, reach into the box to feel one of the items.
 - Tell something about the item, such as its size or shape, whether it is rough or smooth, if it is hard or soft, etc.
 - Have your child guess which item you described.
 - Now it's your child's turn. When she feels an item in the box, ask her questions, such as, "Is it big or little?" "Does it feel squishy?" or "Are there lots of bumps?"
 - Guess which item your child described.
 - Continue to take turns using different sets of objects.

Variation:

When it is your turn to feel the object, encourage your child to ask you questions. For example, you might prompt her by saying, "Ask me how it feels," or "Ask me if it is big."



Preschoolers
36–42
Months



Preschoolers 36–42 Months

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Nature Walk Art

Join your child or have a group outing as you gather natural art materials. You can use them for a variety of projects!

Materials:

- Paper bags
- Non-toxic markers, crayons, paints, or other art supplies
- Natural art materials
- Child-safe scissors
- Glue
- Heavy cardboard
- Clay or play dough (optional)

What to Do:

1. Talk to your child about the different art materials you can find in nature. These might include leaves, berries, tree bark, feathers, grass, seashells, tree cones, twigs, small stones, sand, etc.
2. Decorate paper bags to use on a nature walk. You might write your child's name on one, or he might make a picture of something he hopes to find. Stickers also make good decorations.
3. Use your bags to gather any natural art materials available in your area.
4. Make traditional crafts. Or, arrange and glue the materials onto a stiff piece of cardboard. Use other art supplies to fill in or to decorate further.
5. Write labels for the finished artwork. Display it somewhere in your home, or give it as a gift!

Variations:

- A. Create a bouquet using dried grasses, branches, or other natural materials:
 - You will need a lump of clay or play dough, about two fistfuls. Make this into a mound on a stiff paper plate or a piece of heavy cardboard. This will be the base for your bouquet.
 - Stick your grasses, branches, or other materials into the clay or play dough mound. Make changes to your arrangement by adding items or moving things around. Use stones, sand, or shells to cover the base.
- B. Look for items in nature that are all the same color or whose names all start with the same letter.

Make Your Own Play Dough!

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup water
(with your choice of food coloring)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Instructions:

Mix together all ingredients. Knead the dough until it is smooth. Add a little more flour if the dough is too sticky. Store it in the refrigerator in an airtight plastic bag or container.



Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Let's Rhyme!

Children love to rhyme words — even if the words are made-up! Basic rhyming skills are important for later reading abilities.

Materials:

- Books or poems (nursery rhymes work very well)
- Magnetic letters (optional)
- Cookie sheet (optional)

What to Do:

1. Select books and poems that include rhyming words. Read these with your child every day.
2. Read or recite the book or poem out loud. Stress the words that rhyme, or change your voice according to the rhythm. Whisper or say some words louder than the rest.
3. When reading aloud, give your child cues that a rhyming word is coming up. For example, deliberately pause before this word, allowing time for him to say it before you do.

Variations:

- A. Say a word with one syllable, such as “pat” or “sit.” Help your child think of as many words as you can that rhyme with it (“rat,” “bat,” “mat” or “kit,” “fit,” “hit.”) Accept any made-up words that rhyme, such as “dat” or “rit.”
- B. Play rhyming games with your child as you do chores or when you travel. For example, you might say, “I am thinking of an animal that rhymes with ‘fat.’ It says ‘meow.’ What animal is it?” You also might hold up an item and name it. Ask him to think of a word that rhymes with the item, as in “car” rhymes with “jar.”
- C. Use magnetic letters on a cookie sheet to play this fun rhyming game:
 - Put out two or three letters that can end common words, such as ‘op’ or ‘ick.’
 - Help your child select other letters to put in front of these. In this way, he will form rhyming words such as “hop,” “cop,” “top” or “pick,” “sick,” “lick.”
 - Say each rhyming word out loud. Decide whether it is a real word or a made-up word.

Preschoolers 36–42 Months







Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

Basketball Game

This game lets your child practice reaching across to her opposite side.

