



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 commands. He also knows that printed letters and words mean something to others.

Puppets Puppets can be made in many different ways. You can use a small lunch bag, an old sock, or a paper circle glued on a Popsicle stick. Your child can make faces with crayons, markers, or paint. She can glue yarn or strips of paper for hair. Put on a puppet show of a familiar story or folktale. Have a conversation with the puppets, taking turns asking and answering questions.

Adventure Pals Take your child on a special trip to someplace new. You could visit a museum, a park or outdoor area, a new store, or a library. Plan it with your child. Talk about what you will be seeing and doing. After you come home, ask him questions about what he saw and did. Encourage him to tell other family members about the outing.

Feely Bag Gather some small objects from outside or around your house and put them in a paper bag. Let your child pick an item without looking, then have her try to guess what it is. If she has a hard time naming the item, help her along. For example, you could ask her, "Does it feel rough or smooth?"

All About Me Have your child make a book about himself. Start by stapling or putting together several pieces of paper with tape or yarn or ribbon. Your child can glue pictures of family members or pictures of things he likes from magazines. He can trace his hand on a page or draw pictures. Have your child "read" you his story or tell you about each of the pictures.

Big Helper Your child will enjoy helping you around the house. When it is mealtime, she could help set the table. Give her a few simple directions and see if she can remember the directions. For example, you could ask her, "Open the drawer, get four napkins, and put one on each plate." She may need some help remembering at first. Let her know what a big helper she is.

Cloudy Friends This activity is fun on a day the sky is filled with puffy clouds. Lay on your back and take turns pointing out different cloud shapes and patterns. Ask your child what the clouds look like. "Does it look like an ice cream cone?" "That one looks like a dinosaur!"



48–54 months



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, weaving in and out of obstacles and stopping and turning with skill. She can kick a ball if you roll it into her path. She is learning to run and change direction without stopping and is learning how to somersault and gallop. She can keep herself going on a swing by pumping her legs back and forth and can throw a ball overhand about 10 feet.

- Air Balloon** Play this game with your child and maybe one or two other friends. Keep a balloon in the air by tapping it once to send it up into the air. As it comes down, it's someone else's turn to tap it up once. See how long you can keep the balloon from falling to the ground.
- Target Practice** Cut a few 8- to 9-inch holes out of a big piece of cardboard to make a target. Your child can decorate the target with paints. Prop the cardboard up, and let your child try to throw a tennis ball through the holes. Start by letting your child stand very close to the target, and then let him move back a few feet. Let him try throwing underhand and overhand. You can also pin a target on a tree or tape an X on a wall or fence.
- Ball Games** Your child is ready to practice ball skills. Some games can be changed a little to make them easier. For example, a small trash can on a chair could 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 by using any two objects for goals and kicking the ball to get a goal.
- Scarf Dancing** This is a great activity for a rainy day. Just turn on the radio, and your child can dance to the music. If you have scarves (or dishtowels), she can hold these in her hands while she dances. Try different kinds of music, such as rock and roll or whatever music your family enjoys. Encourage your child to listen and move to the rhythm.
- Circle Catch** It's fun to play catch with your child and a few friends. Use a ball about the size of a beach ball or slightly 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 as often as possible. He will enjoy climbing, running, swinging, sliding, and learning new skills. Keep a close watch. He can be very daring!



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child's finger movements are more controlled now. For example, he can place small pegs in holes on a board and build a tower of small blocks (usually 9 or so). He is learning how to draw shapes following a model and may be learning how to write some letters. He can cut out circles and shapes with curved lines using safety scissors. With his controlled hand movements, he is able to do more tasks independently.

