



Ages 0-1

Ages 1-2

Ages 2-3

Ages 3-4

Bright Steps

DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITY PACK

Bright Steps

The first couple years of a child's life are critical to their long-term development. When we understand what's happening in young children's brains as they grow, we're able to support their development and build stronger, healthier relationships with them.

This developmental activity pack is designed to help you better understand your child's behavior and brain, and to provide easy activities you can do together as they enter different developmental stages.

THE EARLY CARE & EDUCATION IMPACT INITIATIVE

Knoxville's Early Care and Education Impact Initiative aims to provide the foundational health, psychosocial, and educational supports needed to ensure the long-term success of Knoxville's children, from cradle to career.

ABOUT

UNITED WAY OF GREATER KNOXVILLE

United Way of Greater Knoxville is part of United Way Worldwide, the largest charitable organization in the world. United Way of Greater Knoxville is an innovative problem-solver and facilitator of social change dedicated to creating a more equitable Knoxville.

THE EXPERT BEHIND THE BRIGHT STEPS DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITY PACK

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Erica Lyon has over 25 years experience teaching and supporting mothers and families in their transition to parenting and beyond. She has a Bachelors of Science in Human Development with a focus in Maternal Child Health, is certified to teach through the Childbirth Education Association of Metropolitan New York, and has a Master's in Public Health from George Washington University.

She is the Author of The Big Book of Birth, and has been a forerunner in her field, having consulted for numerous hospitals, community centers, obstetrical, midwifery and family practices supporting or creating the development of educational and support programs for women and new parents. She has worked extensively in both the for profit and nonprofit world to address needs in maternal child health.



Learn Through Play

Raising a smart and emotionally healthy child doesn't mean you have to have fancy learning toys. Most learning for babies and young children happens through play and time spent together.

These activities will help foster your bond with your child, and strengthen their engagement and understanding of the world.



Bright Steps

AGE

0-1 YEARS

Hold Eye Contact

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Babies want to bond with you right from the start.

A newborn (the first 12 weeks) will hold your eye contact for about 60-90 seconds before sliding their eyes away to say they have had enough stimulation. Hold your baby's eye contact. This is your way of showing your baby you care and are interested in them.

Eye contact is one of the most important things we can do with our child in the first year.

Narrate Your Day

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

Often we need to take care of our baby while also doing other tasks throughout the day.

Tell your baby what you are doing. For example: "I am getting a cup of coffee", "I am going to put the clothes from the washer into the dryer."

Babies love hearing your voice!

Repeat Babbling Back

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

After about 8 weeks, your baby will start making cooing vowel sounds. Throughout the first year, repeat sounds back to your baby like, “oohh, ahhhhh,” to let them know you are listening.

Your baby is trying to figure out how to talk with you!

Exaggerate Facial Expressions

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

When your baby is in the active alert state or calm alert state (i.e. not sleeping, tired, or crying) interact with your baby.

Let them watch your facial expressions: wiggle your eyebrows, open and shut your mouth, make big smiles and silly faces. Your baby will start and try to copy your facial expressions.

It is okay and fun to be silly with your baby!

Comfort & Soothe

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

Babies are too young for discipline.

Soothe or comfort your baby instead. Babies are learning how to trust the people around them; cuddling and soothing helps to show them we can help them while they are so little and dependent.

Begin Reading

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

6 months old is a great age to introduce baby books.

Soothe or comfort your baby instead. Babies are learning how to trust the people around them; cooing and soothing helps to show them we can help them while they are so little and dependent.

Sing Childhood Songs

Bonding

Cognitive Brain Development

Speech

Psychosocial Brain Development

Remember childhood songs you knew and sing them to your baby. This is good for their verbal development. Singing is a great way to bond with your baby.

Point & Name

Bonding

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

For the first year, tell your baby the names of things as you go about your day. Point to common onbects and name them: "This is a cup," or, "This is a dog."

