



Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child now enjoys longer books and stories. She can help tell a story or make up silly stories of her own. She probably asks “why” often, not only about books but also about daily events. She can describe recent events with some detail and with a little help can place the events in order. She may be reading familiar signs in the neighborhood and may know what words and letters are. She knows her first and last name and probably recognizes her name in print.

Talking Book Paste pictures that your child chooses, one per page, in an inexpensive notebook or on blank pages tied or stapled together. As you look through this picture book with your child, ask him to talk about the pictures. Say, “What’s going on here?” “What colors do you see?” “Is that doggie happy or sad?” See if your child can tell you two or three things about each picture.

Say What You Can See When you’re on the bus or in the car, look for things in a certain category, alive or in pictures. Choose the category ahead of time. You might say, “Let’s see how many animals we see while we’re riding.” Both you and your child can point out dogs and cats, as well as animals on posters, statues, and so forth. Try to find things with wheels or things that are tall. Let your child pick her own categories.

My Own Stories Your child can begin to make up stories of her own. You can encourage her to tell the stories by writing them down on a piece of paper as she tells them to you. She might like to draw or paint a picture to go along with the story. You can put these stories in a folder to make a book titled “My Own Stories.”

Fill in the Blank When reading familiar stories, leave a word out here or there, and pause to let your child fill in the word or even the sound: “Mama Duck said, _____, _____.”

Do What I Do Do a simple action, such as clapping your hands, and tell your child, “Do what I do.” Then, add a second motion such as patting your stomach. Have your child do it with you first, then by himself. Now add a third motion and see if your child can remember all three: clap, clap, pat, pat, wink, wink. Add more as long as your child can remember them and as long as you both are having fun.



42–48 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is now more coordinated and will run, climb, swing, and balance with more confidence. He can jump, dance, and balance on one foot for longer than 1 second. He can walk heel to toe and begin to do forward somersaults. He may have the skills to pump on a swing.

Follow the Leader When playing in the house, outside, or at the park, have your child follow you through an obstacle course. Activities might include over the cooler, around the blanket, hopping across the grass, walking backward, or sliding down a slide. When you finish, let her take a turn leading you through an obstacle course.

Catch This is a good age to start to play catch with your child. Use a fairly big ball, preferably one that is soft so it won't hurt if he fails to catch it. Start by tossing the ball to him from a close distance, then move back so that he is practicing catching from 5 or 6 feet away.

Freeze Game Play a little music, and move around with your child or several children. When you turn off the music, everyone is supposed to stop moving and "freeze" in a stiff position. Encourage your child to freeze in many different positions (e.g., on one foot, bent over, on tip toe). Say, "melt" and everyone can move again.

Ring Toss Cut out the centers of plastic lids from coffee cans or other large cans to make large rings. Have your child toss the rings either onto a small post (made from a paper towel roll taped to a piece of cardboard) or a stick in the ground if you are playing outside. Your child might also aim for a box placed a few feet from her.

Jumping When your child can jump and land with two feet at the same time, show him how to jump over something with height. Start with a book or blocks. See if your child can still keep two feet together.

Toddler T-Ball Use an empty round ice cream carton, an oatmeal box, or any other round container as the stand for a medium-size ball or balloon. Let your child swing a small plastic bat or a cardboard roll from paper towels, aluminum foil, or gift wrap. This t-ball game is a lot of outdoor fun. Make up the rules. Have as many turns as your child wants. When your batter hits the ball, have her run into Daddy's arms!



42-48 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child has stronger finger muscles and is more skilled in drawing and writing. She can put puzzle pieces together and can string beads with ease. She's getting better at using scissors and may be able to cut on a line without help. She may even be able to trace over simple designs.

Magazine Cutting and Pasting Give your child an old magazine and a pair of small safety scissors. Let him cut pictures out of the magazine (he doesn't have to cut them out perfectly) and, using a glue stick, glue them to a piece of paper. You can ask your child to choose a certain kind of picture. Tell him, "Find food that you like, and cut it out." "Cut out some coupons for Mommy."

More Puzzle Pictures Take a colorful page from a magazine, cut it in five or six pieces, and encourage your child to put the pieces together. For sturdier puzzles, glue the pictures onto cardboard before you cut them. Save the puzzles in an envelope to use again and again.

Where's the Button? Provide clothes for your child that have one or two large buttons. You might also let her help you fasten a button on something of yours. As she is trying to fasten the button, pretend it is a Hide-and-Seek game, with the button hidden at first, then "peeking out" from the hole, and then all the way through.