Safety Alert: *Children can choke by playing with scarves, ribbons, and uninflated balloons. Be careful with these items!*

Materials:

- Empty clothes basket, bucket, or cardboard box
- Large ball or beanbag
- Light scarves, tissue paper, or ribbons (optional)
- Balloons (optional)

What to Do:

1. Place the basket or box about two or three feet in front of your child. Let her 'make baskets' by throwing the ball into it. Keep the basket close enough to make sure she can get the ball in.
2. Move the basket to her right side. Have her try to use her left hand to toss in the ball. Be sure she is facing forward so that her arm goes across her body as she throws.
3. Put the basket on her left side. This time, she'll use her right hand to toss in the ball.

Variations:

- A. Have your child sit or stand facing forward. Hold your hand up high and drop light scarves, tissue paper, or ribbons next to her. Have her try to grab them by reaching across with the opposite hand.
- B. Blow up some balloons. Stand several feet away from your child. Use your hand to bat the balloons slowly toward her. When a balloon floats toward one of her sides, she should try to hit it back to you by reaching across with her opposite hand.

Preschoolers 42–48 Months





Preschoolers

42–48

Months



Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Choices Chart

A 'Choices Chart' supports your child's independence in a meaningful and positive way.

Materials:

- Photos, computer art pictures, drawings, or pictures from old magazines and catalogs
- Scissors
- Glue
- Small photo of your child
- Index card, a small piece of cardboard, or other stiff paper
- A large piece of cardboard or poster board
- Ruler
- Large paper clip or clothespin
- Clear contact paper or tape (optional)

What to Do:

1. Take photos or find pictures that show things your child likes to do or to play with. For example, you might have pictures of a TV, computer, book, jump rope, or basketball. If possible, use large pictures, about 5 by 7 inches or bigger.
2. Cut the cardboard or poster board to about 1 foot wide by 3 feet high.
3. Arrange and glue the pictures along the cardboard. Put them in a line going either across or up and down. This is your 'Choices Chart.'
4. Glue your child's photo onto the index card or other stiff paper. Write his name on it. If you'd like, cover the card with clear contact paper or clear tape.
5. Hang the chart and photo card where your child can reach them easily.
6. Help him clip his photo card next to the 'Choices Chart' picture that shows the activity he'd like to do. Move the photo and clip when he changes activities.

Variations:

- A. Instead of a long, narrow chart, try using a cardboard circle. Make it about the size of a dartboard by tracing around something round such as a bucket or large bowl. Use a ruler to divide the circle like you would cut a pie. Glue an activity picture in each 'pie piece.' (You might have to use smaller pictures or cut them creatively to fit!) Use this chart in the same way as described above.
- B. Make a 'Choices Chart' that shows activities your child could do with a friend or family member.
- C. You might want to change activities or to put a time limit on some activities. If so, set a kitchen timer or other alarm to go off in 15 to 30 minutes. When it rings, help your child select a different activity from his chart.



Area III: Approaches to Learning

Carrot Top

This project will keep your child's attention and concentration — even with interruptions!

Materials:

- Red food coloring
- Water
- Two glass or clear containers
- Carrots
- Sharp knife
- Toothpicks
- Vegetable peeler, grater, mixing bowl, and spoons (optional)
- Raisins or apples (optional)
- Mayonnaise (optional)

What to Do:

1. Fill one glass or container with water. Add 8 to 10 drops of red food coloring.
2. With adult supervision, carefully cut the carrot top about 3 inches long. Stick three or four toothpicks in the carrot piece so that it will balance in the colored water. Be sure the cut side is down.
3. Balance another carrot top in a second glass or container of clear water.
4. The next day, take both carrots out of the glasses. Let your child watch you cut the carrots in half. The one that was sitting in colored water will show how the carrot absorbed the water.

Variations:

- A. Prepare a new carrot top. Use toothpicks to balance it in a glass or jar full of plain water. Place the glass in a sunny window and wait for the carrot to sprout. Remember to refill the water every few days.
- B. Wash your hands and make a carrot salad:
 - Wash, peel, and grate two or three carrots (enough to make 1 cup).
 - Mix with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of raisins or apple chunks.
 - Add one to two tablespoons of mayonnaise.
 - Stir and serve this delicious snack.

Preschoolers 42–48 Months



Preschoolers

42–48

Months

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Math Activities for the Home

Use everyday activities to introduce and practice math concepts.