- Pudding Fun** Make a batch of pudding in a bowl. Place a few spoonfuls on a cookie sheet or on a plate. (You may want to cover the table with newspaper first.) Have your child first wash her hands and then finger-paint in the pudding. Your child can draw pictures and practice drawing shapes or letters in the pudding. The best part is cleaning up! Yum!
- Book Making** Books can be made from any type of paper. Just staple, tape, glue, or sew together a few pieces of paper. Then your child can make up his own book. On the pages, your child can draw pictures or paste in cut-out pictures from magazines to illustrate a story. Encourage him to tell you his story. Help him by writing down his words on each page.
- Signed by the Artist** Have your child paint with watercolors at home or draw a picture with crayons. When your child finishes a picture, help her write her name. She may need your help at first. Then she can try to do it by herself. Encourage her in making the marks on the paper, even if they don't look just right. Doing activities by herself is how your child will learn.
- Paper Chains** Paper chains can be made by cutting any type of paper into strips about 1 inch by 5 inches. Show your child how to make a loop by gluing or taping the ends together. Create a chain by inserting the next strip through the first loop and so forth. See how long you can make the chain.
- You've Got Mail** When the mail comes to your home, 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 Painting** On a dry, warm day give your child a plastic bucket of water, one or two paintbrushes, and an old sponge. Find a safe paved driveway, fence, or sidewalk and let him paint large pictures or patterns with the water on the cement or wood. Watch the pictures disappear.



48-54 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child's attention span is growing, and 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 also learning how things go together on the basis of function; for example, she can point to "all things that are tools" 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.

Rhyme Time When you are in the car or on a bus, play a rhyming game with your child. Think of a word, and have your child come up with a rhyme. Then, have your child think of a word and you find a rhyming word. For example, you say, "star," and your child says "car." Your child says, "train," and you say, "rain." If your child is having a hard time thinking of a rhyming word, help him out a little.

Grouping and Sorting Gather together a lot of little things in a small container. You might already have a box in your home with buttons, coins, or odds and ends. Sit with your child and try to come up with ways to group the things together. For example, the two of you might sort buttons by color, size, or numbers of threading holes. Find the biggest button and the smallest button. Line up five items, and point to each one as you count. Now let your child try.

Waiting Game When you and your child are waiting for something, try counting together to see how long it will take for the event to happen. For example, when you are in the car and waiting for the light to change to green, count how long it takes to change. She will learn how to count, and it may help her become more patient.

Broadway Baby Read a story to your child, and then encourage him to act out the story. He can pretend to be different characters. For example, you might read a story about farm animals and he could pretend to be a cow, chicken, piggy, or horse. Encourage him to act out the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story.

Number and Letter Search When you are at stores with your child, play number and letter searches. Encourage her to find numbers or letters on the walls, pictures, and signs. When she spots one, say, "You found the number 5. Good for you!" Point out numbers between one and nine or single letters of the alphabet. Ask your child to find something specific: "Now we're looking for the letter C."



48-54 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is becoming more independent in dressing and has refined his skills. He can put his shoes on the correct feet. He uses the toilet without needing help and can brush his teeth. He is eating different types of foods and can serve himself at the table, pouring and scooping with no spilling. He plays cooperatively with other children and will comfort a playmate in distress. He plays games with rules and can follow directions.

- Game Time** Your child may enjoy learning games that have rules. You can play card games with your child, such as Go Fish, Old Maid, or Animal Rummy or other games such as Candy Land or Don't Spill the Beans. If other children come over, you may need to play at first to help them learn about rules and taking turns.
- 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 (and careful supervision). You might try muffin pizzas. Your child can scoop spaghetti sauce on an English muffin, sprinkle on some cheese, and add toppings that she likes. Cook the muffin pizzas in the oven for a few minutes. Yum.
- Tent Safari** On a rainy day, ask your child if he would like to invite a friend over to play. Give the children some old blankets or sheets and let them build a tent by draping the sheets over chairs or furniture. Once they make their tent, they can play in it or read books with a flashlight.
- Teddy Bear Picnic** Your child can bring her stuffed animals or dolls on a picnic. Make a basket with a blanket, napkins, pretend food, and plastic plates and tea cups. Your child can practice dressing skills by getting "dressed up" for the bears. Later, your child can help clean up after a wonderful picnic.
- Novice Note Writer** Help your child write a letter to someone he knows. Your child can draw a picture and you can write down the words he wants to say, or your child can try his own skills at writing. Show him how to address the envelope, and have him practice saying his full name and address. You can help your child write his name at the end of the letter.
- Rub-a-Dub** Keep a sturdy footstool in the bathroom so that your child can step up and see herself in the mirror. Give your child her own special washcloth and towel, and teach her how to wash her face with soap. Give her a big kiss on her clean and shiny face! When she takes a bath, she can wash herself and dry herself off, too. Don't forget to have her brush her teeth.



48-54 months