

Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

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



Putting on a Play

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

Adventure Pals

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

Dramatic Storytime

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

All About Me

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

Cleanup Helper

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

I Can, I Can, I Can!

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

Cloudy Friends

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

Notes:



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

Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

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



48-54 months

Air Balloon

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

Target Practice

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

Ball Games

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

Scarf Dancing

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

Circle Catch

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

Playground Time

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

Notes:

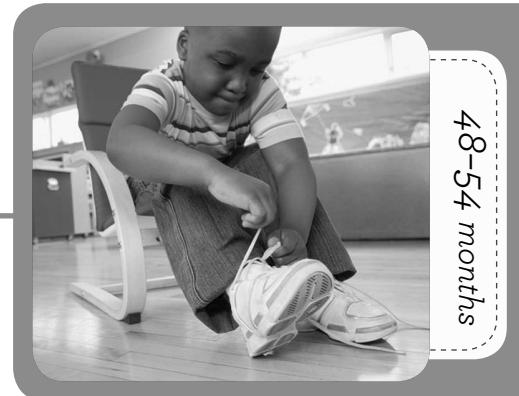


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Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

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



Pudding Fun

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

Little Author

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

Signed by the Artist

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

Paper Chains

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

You Have Mail

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

Water Pictures

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

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Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

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



Riddle, Riddle

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

Grouping and Sorting

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

Waiting Game

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

Feeley Bag

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

Number and Letter Search

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

What Comes Next?

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

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Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

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



48-54 months

Game Time

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

Super Chef

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

Tent Safari

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

Teddy Bear Picnic

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

Everybody Loves a Letter!

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

Rub-a-Dub

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

Notes:



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Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child's communication skills are growing. She is learning how to have conversations with people she knows. She can start conversations as well as respond to people's questions. She is learning different parts of speech and using more complex sentences. When describing something, she might say, "It was a very big brown dog." She may use silly language and laugh at her own jokes.



54-60 months

Animal Crossing

This game is for the whole family. Cut pictures of animals from a magazine. Turn the pictures face down. Have one person choose a picture. The other people ask yes-or-no questions to guess what the animal is: "Does the animal swim? Is it bigger than a cat?" After someone guesses correctly, another person chooses a picture and lets the others guess.

Bedtime Memories

At bedtime each night, have a soft talk with your child. Whisper to him, "What was your favorite thing that happened today?" Ask what else happened. Share your favorite event, too.

Reading Adventures

Read to your child every day. Read slowly and with interest, with expression and voices. Use a finger to follow the words. Stop reading at times. Encourage your child to talk about the pictures and the story. "Who is your favorite character? What happened in the middle of the story?" Make this a special together time!

Moonbeams

When the moon is visible, find a place to look at the moon and stars with your child. Explore your child's imagination: "What do you see? Can you connect the stars to make a picture? What do you think it is like on the moon? What would you do there? How would you feel about being so far away from Earth?"

Strike Up the Band

Have your child chant or sing a nursery rhyme and tap it out on a drum, the bottom of a pot, or a small box. Make this activity more challenging and interesting by adding new instruments such as bells, spoons, or shakers. Have some noisy fun with friends!

At the Office

Set up an office for your child with notebooks, a toy phone, an old keyboard, pencils and pens, a ruler, a calculator, and a calendar. Add envelopes, paper, and stickers. Encourage her to pretend to go to work, write letters, type messages, and make notes. Pretend with her. Call on the phone and ask questions: "When will the mail come today?"

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Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child continues to develop and refine his gross motor skills. He is much more stable and is learning how to balance on one foot or walk along a narrow beam. He is learning skills such as jumping, hopping on one foot, and skipping. He will enjoy activities such as throwing, catching, and kicking balls. He can ride a small bike with training wheels. Watch him closely because he may try some dangerous tricks.



54-60 months

The Stone and the River

Get a group of children together. The person who is "it" tries to tag other children. If a child is tagged, she must turn into a "stone" (not move). Another child may turn a stone player into a "river" by touching her. A river player can run around again. Whoever is frozen three times is the next "it." This is great for exercise!