Materials:

- Household items

What to Do:

1. When you are at a store or at home, ask your child to find different shapes. For example, she might show you a round can of soup or a square box. Or, you might hold up an item and have her look for other items the same shape.
2. Show your child where to find the price of items. Read the price out loud. Point out that some numbers are bigger than others and that some items are more expensive than others.
3. Before you put away the groceries, let your child sort items into two piles, such as those that go in the refrigerator and those that go in a cupboard. She could then help you put some of them away. Be careful with heavy items and with things that might break easily!
4. Most children love to help adults bake. Let your child help you find the ingredients and utensils you will need. He can use cups and spoons to help you measure ingredients. Cooking or baking is a great way for children to learn about sequences: “First we put in the flour, then we add the eggs, next...”
5. As you bake or cook, use new vocabulary such as “half,” “whole,” or “quarter.”
6. Here is a fun way to learn about quantity. Show your child a tall, thin container and a short, fat container. Put them in the sink. Ask your child to guess which container will hold more water. Use a large measuring cup to pour water into each one. See which container holds more before spilling over. Try this with containers of other shapes.
7. Ask your child to help set the table. Show him where to put each item, and ask him to repeat that pattern for each person. (For safety, consider using unbreakable dishes.)
8. Use food to practice learning shapes. For example, cut your child’s sandwich or other snack into triangles, rectangles, circles, or squares. Ask her to name the shapes, or tell her the shapes if she doesn’t know them. Separate the cut food pieces on your child’s plate. Let her put them back together like a puzzle. Remember to wash hands before and after handling food!





Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Tell Me About It!

Use a journal to let your child put her ideas into pictures and words.

Materials:

- Plain white paper
- Non-toxic crayons, markers, or pencils
- Heavy colored paper
- Glue
- Stapler or string

What to Do:

1. Discuss an interesting topic with your child. Here are some that might inspire creativity:

- Favorite animals
- Favorite places to play or favorite games
- Favorite things to eat
- Favorite sports
- Family events
- Community events
- Activities with friends

2. Provide plain white paper and art supplies. Ask your child to draw a picture that shows something about the topic you discussed.
3. When she is finished with the picture, ask your child to tell you about what she drew. Ask her questions or make your own comments to keep the conversation going.
4. Get out your writing materials! Ask your child to tell you what to write about her picture. Try to write down two or three sentences — or more if she's talkative!

5. Glue the drawing and the written text onto a piece of colored paper.
6. Do this activity every day or several times a week. Collect all the picture pages. Label and decorate a cover page. Help your child carefully staple or string all the pages together to make a journal.
7. Look at this book often with your child. Let her listen to you read the descriptions, 'read' them herself, or tell about her pictures. This kind of practice helps your child understand that written words stand for spoken words.

Variation:

Make a book of blank pages. Allow your child to draw, scribble, or write in this diary each day. If she asks you to, write other statements in her diary for her.

Preschoolers 42–48 Months







Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

String Art

Here is a fun way to exercise your child's fingers. This helps him get ready to write.

Materials:

- Paint smock or old shirt
- Newspaper
- Plain paper
- Four colors of non-toxic paint in bowls
- Scissors
- String
- Other art materials, such as pipe cleaners, leather strips, or thick yarn (optional)

What to Do:

1. Cut the string into small pieces for your child. Make them about 1 to 4 inches long.
2. Put a paint smock or old shirt on your child. Make sure the sleeves are rolled up and out of the way.
3. Cover your work area with newspaper. Set out pieces of string, paper, and bowls of paint.
4. Show your child how to pick up a piece of string between the pads of his thumb and index finger.
5. Dip the string in a bowl of paint.
6. Lay the string on the paper to leave a mark.
7. Remove the string. Put it on some newspaper to be re-used or thrown away.
8. Use other strings that have been dipped in new colors.
9. Continue until you finish your design.

Variations:

- A. Instead of string, use pipe cleaners, leather strips, or uncooked spaghetti cut in smaller pieces. Because these things are stiff, your child will have better control using them to paint.
- B. Use thicker string or yarn that can be picked up more easily.
- C. Encourage your child to make shapes, letters, or numbers with his painting materials.

Preschoolers 48–54 Months





Preschoolers 48–54 Months



Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Helping With Family Chores

Now is the time to teach your child responsibility. Let her help with simple tasks around the house or community.