Listen to Music Together

Bonding

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Playing music and either singing along or listening while gently rocking or bouncing your baby is a fun way to bond and spend time together.

Play

Peek-A-Boo

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

By four months, most babies LOVE peek-a-boo.

Use a blanket, your hands, a wall, or a chair to hide behind and pop out from.

Do Itsy Bitsy Spider & This Little Piggy

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

These two classics can be introduced at three months and are a great way to entertain your baby.

Do Tummy Time

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

From week one, when your baby is in calm alert time or active alert time, try short episodes of tummy time.

It helps your baby get strong and helps their brain figure out how their body works. This needs to be done on a safe, flat surface, like on a play mat or a firm mattress.

It is most successful when done multiple times a day for short intervals.

Count Food Items

Cognitive Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

When you introduce small bites of food (around nine months), count items with your baby.

Cheerios and small fruit pieces are an easy way to introduce counting.

Give & Take

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

When your baby has mastered reaching and holding, practice giving and taking:

“Can I have the ball?” when you take, and, “You have the ball!” when you give it back to them.

Your baby will love exercising their ability to give and receive the ball.

Pat or Tap to Mean “More” or “Again”

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

This is a very easy hand signal that can help cue if your baby needs something.

Demonstrate by tapping a book and saying “again?”.

Then repeat reading the story.

Your child will quickly understand that tapping means something happens again, or on repeat-like another serving of breakfast



Bright Steps

**PARENT
PRO TIPS**

NO. 1

Early Exposure to Words and Numbers

Babies need to hear people talking around them.

Talking to babies helps them learn how to interact with us.

0-1 YEARS

PARENT PRO TIPS

NO. 2

Find Parents With Babies That Are the Same Age

Parents with babies the same age as yours are a good resource.

Community centers, new mom or dad groups, and baby reading hour at the library are great places to make connections.

Isolation makes it harder to cope with growth, change, and stress. Parenting can be a social experience, it doesn't need to be done alone.

0-1 YEARS

PARENT PRO TIPS

NO. 3

Attachment Is a Result of Responsiveness

Babies bond with us because we respond to them. In the first year, they are learning to trust us and the world around them.

Your responsiveness to your baby will affect their attachment level and style.

NO. 4

It Does Get Easier!

Our first baby is the biggest adjustment, and with each new baby the family goes through an adjustment period.

It is very normal for the first three months to feel much harder than we expected. This is a transitional and temporary phase while you all get used to each other and a new way of life.

NO. 5

Bonding and Attachment

Bonding is how we feel about our connection with our baby, and attachment is how the baby is feeling about its connection to you, or how “attached” it is to you.

For parents, it’s important to our well-being and functioning to feel bonded with our baby.

For the baby, it’s physically and emotionally healthy for them to feel “attached” to us.

NO. 6

Sleep

As our baby grows big enough to sleep fully through the night, it's important parents get enough sleep too.

This may mean we have to “parent ourselves” and go to bed early some nights when we can. Pick one time to nap when the baby naps.

Be mindful of getting enough sleep during the baby transition.



Bright Steps

AGE

1-2 YEARS

Do the Mr. Rogers *Can You Say?*

Cognitive Brain Development

Speech

Psychosocial Brain Development

Children's language development explodes from 18 months onward. Point to an object, name it, and ask your child to repeat it back to you. When they say a word or sentence, repeat what they said back to them before answering the question or responding to the statement.

Object Sorting

Cognitive Brain Development

Critical Thinking

Psychosocial Brain Development

Problem Solving

This can be done with any object.

For example, your child can sort a bag of frozen peas and carrots, sorting the orange vs. the green, or square vs. the round. Use only two different shapes or colors that are very obvious, as this is a starter exercise from 18 months on.

Counting Objects, Steps, & More

Cognitive Brain Development

Critical Thinking

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

Count objects as you take a walk or ride in the car.