Leaf Fun

Go outside with your child to play in the leaves in your yard or at a park. Try catching the leaves as they fall. Collect and sort leaves of different colors, sizes, and shapes. Rake leaves into small piles. Chase each other around the piles, jump in them, or try to leap over them.

Splash Game

On a hot day, have a sponge relay with large sponges and buckets of water. Divide children into two teams. Place two sets of two buckets at opposite ends of an open space. Fill one set with water. The children race to dip their sponge in the water, carry it to the empty bucket, and squeeze the water out. The first team to fill their bucket wins! You can also play catch with the wet sponges.

Ribbon Dance

Cut ribbon or streamers into 6-foot lengths. Show your child how to dance and make designs in the air. Try circles and loops, up and down movements, and figure eights. Try the movements with two ribbons, one in each hand. Move from place to place taking the ribbons with you. Put on music to make a "ribbon dance." Skip, run, and walk!

Animal Games

Turn pictures of animals face down, and take turns choosing an animal. Act out the animal you picked. Your child has to guess what animal you are. For a kangaroo, you must jump, jump, jump. For a cheetah, you will run. Act like a giraffe by walking on tiptoes and stretching really tall.

Crazy Catch Game

For this funny game of catch, gather a ball, a small pillow or cushion, a stuffed animal, a shoe, and a small box. From a distance of about 4 feet, toss each item to your child. See if she can catch each one. Move back 6 feet. What a good catcher!

Bottle Bowling

Collect six plastic bottles of similar size. Put a handful of peas or gravel in each one and cap it tightly. Arrange the bottles in a bowling game shape: three bottles in the back row, two bottles in the middle, and one bottle in the front. Show your child where to stand, about 4 feet back, and "bowl" with a soft medium-sized ball. Take as many turns as needed to knock them down: "Strike!"

Notes:



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Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child is able to use her fingers with more control. Her finger movements are coordinated and faster. She may be able to write some or all of the letters of her name. She may begin to prefer using one hand over the other. Your child can cut shapes with scissors and is getting better at buttoning and tying her shoes.



54-60 months

Lacing Cards

Your child can use safety scissors to cut simple pictures from magazines and glue them onto cardboard. Punch several holes around the outside of the cardboard. Tie a shoestring or yarn through one of the holes. Make a firm tip with tape at the other end. Show your child how to sew, in and out, around the edge. He can try to sew two cards together.

Picture Perfect

Help your child make a picture frame for a favorite photo. Cut out two rectangles of stiff paper, a little larger than the picture. On one, cut a rectangle inside that's smaller than the picture border. Let your child decorate the smaller "frame" with stickers, glitter, shells, macaroni, or anything small and interesting. Glue the photo to the large solid rectangle. Place the decorated "frame" over the picture and glue the edges. Beautiful!

Bird Café

Find a medium pinecone or corncob. Let it dry. Have your child use a plastic knife to spread peanut butter on it. Roll it in bird seed, sunflower seeds, or crushed granola. Hang it on a string under a tree or outside a window. Watch the birds discover your wonderful gift to them. Count how many different types of birds come to the Bird Café!

Map It

Make a map of your neighborhood. Go for a walk and point out streets, buildings, parks, or other landmarks. Use paper and markers to make a map. You may need to help your child start her map. Begin by mapping your house or her room. Ask your child, "Where would we put your bed on the map? How about your toy box?"

Cutting Shapes

Draw a pattern or shape, such as a circle or a triangle, with a pencil on a piece of paper. Have your child use child-safe scissors to cut out the pattern. When he can follow the pattern, draw larger or more complex ones. Make fun shapes, such as a teddy bear or a train!

Make a Sculpture

Create a sculpture with your child. Use materials you find in your home and outside—plastic bottles, newspaper, twigs, jar lids, paper plates, Popsicle sticks, boxes, plastic containers, bits of ribbon, and fabric. Give your child masking tape, small wire, duct tape, and some glue for joining materials together. Put materials in a place where your child can "create" for a few days and where this wonderful sculpture can dry.

Fancy Bananas

When seated at a table, give your child a smooth ripe banana and a ballpoint pen. Show your child how to draw a face at one end. Draw some clothes with buttons and a belt. Have fun decorating the banana. Now peel it and eat!