What to Do:

Choose some of these chores for you and your child to do together. Remember to have fun! Talk, hum, or sing as you work!

1. Laundry

- Sort dirty laundry by colors. Put them in piles or baskets.
- Supervise your child if she helps you put in the detergent or fabric softener. (Wash hands when finished!)
- If you put your laundry on a clothesline, she could hand you the clothespins or laundry items.
- Sort clean socks, underwear, or other clothes.
- Fold washcloths or other small items.
- Help put away laundry.

2. Meals

Everyone, remember to wash your hands before and after handling food!

Safety Alert: Supervise your child if you want her to help you wash or dry dishes. Check the water temperature frequently. Be careful with sharp objects such as knives. Teach your child to handle a knife properly or supervise her carefully!

- Help prepare meals or make dessert. She could stir cake batter, Jell-O, or pudding; or spread soft butter, cream cheese, peanut butter, or jelly. Most children love to sift flour or to grease baking pans or cookie sheets. Always supervise your child if she helps you cook!
- Help set the table. Your child could put out or hand you dishes, silverware, or napkins, etc.
- Help carry covered bowls of food to the table. Make sure these are not too hot, too heavy, or too hard for small hands to manage!
- Put out serving spoons.
- Put bread or other packaged foods onto serving plates.
- Carry a covered carton of milk or juice to the table. Take out some of the liquid if the carton is too heavy for your child.
- Put condiments on the table, such as butter, ketchup, or pepper.
- Help clean up after a meal. For example, your child could put away condiments, take dirty dishes to the kitchen, push in chairs, or put some things in the dishwasher.





3. Other Household Jobs

- Clean up after play or art projects. Store toys and other play items in cardboard boxes or laundry baskets.
- Recycle or throw away trash.
- Help sweep floors and use a dustpan.
- Clean up a spill with a rag, paper towel, or sponge.
- Carry things into the house after shopping or getting the mail.
- Make her bed reasonably well. She can take everything off the bed for laundry day.
- Help decorate for any holiday or celebration.
- Help dust areas that are within reach.
- Help feed pets or other animals.

4. Outside Work

Use child-size tools if possible.

Safety Alert: *Always wear gloves when handling litter. Carry along a trash bag or bucket. Remind your child that plastic bags are not toys! Show her how to use them correctly.*

- Rake leaves into piles.
- Plant seeds in gardens or in pots.
- Water plants or pots.
- Pull weeds.
- Pick berries, vegetables, or flowers.
- Help clean the car, boat, or snow machine.
- Put away outdoor toys such as tricycles or balls.
- Help pick up litter around the yard or community.

5. Shopping

- Help select fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods.
- Help find other items in the store.
- Help carry bags from the store.

Preschoolers 48–54 Months





Preschoolers 48–54 Months

Area III: Approaches to Learning

Block Parade

This is a way to help your child make independent choices. He'll also create some original artwork.

Materials:

- Small empty boxes
- Construction paper or other colored paper
- Pipe cleaners, string, ribbon, rickrack, feathers, or other decorations
- Non-toxic markers, paints, crayons or other art materials
- Interlocking building blocks or bricks, like Legos
- Clay or play dough

What to Do:

1. Explain to your child what a parade is. Show him pictures if you can find some.
2. Talk about how parade floats are designed to show a theme. For example, a float may look like an animal, a piece of fruit, a holiday item, or may represent something celebrated in your community. Help your child think of a theme for a pretend parade.
3. Have all the materials available for him to design and decorate a float for the parade. Use a cardboard box or building blocks as the base for the float. Decorate it with art materials or play dough. Make people or animals to go with the float.
4. Make a label card with your child's name and a name for the float.
5. Display the float on a paper or glass plate, or piece of cardboard.

Variations:

- A. Discuss with your child what other floats in your parade might look like. Tell what kind of floats would be in parades for different holidays. Draw some pictures of other floats.
- B. Tip the box on its side and decorate the inside to look like any place your child would like it to be. It could become the habitat for a bear or eagle, a house for a toy, or a scene from a favorite story or nursery rhyme.

Make Your Own Play Dough!