How many cars or rocks are there? How many stop signs?

Try to create a verbally repetitive tally of how many objects you say together:

“We saw three birds, two cars, and one tree.”

Name Everything You See of One Color

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

Spend time pointing to objects and repeating their name and color.
For example: the red pillow, the red shirt, the red flower.
Ask your baby, “Can you find something red?”

Name Feelings

Cognitive Brain Development

Critical Thinking

Psychosocial Brain Development

Problem Solving

Draw happy faces, sad faces, angry faces, or silly faces.

Ask your child to do the same - re we asking them to draw or to make feeling faces. Clarify draw then, make.

E.g. practice making feeling faces together-make a happy face, a sad face, a grumpy face. This helps your child identify feelings in themselves and others.

Make Breakfast or Dinner *Family Meal Time*

Psychosocial Brain Development

Healthy Eating

Bonding

Attachment

Family meals are important for bonding, social time, and building predictable routines for your family.

Sometimes toddlers go to bed before everyone can eat dinner together, so breakfast together can be an opportunity for a family meal and a great way to have some time with your toddler.

Adjective Game: *How Many Description Words*

Cognitive Brain Development

Critical Thinking

Psychosocial Brain Development

Problem Solving

Speech

Pick a toy of your child's and see how many words you can come up with to describe it for them.

For example, 'this tree is tall, this tree has rough bark, this tree has leaves, this tree is brown and green, this tree is old, this tree is wide.'

Blow Bubbles & Catch Them

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Speech

Fine Motor Skills

Bubbles are a great pastime and easy fun.

It helps your toddler practice fine motor skills and self control. Gently catching bubbles or popping them while running around builds strength and skill.

Try a New Food

Psychosocial Brain Development

Fine Motor Skills

Healthy Eating

Pretend you are trying a new food at the same time as your toddler.

Talk about how you are both going to try something new together.

Ask if it will be sweet, salty, or savory, and have your child guess.

Do a little lick of the new food, then a small taste, a big taste, and then exaggerate chewing. Ask your child if they like it and announce that you definitely like it.

Taking Turns Game

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Using a favorite toy or object, ask your toddler if you can take turns playing with it.

Show your child how to play, then practice an exchange. Hold the toy, play with it for a minute, then hand it to your child, saying “your turn.”

After a few minutes, say “my turn, can I have the toy please?” When they give it to you, play for a minute then announce “your turn,” and hand it back to them. Repeat back and forth as a game.

Keep the turns short to build trust and tolerance in sharing.

Have a Little “Fresh Air” Time

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Sit on the steps of your house or building with your child and watch your surroundings together.

Take a walk around the block, or go to the park. Talk about what you see: cars, trees, people, birds.

A little fresh air goes a long way.

Stack Blocks or Pillows, Then Knock Them Over!

Cognitive Brain Development

Sensory Play

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Coordination

Toddlers like to build items, then knock them over.

Part of dealing with toddlers' energy is giving them places where it's okay to make a mess; this makes it easier for them to follow the rules when they aren't allowed to make a mess. Find things to stack and topple!

Water Play at Bath Time

Cognitive Brain Development

Sensory Play

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Using a few plastic cups, have your child make waterfalls in the bath by scooping water then pouring it out.

Have them pour water on their hands or belly and notice little trickles, drops, or how full the cup can be. Notice if the empty cup floats and how much water is needed to make it sink.

Swing Together at the Playground

Cognitive Brain Development

Sensory Play

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Sit like a “spider” together on the swings at a playground.

The adult sits on the swing, the toddler sits facing the adult on their lap with their legs going through the other side; the adult clasps their hands behind the toddlers back to secure them on their lap. Swing with your toddler.

They love swinging with you and being pushed on the swing.

Have a Parade with a Homemade Drum or Horn

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Using a cardboard tube from a toilet paper or paper towel roll as a horn, or an empty tissue box for a bongo drum, march around with your toddler and pretend to have a parade.