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Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child can count to at least 15 from memory and can accurately count at least 10 objects. He is able to follow directions in a group activity and knows the rules at home and at school. He enjoys pretend play and may act out different roles with friends. Wild stories and exaggerations are common. He enjoys reading books and may have simple books memorized. He is starting to understand how things work in the world and is curious about why things are the way they are.



54–60 months

Pretzel Fun

Have fun making pretzel letters (or numbers). Wash your hands, then cut pizza dough into strips. Help your child form numbers or letters with the dough. Show her how to brush with a beaten egg, sprinkle with salt, and bake until golden brown. Tell your child the sounds that the letters make. Eat up an A, B, or C!

Fun Food Coloring

Let your child experiment with food coloring in his food. It only takes a small drop! Color scrambled eggs blue. Color a glass of milk red. Add a drop of green to a piece of apple or to a slice of bread before toasting it. Color mashed potatoes yellow. Ask your child for ideas!

How Long? How Many?

Count how long or how many times your child can do a new skill, such as standing on one foot or bouncing a ball. Celebrate doing a new skill for a little more time. Let her count while you try balancing a book on your head. Help your child practice new skills and counting.

Storytime Acting

Tell your child a story using different voices, body postures, facial expressions, or even hats to be different characters. Now it's your child's turn to tell a story. Encourage your little one to ham it up—and don't forget to be a good audience.

What's Missing?

Give your child time to look at a group of five or more different toys. Hide a single toy and ask, "Which toy is missing?" You may need to give clues at first. Once he guesses correctly, hide a different toy. Let him hide a toy for you. It's his turn to try to trick you!

Find the Treasure

Plan this activity ahead of time. Hide "treasure" (a favorite snack, a bag of crayons, some stickers) in a place your child can reach. Draw the place you want your child to search for each "treasure." Be sure to make the drawings simple and clear. Your child will have great fun with the treasure map. Celebrate when your child finds the treasure!

Notes:



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Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child is able to meet most of her personal needs. She may need practice or help on more difficult tasks, such as tying her shoes. She eats a variety of foods, has social dining skills, and dresses herself. She enjoys playing with other children and working together on projects. She is beginning to use her words to help solve conflicts with friends.

Going on a Date

Go on a "date" to lunch or a movie with your child. Before you go out, you can get ready. He can put on a special shirt, wash his hands and face, use the potty, and brush his teeth. Show him a mirror so he can see how great he looks. Now go have fun! Be extra polite. Say "please" and "thank you" throughout your date.

Fruit Salad

Make a fruit salad for lunch with any favorite fruits such as grapes, bananas, apples, and oranges. Your child will enjoy washing or peeling the fruit. She could help slice a banana with a plastic knife. Add yummy things to the salad, such as yogurt or sunflower seeds. Your child can practice using a spoon and fork to make and serve the fruit salad.

Pressed Flower Cards

Collect flowers from your yard, neighborhood, a park, or a roadside. Flowers that are small and delicate work best. Place the flowers between sheets of paper towels or newspaper, then lay them between heavy books. Give the flowers a few days to dry and flatten out. Glue them to a piece of paper to make notecards. Help your child write someone a special note.

911

Talk to your child about what to do if he gets lost or if there is an emergency. Teach your child his name, address, and telephone number. Your child can learn how to dial 911. Role-play using a pretend phone, but teach your child to use a real phone for a real emergency. It may help if he learns this information as a song. Make a card for your child that has his name, address, phone number, emergency contact, and a list of any allergies in case you cannot be reached. Give your child his own wallet to carry the card in his pocket or backpack.

I Can Dress Myself

Make sure your child has a little extra time in the morning to get dressed. Encourage her to try to button her shirt, snap her pants, or tie her shoes. She will need help and some time, but be patient. The more she practices, the sooner she will be able to get dressed all by herself.

You as Me, Me as You

You and your child can switch roles. He can pretend to help you get dressed or brush your hair. This pretend time could include a change of small jobs, clothes, behaviors, vocabulary, and other habits. Keep the activity positive and fun.

Notes:



54-60 months



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