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup water
(with your choice of food coloring)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Instructions:

Mix together all ingredients. Knead the dough until it is smooth. Add a little more flour if the dough is too sticky. Store it in the refrigerator in an airtight plastic bag or container.



Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Science in the Home

Look around your home, yard, or community. You can introduce your child to scientific concepts and help him build a habit of observing what's around him.

Materials:

- Magnifying glass
- Blank journal, notebook, or paper
- Non-toxic crayons or pencils

What to Do:

1. Make a science journal by decorating or labeling a blank journal or notebook. Or, make a booklet by carefully stapling or stringing blank paper together.
2. Show your child how to use a magnifying glass. Practice looking at things in the house.
3. Take a walk outside with your child, anywhere that's convenient. Bring along the magnifying glass. He can bring his science journal and a crayon if he'd like, or use them at home later.
4. Look for interesting things to examine with the magnifying glass, such as:

- Dirt or sand
- Leaves (from the ground or on a plant)
- Flowers
- Snowflakes
- Icicles
- Tree bark
- Bugs
- Mud puddles or other water
- Rocks
- Lichens
- Grasses

5. Talk about what your child sees. You might discuss the item's size, shape, or color, or describe its different parts. For example, you might ask:

- What shape is this?
- How many legs does this bug have?
- What colors can you see in this mud puddle?

6. Encourage your child to record something in his science journal. He could tell you something to write, or he might draw pictures to show what he saw.

Variations:

- A. Encourage him to share his journal with others and to talk about his experiences.
- B. Show your child two different kinds of rocks, leaves, or flowers, etc. Ask him to tell you how they are alike. How are they different?

Preschoolers

48–54

Months





Preschoolers

48–54

Months

Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Alpha-Bags

Let's get familiar with the alphabet! In this activity, your child also will practice his sorting skills.

Materials:

- Variety of small toys or household items
- Pictures from old magazines, catalogs, computer art, or drawings
- Plain paper bags
- Non-toxic markers

Variations:

- A. Make three bags with different letters and sort things among them.
- B. Make 'alpha-bags' with letters that sound closer to each other, such as 'M' and 'N.'
- C. Ask your child to name other things that could go in each letter bag.
- D. Draw pictures on the bags to show things that begin with each letter.

What to Do:

1. Choose two letters that make very different sounds, such as 'B' and 'R' Write the letters on two different paper bags.
2. Collect small items or pictures that begin with each letter. For example 'B' is for "banana," "boat," "bell," "block," or "baby." 'R' is for "radio" "rain," "rug," "raspberry," or "roof." Old magazines or catalogs are a good place to find pictures, or use drawings or computer art.
3. Show your child the two different bags. Talk with him about the letter on each bag and the sound each letter makes.
4. Bring out the items or pictures you have collected. Pick up each one and name it. Make your voice a little louder for the first sound. Your child can decide which bag each item should go in, based on the first sound he hears.
5. After all the items are sorted, dump out each bag. Check to see that all things are in the right place!









Area I: Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

Rubber Bodies

Join your child or family to stretch and breathe together. These yoga-like exercises will help everyone relax. You'll all become more flexible!

Materials:

- CD or cassette player
- Soft, soothing music
- Mats or blankets
- Large open space with enough room to move freely

What to Do:

1. Place mats or blankets on the floor. Turn on some soothing music. Dim the lights if you'd like.
2. Tell your child these directions:
 - Lie comfortably on your back. Take five deep breaths. Count each one as you let your air out.
 - Keep breathing deeply. Count silently if you wish.
 - Close your eyes and think about making your body heavy and limp. Start with your toes and move up through your body to your head. Talk about how heavy and relaxed each part feels as your child imagines it.
 - Lie quietly with your eyes closed for a few minutes.
 - Sit up slowly.

3. Try to do each of these exercises five times:

- Put your legs straight out in front so that you are sitting in an 'L' shape. Slowly point your toes in and out.
 - From the same sitting position, hold your arms out in front, level with the floor. Pretend you are driving a car or other vehicle. Twist and turn as you move the steering wheel from one side to the other.
 - Sit with the bottoms of your feet touching each other. Slowly move your knees up and down like butterfly wings.
 - Lie on your stomach. Gently push up on your arms, like a seal.
 - Lie on your back and draw circles in the air with your toes.
 - Stand and stretch your arms out like a tree. Pretend to sway in the wind by leaning in different directions.
4. End your exercise as you began it: lie down again on your mat or blanket. Relax, and breathe as you did in steps one and two above.