Teach a marching step (knees high) and pat the drum or make trumpet sounds. This can begin to teach rhythm and body control and be an energy outlet for a rainy or stressful day.

As your child grows, you can add dress-ups or more sophisticated instruments.



Bright Steps

**PARENT
PRO TIPS**

NO. 1

Parenting Consistency Is Important

Toddlers need the adults around them to behave in consistent, predictable patterns.

Unpredictable behavior from adults, like not knowing when an adult will get mad or upset, is scary for kids and makes it hard for them to learn emotional calmness, and to process information.

NO. 2

Keep Reading and Cuddling

Suggest book time when you are unsure what to do with your toddler. It gives parents a moment to rest and is guaranteed to be good for your child's development.

NO. 3

Naming Feelings

Part of what we do as parents is teach our children how to name feelings.

The easiest ones are physical, like tired, sleepy, hungry, or full. Be sure to also teach your child how to name emotional feelings, like sadness, anger, joy, happiness, and silliness.

Ages 1-2, your child is growing their range of emotions, so having words to identify feelings is important.

NO. 4

Emotional Growth

From one to two years, your toddler is having a lot of **NEW** feelings develop and a desire for independence.

They don't understand all the new emotions yet, so model how to handle anger by counting to 10 to calm yourself or taking a few deep breaths. Your child learns from you on how to handle big feelings.

Toddlers don't understand that they can't swim in the freezing water, or drive the big fire truck. It is normal for toddlers to have irrational big feelings that pass like a storm.

1-2 YEARS

PARENT PRO TIPS

NO. 5

Picky Eaters

Children will generally eat what we eat. They might like a particular food one day, and hate it the next! Keep all foods in rotation, and continue offering what you eat as an option. Avoid a power struggle by not forcing kids to eat.

Notice what they eat over the course of a week, rather than at one meal or one day. Some days kids will eat a lot of fruit, then will only eat rice or pasta the next day. Adding a little butter or oil to veggies or having dips like ranch or hummus helps to get kids to eat veggies.



Bright Steps

AGE

2-3 YEARS

Play in a Box

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Creativity

Sensory Play

Save or find a cardboard box big enough for your child to sit in.

Help them make a car, plane, or boat out of it using paper, or cardboard paper towel tubes.

Pretend to drive the car, fly the plane, or fish from the boat.

Talk About Going Potty

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Creativity

Sensory Play

Find potty training book(s) and read to your child.

Talk about how pretty soon it will be time to learn to go potty in the toilet when they are ready.

Patterns

Cognitive Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Critical Thinking

Using square and round crackers, blocks, or paper, cut into different shapes, make a simple alternating pattern of two or three different shapes. Try a few variations of making a pattern. Have your child copy the pattern.

Finger Paint

Fine Motor Skills

Creativity

Sensory Play

Finger painting is so much fun for toddlers.

Wear an old shirt as a smock, or finger paint outside for an easier clean up after your toddler is done making their masterpiece.

Jump in Puddles

Gross Motor Skills

Sensory Play

Jumping in puddles is a great rainy day activity.

Make up a special name for it like 'Rain Adventure' or 'Puddle Time.' This makes it feel like a special activity, separate from just walking in the rain. It also helps define when the behavior is okay, so your toddler doesn't jump in puddles whenever. Wear clothes you don't mind getting wet, and walk around the block or through the park, purposefully jumping in puddles .

Paint With Water

Fine Motor Skills

Creativity

Sensory Play

This activity is great for when the paint has dried up or you can't get to the store.

Using a bucket of water, a paint brush, q-tips, or even their fingers, your toddler can dip and brush on the side of the house or sidewalk with water and make images that disappear like magic!

Dance Party - Get the Wiggles Out!

Gross Motor Skills

Sensory Play

Creativity

When toddlers need exercise, a short dance party is a great way for them to release some energy.