Pick-Up Games Give your child a pair of tweezers or small tongs and two cups. Put some cotton balls, large pieces of macaroni, or large beans into one of the cups, and have your child pick them up with the tweezers and put them into the other cup. Once your child can do this, make it more exciting by having a race. Do it fast. Ready, set, go!

Winding the Clock If you have a wind-up clock, show your child how to wind the alarm or turn the hands. Not only will your child get some good fine motor practice, but he also will learn something about how clocks work.

Tool Time Let your child play with some large nuts and bolts. See if she can screw the nut onto the bolt. You might also let her try hammering a short nail into a piece of soft wood. If you have a fat screw with a large slit, let your child try her hand at using a simple screwdriver. You may need to hold on to the screw or make sure that the hole is large enough so that the task isn't too hard. Always supervise when kids are using tools.



42-48 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is learning to count with some accuracy, up to three or four items. He can probably count up to 10 from memory. His knowledge about the world is growing. He now understands simple opposites and whether things are the same or different. He understands patterns, or degrees of change, such as “cool, warm, hot water” or “loud, louder, loudest.”

Remember What Happened When... Encourage your child to tell you about things that happened in the past. You can start with this phrase: “Remember what happened when [you went to Grandma’s and we went swimming]?” Follow up with questions such as “When did we do that?” “What did you like the best?” or “How did that make you feel?”

Color Hunt Have a scavenger hunt for colors. Say to your child, “Find something [color] and put it on the table.” When she returns, give her another color. This is a fun game for everyone to play, including older children or adults. Try to use four or five different colors. Even if she brings back the wrong color, praise her for trying.

Where Does the Sock Go? Put a sock (of any type) on your head or somewhere else it doesn’t belong. Ask, “Where is my sock?” When your child points or says it’s on your head, ask him where it really belongs: “On my foot? Really?” Have fun with this silly game. Try another object, such as a bar of soap in a cereal bowl.

What Do You Do When... Ask your child simple questions such as “What do you do when you’re really tired?” “What do you do when you get hungry?” “What do you do when you’re all wet?” See if your child can give you answers that make sense. Talk about it.

What Doesn’t Belong? Play this fun thinking game. Gather four things. Make sure three are very similar or are in the same category, such as three lemons. Add a fourth item that does not belong, such as a bar of soap. Ask your child to tell you which one doesn’t belong. Try something different: Gather three things from the bathroom—such as soap, shampoo, or toilet paper—and add something such as a screwdriver. Ask your child to tell you what doesn’t belong and why.



42–48 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is better at taking turns and waiting. Although she plays with other children cooperatively, she still needs adult help from time to time with problem solving. Her feelings can be strong, but they may become easier to understand when you name them. She likes to select her own clothes and is more skilled at dressing herself.

Pouring Give your child a small pitcher or measuring cup and let him pour his milk from the pitcher into his cup or bowl of cereal. Have a paper towel ready just in case. Let him pour juice or milk at mealtime. Praise his success.

Dress-Up Provide clothes for your child to play dress-up. Children love to imitate adults in their family and in their community. The clothes don't have to be fancy, just oversized shirts, scarves, hats, skirts, shoes, or even loose fabric. Encourage children to dress themselves, fastening buttons, snaps, zippers, and so forth. Play along: "Are you going to work today?" "Are you going to a party?"

Puppets Puppets are another way to pretend and to have some fun. You can use store-bought puppets, or make them yourself. Find a magazine picture (or draw a picture) of a person or animal, cut it out, and paste it on cardboard. Attach a Popsicle stick, paint stirring stick, or chopstick for a handle. Let your child be one character, and you be another. Have conversations in pretend voices.

Special Helper Proclaim your child the special helper for the day. Let her help you wash the clothes, cook, feed pets, sweep, and wash dishes. She can help in some small way with almost everything. Be sure to allow extra time since young helpers may need it. This helping will eventually become part of your child's family chores, so be sure to give praise and keep it fun. At dinnertime, tell the others in the family what a great helper she was.

Self-Help Choices Offer choices to your child about his activities, including taking care of himself. Sometimes it is easier to get him to cooperate when he has a choice. For example, you might offer him the choice to brush his teeth either before or after he puts on his pajamas. These self-help skills are things children can start doing for themselves, but it's more fun and more appealing if there's a choice.



42-48 months