Preschoolers 54–60 Months



Preschoolers

54 – 60

Months

Area II: Social and Emotional Development

Making a Train, Boat, Etc.

This group project will give your child an opportunity to share and to work together with others.

Materials:

- Cardboard boxes of various sizes
- Child-safe scissors and adult scissors
- Non-toxic paint, crayons, markers, or other art supplies
- Stuffed animals or other toys (optional)

What to Do:

1. Invite a few friends over.
2. Suggest that the children use the boxes to make a train, house, school bus, boat, or plane.
3. Help them carefully cut out doors or windows as needed.

4. Provide art supplies to decorate the boxes. Have limited supplies available. In this way, the children must share the materials.
5. As the children are building and decorating, make positive comments or praise them when they share.
6. Talk about how it feels to wait for something. Discuss things you could do while you are waiting for your turn.

Variations:

- A. Fill the train with stuffed animals or other toys. Take them for a ride around the room.
- B. Take turns telling where the train is going, what happens on the trip, or what the passengers see.



Area III: Approaches to Learning

The Weather Report

Encourage your child to describe the weather and to make weather predictions.

Materials:

- Old magazines, calendars, catalogs, computer art, or drawings
- Poster board or large piece of cardboard
- Scissors
- Glue
- Non-toxic markers
- Small sticky notes
- Other art materials (optional)

What to Do:

1. Cut out or draw pictures of different types of weather conditions, such as rain, snow, sun, wind, etc.
2. Look at the pictures and discuss different kinds of weather with your child. Talk about how weather differs from season to season. Ask her how weather can change or interrupt someone's plans.
3. Listen to the weather report on television or the radio. Discuss what it means with your child.
4. Look or go outside and talk about current weather conditions.
5. Make a poster by gluing the weather pictures onto cardboard. Write a label for each picture, such as "snowy," "windy," or "sunny."
6. Put the poster up where your child can reach it.
7. Ask her to point to the picture that shows the current weather or that predicts tomorrow's weather. Use a small sticky note to mark the picture she chooses.

Variations:

- A. Provide various arts and crafts materials. Encourage your child to make a picture of her favorite kind of weather. For example, she might use cotton balls for snow, blue string or yarn for rain, or draw a weather picture with crayons.
- B. If she can, have her write her name on the picture. If not, encourage her to scribble somewhere on the paper. You may want to write her name for her to try to copy.
- C. Hang the picture on your refrigerator or wall at your child's eye level.
- D. Ask your child to sway her arms and body along with you, like a very gentle breeze. Move faster to become a light wind. Gradually, pretend you are a gale force or large storm. Slowly reverse the process, until you and she are imitating a light breeze again.

Preschoolers 54–60 Months



Preschoolers

54 – 60

Months

Area IV: Thinking Abilities and General Knowledge

Measure It Scavenger Hunt

Give your child the opportunity to compare lengths and to measure things in different ways.

Safety Alert: *Your child may get tangled in yarn or string. This poses a choking danger. Always supervise activities involving yarn and string, and put them away safely when you are finished.*

Materials:

- Yarn or string
- Scissors
- Common household objects
- Ruler, yardstick, or tape measure

What to Do:

1. Cut several pieces of yarn or string into different lengths, from about 3 to 12 inches.
2. Give your child several pieces of the yarn or string. Show her how to measure length by matching each string along the edge of an object.
3. Let her choose a string. Ask her to find items in the house that are about the same length as the string.
4. When she finds a match, ask her to bring it to you or to show you what she found.
5. Have her pick different lengths of string and find other matches.

Variations:

- A. Use a ruler, tape, or yardstick to measure different household objects.
- B. Measure objects in inches and in centimeters.
- C. Write down the measurements you get.
- D. Make groups of items that are similar lengths.



Area V: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Jumping Jack Syllables

Here's a high-energy activity that will develop your child's muscles. At the same time, she'll learn that many words are made up of parts.