Play three to four songs on your phone, or put a music station on the radio, and have a dance party together. Show your toddler your moves!

Create a Picture Plan

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Critical Thinking

This is great for toddlers who have a hard time transitioning between activities or environments.

It's also ideal if you have a different schedule each day. It creates predictability and reliability for changing schedules or caregivers. Together, before, or at breakfast, make a picture of each thing you are going to do today to create a visual map of the day.

Sing Together

Speech

Attachment

Creativity

You likely read or sang nursery rhymes to your child during their first year. Try to teach or sing these songs with your toddler. Or, you can pick one longer song you know and teach them the lyrics by singing a line and having your toddler repeat it.

Go to the Library

Bonding

Attachment

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

The library is always a great excursion with free books and relaxing time together.

Reading or looking at pictures together is one of those few parenting moments that you can feel 100% sure you are doing the right thing with your child.

Don't forget books with counting and numbers!

Introduce Educational Videos & Watch a Show Together

Auditory & Visual Learning

Once your child is past the age of two it's okay to introduce educational or child-safe shows as a form of family enjoyment.

Child-safe shows are age appropriate and AVOID commercials. Commercials are just a stranger telling your kid what to like. You don't need that. Watching a show together allows you to add information or talk to your child about what they're watching.

Ideally, TV or screen time is limited to about an hour a day at this age. So, if you need to use it for dinner prep, that's okay too.

Try Some Condiments Together

Creativity

Sensory Play

Healthy Eating

Using a cracker or carrot stick, try out some ketchup, mayo, mustard, pickle relish, or mild salsa.

Use savory or sweet condiments. Have your child dip the cracker or carrot into the different options and taste them. Talk about what you like or don't like.

Talk about the texture, the color, make silly faces about the flavors.

Name the flavors like 'Mr. Mustard, meet Peter Pickle Relish.'

Try mixing them together.

More Food Play

Sensory Play

Healthy Eating

Food play can help prevent picky eating.

Have your child hold a squishy food like a tomato and a crunchy vegetable like a carrot for comparison. Ask “How does it feel?” “What does it taste like?”

Have them pick up things to put in a bowl for salad with you. Getting used to textures and seeing the food helps children overcome texture aversion.

Color in a Coloring Book

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Fine Motor Skills

Don't worry about going outside the lines.

Color a picture together, naming the colors. Ask your child what color objects in the picture should be. Holding crayons helps them develop fine motor skills.

Draw a Picture of Your Family Together

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Fine Motor Skills

Attachment

This doesn't have to be a fancy drawing, and any writing utensil works well.

Draw yourself, or other family members. Ask your child how you should draw them (tall, or short? With a hat? With a dress or pants? With a big, small, or medium nose?).

The idea is to talk through all the people in your family, and discuss how and where to draw them in the picture. Your child will love this joint picture adventure. You can also draw pets or special toys like a teddy or blanket.

Trace Letters

Cognitive Brain Development

Fine Motor Skills

Draw an alphabet letter on paper, have your child trace over it following the lines, make the letter's sound while writing the letter.

Show Your Child Pictures of Family and Themselves

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Sense of Identity

Young children love to see how they are growing.

Review with them the things you did together as a baby, and the new things you do together now. Talk about how they are doing a good job growing and learning. Show a few pictures of family and talk about their relationship to you and your toddler.



Bright Steps

**PARENT
PRO TIPS**

NO. 1

Routines Are Your Friend

Toddlers are struggling for independence but need to feel secure within their world.

Having predictable daily routines helps them feel safe enough to explore and exercise their independence.

Toddlers thrive within daily schedules and routines, and are not old enough to know what they need or what is best for them, that's our job. Their job is to play and learn about their world!

NO. 2

Name Feelings

Naming feeling as toddlers experience them can help your toddler begin to identify how they feel. This will help foster the ability to talk through feelings as they get older rather than acting out, suppressing, or feeling shame about their emotions.

