



# Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is learning to use complete sentences to tell you all about what's happening. He also can follow more than one direction at a time. He has probably learned both his first and last name and can tell you if you ask. He loves to have conversations with a friend or maybe a toy doll or bear. He has learned that a voice on the telephone really comes from a person, even though he can't see the speaker at the time, and your child is more likely to talk than just listen.

**Good Night Everywhere** When it's time to go to bed, give good-night kisses all over. Tell your child, "I'm going to kiss you under your arm. I'm going to kiss you on top of your head. Now I'm going to kiss you behind your ear. Good night back there! Good night everywhere!"

**Who's This Person?** Pretend you suddenly forgot who your child is. Say, "What's your name little girl? Is it Samantha? Is it Rosita? Do you have another name?" (When she tells you her name, you can be very happily surprised!)

**Love Notes** Write little notes to your child and place them here and there during the day. A note might say, "You are a very helpful brother to your baby sister. She thinks you are really special." A note on your child's toy shelf can say you noticed that the toys were put away. A note by the plate at dinnertime can say that Dad will read his favorite story at bedtime. As you read these notes to your little one, he learns that reading is fun and important.

**Where the Creatures Live** Help your child learn directions by asking, "Where do birds fly? Up in the sky. Where do the bugs live? Under a rock. Where do fish swim? Deep down in the water." Your child may need a little help at first, but soon she will know the answers.

**Weather Person** At the start of the day, ask your child to look out the window and tell you about the weather. Is it sunny? Is it raining? Is it cloudy? What will the weather be today? Have your child draw a picture of the sun if the day is sunny, raindrops if the day is rainy, and clouds if the sky is cloudy.

**A Card of Love** Collect pictures of favorite things and animals, plus some stickers, bits of lace, buttons, and other small craft items. You will also need some pieces of paper and glue. Make a Happy Birthday card for someone special, or a Get Well card. While making the card, talk about how special your friend or relative is. Help your child write a message. Address the card, stamp it, and mail it. This little kindness will bring much appreciation.



36-42 months



# Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child can usually kick a ball forward, jump, and perhaps hop on one foot. She likes to do things for longer periods of time now and may spend quite a long time riding a tricycle or pulling things in a wagon. Climbing is getting to be one of her favorite activities. She also enjoys vigorous play with friends. Having used up all that energy, she will usually sleep well through the night.

- Marching in the Band** Show your child how to march like a member of the band. Be sure to get those knees up high! Invite a friend to join you. Add a drum and a flag and make a parade!
- Kangaroo Kid** Show your child how the kangaroo jumps around. Pretend to be a mother kangaroo. With your feet together, jump, jump, jump. This is also a lot of fun outdoors or with a friend.
- Freeze Game** Play the freeze game. Let your child dance or move around in any way he wants, but when you say "freeze," he has to stop right away in the middle of a motion. You can start the movement up again by saying "melt." Take turns playing this silly game.
- Football Fun** Give your child a medium-size ball. Show her how to kick it by swinging a foot back, then forward. Turn a cardboard box on its side and encourage your child to kick the ball into the box for a goal. Shout "goal!" when your child gets the ball into the box.
- Airplanes Everywhere** Let your child pretend to be an airplane and run with his arms outstretched. Show him how to lean to the left, then to the right. Make some airplane noises. Swoop down low and then fly around in a circle. Time to slow down; bend down and land.
- Big Box Basketball** Place an open box or laundry basket on a tabletop or surface higher than chair level. Give your child a medium-size ball to throw overhand into the box or basket. You can also tie a ribbon across the tops of two chair backs with the box on the other side. Show your child how to throw the ball over the ribbon and into the box.



# Fine Motor

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Your child is becoming more skilled at buttoning and zipping clothing. He can use a fork and spoon to feed himself. He can spread soft butter on bread. He can hold a pencil or crayon with his thumb and two fingers and likes to draw. When asked, he may be able to draw circles or other simple marks.

**Button-Up Bear** Let your child dress a large stuffed teddy bear or large doll with real baby clothing. Make sure the baby clothes have a couple of large buttons or snaps to let your child practice small finger work. You might even find some baby shoes with Velcro closures. Tying or buckling shoes is probably too difficult right now.

**Beautiful Necklace** Cut some circles or flowers out of colored paper, and punch a hole in the center. Then, cut a large plastic soda straw into pieces. Let your child string a shoelace with alternating flowers and straw pieces. She probably will not always alternate pieces, but that doesn't matter. Tie the ends, and she will have her own beautiful necklace!

**Picking Peas** Buy a few fresh peapods at the market. Show your child how to find the peas inside the shell. Give him a few in a plastic container to shell for himself. When he is finished, rinse off the peas and eat them. Yum!

**Sidewalk Artist** Let your child draw pictures on the sidewalk or driveway with colored outdoor chalk. If you don't have chalk, give your child a small paintbrush and let her paint a picture with water. The painting will be fun, and so will the magic of evaporation. "Where did your picture go?"