Materials:

- Open area big enough for exercising

What to Do:

1. If she does not already know how, teach your child to do a jumping jack:
 - Start with your legs together, knees straight.
 - Hold your arms down at your sides.
 - In one smooth movement, jump up and land with your feet spread apart and hands up over your head.
 - If you'd like, clap your hands when they are above your head.
 - Quickly return to your starting position, with arms down and feet together.
 - Continue to do these up and down jumping actions.
2. Practice doing jumping jacks as you count out loud to 10.
3. Explain to your child that many words are made up of parts. For example, "Sat-ur-day" or "Jan-u-ar-y." Practice clapping or making other simple body movements as you say each part.
4. Do jumping jacks to the days of the week. For example, on the first part of the word, your child will jump and clap. She'll return to starting position on the second part, and so on.

Variations:

- A. Practice jumping jacks to the months of the year or to the names of family, friends, or pets.
- B. Decide which month had the most jumps. How many months had just one?
- C. Try to think of some really long words, such as "hippopotamus," "caterpillar," or "refrigerator." Clap or jump along as you say the parts of these words.

Preschoolers 54–60 Months







References

- Adams, M., Foorman, B., Lundberg, L. & Beeler, T. (1998). Phonemic awareness in young children. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Armstrong, T. (1991). *Awakening your child's natural genius*. Putnam Publishing Group.
- Bailey, B. (2000). *I love you rituals*. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. New York, NY.
- Baker, A. & Manfred/Petitt, L. (2004). Relationships, the heart of quality care. National Association of the Education of Young Children.
- Barsley-Marra, B. L. (1993). *Understanding and encouraging your young child's large motor development*. University of Missouri, Extension Publications.
- Burns, M. & Snow, C. (Eds.) (1999). *Starting out right: A guide to promoting children's reading success*. National Research Council, National Academy Press.
- Callender, S. (2007). Gross and fine motor activities for early childhood: Preschoolers. Mississippi State, MS: Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute.
- Cohen, L., et. al. (1999). *Child development, health, and safety*. Aspen Publication, Gaithersburg, MD.
- Cohen, M. & Gross, M. (1979). *The developmental resource*. Grune & Stratton, Inc. New York, NY.
- Copley, J.V. (2000). *The young child and mathematics*. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.
- Cutler, K., Gilkerson, D., Parrott, S. & Bowne, M. (2003). Developing math games based on children's literature. *Young Children*. 58 (1): 22-27.
- Department of Education and Early Development, Alaska (2006). *Alaska early learning guidelines*.
- Department of Education, Washington, D.C. (1997). *Ready, set, read (For Families): Early childhood language activities for children from birth through age five*. Corporation for National Service.
- Drew, W. & Rankin, J. (2004). Promoting creativity for life using open-ended materials. *Young Children*. 59 (4): 38-45.
- Fetherston, K. & England, K. (1998). *Storybook-based curriculum*. Hearing & Speech Institute.
- Grace, C. & Thompson, N.L. (2007). *Growing and learning with native young children: Workshops for teachers and community leaders*. Mississippi State, MS. National Center for Rural Education Learning Initiatives, Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute.
- Moomaw, S. & Hieronymus, B. (1995). *More than counting: Whole math activities for preschool and kindergarten*. Readleaf Press.
- Morris, L. & Schulz, L. (1989). *Creative play activities for children with disabilities*. Human Kinetics Books, Champaign, IL.
- NAEYC & NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). (2002). *Early childhood mathematics: Promoting good beginnings. Joint position statement*. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC and Reston, VA: NCTM.
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education. *Active start: A statement of physical activity guidelines for children birth to five years*. Reston, VA: NASPE, 2002.
- Neuman, S., Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (2000). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Pieraccini, V. & Vance, D. (2001). *Handprints: Home programs for hand skills*. Pro-ed.
- Roskos, K. & Christie, J. (2002). Knowing in doing: Observing literacy learning in play. *Young Children*. 57 (2): 46-55.
- Schickendanz, J. (1999). Much more than the ABC's: The early stages of reading and writing. National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Weitzman, E. & Greenberg, J. (1992). *Learning language and loving it*. Hanen Centre, Toronto, Ontario.
- Whitin, P. & Whitin, D. (2003). Developing Mathematical Understanding along the yellow brick road. *Young Children*. 58 (1): 36-43.