It helps when parents model how to name feelings:
“I feel tired. I am going to get ready for bed.”

NO. 3

Toddlers Feel Like Everything is Absolute

Understanding how a toddler thinks can help us cope with their tantrums. Toddlers think that whatever they feel in the moment is how they will feel forever.

It feels big and important and never ending, for those few minutes at least. They aren't big enough to understand that the feeling will pass and they will feel better.

NO. 4

Handling Tantrums

Toddlers are notorious for tantrums. A huge part of getting through a tantrum is the parent modeling calm behavior.

If parents have a tantrum, i.e. get mad, when the child is mad, it often escalates the situation. Staying calm can help the tantrum pass more quickly.

NO. 5

Introduce Two-Choice Options

Toddlers want to practice being independent. A good, safe way to help them feel independent is to offer two choices only. 'Do you want the blue shirt or the green shirt?'

Offer two choices that YOU want them to choose; your toddler will be happy that they got to pick as they test their independence.



Bright Steps

AGE

3-4 YEARS

Drawing & Coloring

Cognitive Brain Development

Sensory Play

Gross Motor Skills

Building Confidence

Using crayons, draw pictures together of things around you: a chair, a table, a flower, someone in the room.

Child Scissors

Cognitive Brain Development

Sensory Play

Fine Motor Skills

Building Confidence

Practice cutting out shapes like triangles, rectangles, and circles, using child safe scissors.

Nature or City Walks

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Observation Skills

Go to a park, or take a walk around the block together.

Talk about everything you see together. Talk about the weather.

Green spaces are calming, rich with learning opportunities for young children.

A change of scenery, even for 15 minutes, goes a long way.

Cook Something Simple Together

Psychosocial Brain Development

Building Confidence

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Have your child help you stir something, or help put things in a bowl after you've chopped up the ingredients.

Young children like to be part of what is happening.

Your toddler likes to be included. If you make cookies, your three-year-old can pour each item in the bowl after you have measured. It may take a little longer to make a dish, but it's worth it.

Help Pick Up Toys

Psychosocial Brain Development

Building Confidence

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Have your child pick up toys with you.

It is good for children to begin engaging with chores at this age.

Doing these activities together at first helps them build good habits.

Help Set the Table

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Show your child how to set a plate, fork, napkin, or whatever is needed for that meal.

Hand them items one at a time (a plate) or in small numbers (forks) so they can successfully carry them to the table and set each place.

Play-Doh Creations

Fine Motor Skills

Sensory Play

Creativity

You can use Play-Doh, clay, or slime to make shapes, creatures, and even letters.

Try making small things and bigger things.

For example, if using clay, make tiny food for dolls, little animal shapes.

Learning to Get Dressed

Cognitive Brain Development

Building Confidence

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Show your child how to button a button, zip a zipper, and begin to tie a shoe lace.

A little practice getting dressed without the pressure of a specific event or location gives your child the confidence to do it on their own.

Teach a Somersault & Jumping Jacks

Gross Motor Skills

As your child gets more physically skilled, teaching these coordinated movements are a good activity!

Play *Mother May I* or *Simon Says*

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Gross Motor Skills

Following Directions

These are two classic kids' games!

These games are good opportunities for kids to practice giving and following directions. It's important you take turns and let your child also give directions. Give silly, but easy, directions like 'pat your head,' 'wiggle your foot,' 'jump up and down three times,' or 'cluck like a chicken'.

The older your child gets, the more sophisticated the directions can be. For example, when they're six, it can be 'pretend you are a balloon blowing up,' or 'pretend to be a kite in the wind.'

Teach All Body Part Names Accurately at the Same Time

Cognitive Brain Development

Socialization

Privacy Protection

Using a children's book, drawing on paper, or even a chalk outline of your child, name all the body parts.