**List Maker** Keep a small pad of paper and a few pencils close at hand. Before going shopping, ask your child to help you make a shopping list. Let him write his own version of words and see if he can remember what they mean. He can also write a note to his Mom or a pet.

**Little Snipper** Let your child practice cutting with safety scissors. Show her how to open and close the scissors while you hold the paper. Later, show her how to hold the scissors with one hand and the paper in the other. At first, just snipping the edge is great progress. If she snips off a few pieces, save them in an envelope. Later you can paste the pieces on a sheet of paper for a special art creation!



36-42 months



# Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your busy learner is gaining many skills. She can put puzzles together (six pieces or maybe more), draw some shapes, such as circles and squares, and identify a few colors. She can match an object to a picture of that object and notices many similarities and differences. She is very curious about how things work, and your answers really help her understand and learn.

**Box o' Blocks** Collect blocks and small boxes for your child to use for building. Make something and let him copy what you build. Add pieces of cardboard for a roof and some paint stirring sticks for bridges. Make a town. Add some toy cars and toy people; the town will come to life!

**Memory Magic** Play this game to help your child develop her memory. In a car or on a bus, tell your child, "We're going on a picnic, and we're bringing a..." Name an object that you would bring on a picnic, such as an apple. Encourage your child to think of another object to bring on a picnic and repeat "We're going on a picnic, and we're bringing..." then name your object (apple) followed by hers (balloon). Take turns thinking of what to bring on a picnic, each time repeating what has already been named. Try to name things alphabetically.

**Mr. Sticks** Ask your child to draw a stick figure about 5 inches tall on a paper plate or piece of cardboard. Say, "This is Mr. Sticks." Now, hide Mr. Sticks. Give your child clues to lead him to Mr. Sticks: "He's in a room with water, but not the bathroom." "He's in a drawer near a door." Finding Mr. Sticks earns a big hug. Now it's your child's turn to give you clues.

**Money Management** Make some play dollar bills from green paper. Put them in an old purse or wallet for your child. Pretend to be the storekeeper. Say, "Those socks cost \$2.00." "This lunch costs \$3.00." Help your child count the right amount of money. Now change places. Let your child be the storekeeper. Add to the fun by collecting cereal boxes, empty milk cartons, and plastic juice cans to make a store.

**Picture Shopping List** From newspaper ads, cut pictures of three or four foods you'll be shopping for. Place them in an empty envelope and take them to the supermarket. Let your child pull out the pictures and remind you of what you need. If your child is holding a picture of apples, buy a few apples. If he is holding a picture of eggs, say, "Yes, we need eggs today."

**Quick Picture Puzzle** Remove the front of your breakfast cereal box. Trim the edges and cut the picture into six or seven pieces. Your child will enjoy putting the pieces together. You can help her by pointing out ways to match part of a picture on one piece to another part of the picture on another piece. Good thinking!



36-42 months



# Personal-Social

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Your child is becoming more and more sociable. He can be very helpful with household tasks and can take care of many of his personal needs. He plays with other children but still may not be able to cooperate or share very well. Your approval and attention are very important to him. He likes being silly and making others laugh, especially you.

**Dress-Up Fun** Let your child play dress-up in some old or interesting clothes. Boots are fun, as well as large hats. A scarf or necklace adds a nice touch. A purse, wallet, or vest also makes the play interesting. Make sure there are some buttons to button, some zippers to zip, or some gloves to stick fingers into for even more skill building! Put a mirror at your child's level. Ask her, "Are you ready to go to town?" "Are you going to work?"

**Counting Turns** Help your child learn to manage taking turns by counting how long a turn will take. For example, tell your child he can swing until the count of 10, and then it will be his brother's turn. Count 10 swings out loud. "Okay, now it's your brother's turn for 10 swings. Help me count." Your child will learn that the wait for a turn will soon be over.

**Wonderful Rhythm and Rock** In addition to stories, read poems and rhymes to your child at special cozy quiet times. If you have a rocking chair, cuddle up and rock a little to the rhythm of the words, or just cuddle and rock. Let your child fill in some of the missing words to a rhyme:

You: Hickory, dickory...

Your child: dock

You: The mouse ran up the...

Your child: clock

**Cupcakes for All** Let your child help you bake some cupcakes for the family. Let her sift, pour, and stir as much as she is able. Let your child spread icing with a plastic knife while you do the cooking and handle anything hot. Talk about who the cupcake is for. Place it on a napkin and write that person's name on the napkin. At mealtime, let your child share the special cupcakes.

**Counting Good-Night Kisses** When you put your child to bed, count kisses out loud. Ask your child how many kisses for the chin: "Three? Okay, one (kiss), two (kiss), three (kiss). How about your nose?" What a happy way to learn to count.

**Set the Table** Let your child help you set the table. Place one plate on the table for each person, and then show your child how to put one fork by each plate, then one napkin by each fork. What a good helper!



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