Kids need to learn about the names of all their body parts and know the correct names to help understand privacy and body boundaries.

Make sure all body parts are labeled correctly and don't leave any out. If we leave out genital areas we are teaching kids those body parts are different, shameful, or secret. Just teach the body as a whole.

Encourage Action Play and Creative Play

Cognitive Brain Development

Socialization

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Regardless of your child's gender, it's important they engage in both action play and creative play.

For action play, practice rolling, tossing, and catching a ball. For creative play, you can use figurines or dolls to create an interactive story. It can be something you did together the day before, or be a new made up story.

The key point is to not limit action play to boys and creative play to girls. All children like both.

Plant Something Together

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Fine Motor Skills

Sensory Play

Plant a seed or seedling in a pot.

Have your child help put dirt in a pot, or dig the hole, place the plant or seed, and water it. Together, keep track of how it grows.

Exposure to Different Faces & Cultures

Psychosocial Brain Development

Tolerance

Using your phone, computer, or library books, find pictures of people around the world and share them with your child.

Ask them questions about what they observe.

What clothes are worn around the world? What is the geography and weather like around the world? Tell them to imagine they are friends with the people they see. What might they play together? What kinds of food might you want to try from another part of the world?

Look, Listen, & Feel Game

Cognitive Brain Development

Sensory Play

In a park or in your living room ask your child to 'Look, Listen, and Feel' with you.

Sit quietly for one minute and then ask what is everything we see right now?

Then, what is everything we hear right now. Name any items or sounds your child might not know. Then, ask what do we feel? Is the temperature warm or cool? Is there a breeze? Is it comfortable or uncomfortable to sit?

Have a Snack Adventure

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Sensory Play

Healthy Eating

Choose three foods your child has not tried yet.

Have them describe the food, then smell the food, and then lick the food only, or touch their tongue to it. Then choose which of the three foods they want to take a small bite of (hopefully they want to try all three!) Licking is a great “non committal” way to get kids to try new foods without forcing them to fully taste them.

Indoor or Summer Snowball Fight

Cognitive Brain Development

Psychosocial Brain Development

Creativity

Problem Solving

Ask your child if they want to have a snowball fight.

But then present the problem that it is summer, or that you are indoors. What could make a good snowball? Check items around the house. What items are soft enough to throw? Are there enough of them to use as snowballs?

Use paper balls (10 pieces of paper), cotton balls, or balled up socks as a solution. Guide your child to an answer by exploring options.



Bright Steps

**PARENT
PRO TIPS**

NO. 1

Have the “Good Touch Vs. Bad Touch” Talk

Children need to understand certain parts of their body are private.

Let your child know that secrets are only for surprise parties, not for body parts, and they can tell their doctor, teacher, and parent if anyone is bothering them. Make sure the child knows these body boundaries apply to everyone, including family.

It is important to not call private areas silly nicknames, but the correct biological name.

NO. 2

Answer Awkward Questions

Kids ask awkward question at this age because they are curious about the world: this is normal as they observe the environment around them.

Answer them honestly in a way that teaches tolerance, or empathy.

Children might ask a question about how people look or seem different than what they are used to. E.g. “Why doesn’t that man have any hair on his head?” Answer factually in a way that teaches that everyone belongs to the human race.

NO. 3

Encourage and Model 'Please' and 'Thank You'

Please' and 'thank you' need to be established at this age, if not sooner.

Practice please and thank you.

NO. 4

Teach Cleanliness and Self Care

Children can learn to wash themselves and brush their teeth by this age, but they don't learn it well unless we really make sure they understand the process.

Teach them how to wash all over with soap and a washcloth or sponge when taking a bath. Teach them how to brush all sides of their teeth.

NO. 5

Tuck in Resolution

If it's been a rough day, talk it out before bedtime. Reassure your child that tomorrow will be a better day and a fresh start.

Children (and parents) need to feel a sense of resolution for a fresh beginning in the morning.