At-Home Activities

Simple, fun activities that use everyday items to provide rich learning opportunities.

Skill Development

These research-based activities are designed to support key developmental areas. Most activities involve multiple skills, but each focuses on three of the following:

- Creativity
- Gross Motor
- Math
- Sensory
- Fine Motor
- Language & Communication
- Problem Solving
- Social & Emotional

Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences
**Water Play**

*Set-up: 2 min*

Children engage their senses through water play. Let them experiment as they fill, pour, wash, dunk, and splash!

**What You Need:**
- Water
- Sink, plastic tub or bowl
- Any materials ok to get wet
- Towel or other floor covering

**Material Ideas:**
- Measuring cups, spoons, scoops
- Sponges, wash cloths
- Plastic toys or blocks, containers
- Soap, bubble bath

**To Play:**

1. **Fill a sink with water or a tub on the floor (on a towel). Take it outside for even less clean up!**

2. Give your child materials and let them explore.

**Mix It Up:**
- Create a wash station for toy animals, vehicles or blocks. Have your child give them a bath then rinse and repeat.
- Have your child guess whether different materials will sink or float. They can drop them in water, then add food coloring, glitter, beads or small mess? Fill a clear plastic bottle with water and add food coloring, glitter, beads or small objects. Have your child tip, roll and shake to their heart's content.

**Adjust The Challenge:**
- What materials will sink or float?
- Guess whether different materials will sink or float. Have your child give them a bath then rinse and repeat.
- What do they do?
- Start with just the tub filled with a little bit of water. Next, add a cup of water for your child to explore. Then, add more water or a sponge and follow your child's lead to fill their needs. They can drop their materials in the tub and see if their prediction was right.

**Extend the Fun:**
- Give your child materials and let them explore.
- Fill a sink with water or a tub on the floor (on a towel). Take it outside for even less clean up!

**Want sensory play without the mess?** Fill a clear plastic bottle with water, then add food coloring, glitter, beads or small objects. Glue the lid shut and let your child tip, roll and shake to their heart's content!
Tape Puzzles

Set-up: 3 min

Toddlers and preschoolers love filling spaces – packing, stacking, ordering. This simple activity turns it into a game!

What You Need:

- Painters tape (or other not-too-sticky tape)
- Blocks or other materials to fill the space – cloth, paper, cut pieces of cardboard, jar lids, etc.

To Play:

1. Find a comfortable space on a floor or rug. Use the tape to mark off an enclosed space. A simple square works well, but you can make it more complex if you like.
2. Have the child fill in the space with the blocks or other materials.
3. Do it again with the same or different objects.

Mix It Up:

- Use painters tape to create different shapes to be filled. Instead of tape, try filling a shoe box lid or plastic bin.
- Take a tape-marked space and try filling it with objects. Separate the objects into ‘fit’ and ‘don’t fit’ piles.
- Extend the Fun:
  - Tape a small space on the wall at floor level. See if you can cover the space by stacking materials. If you can fill the wall at the floor level, see if you can cover the space by stacking materials.
  - Mix it up:
    - Don’t fill the spaces.
    - Separate the objects into fit and don’t fit piles.
    - Simply see whether a single object can fit inside or not.
Point and Seek

Set-up: 1 min

Children love to explore, even if it’s only with their eyes. In this game, children find categories in their environment with a fun rhyme and pointing.

Rhyme To Start:
- Let’s find **green**.
- I’ll show you how.
- The door is **green**. (Point)
- I found it! Wow!

To Continue:
- Let’s find more **green**.
- It’s your turn now. (Pause for pointing)
- The (chair, book, etc) is **green**.
- You found it! Wow!

To Play:

1. Look around you and pick a category. Colors and shapes work well.

2. Use the first rhyme to start the game and provide an example. Use the second rhyme to invite your child to play.

3. Repeat the rhyme to point to more objects or replace the bold words with a new color or category. Play again!

Adjust the Challenge

Extend the Fun
Dice Dash

Set-up: 8 min

Toddlers and preschoolers love matching games. Encourage them to get up and move as they roll the dice and run, hop, or crawl to the corresponding color.

What You Need:
- Dice customized for the game
- Paper or felt to create two floor bases to match each color on the dice

Make Your Dice:
- Turn an old tissue box into a large colorful dice or use real dice as a starting point. Tape or glue a piece of colorful paper to each side. Markers work too!

To Play:
1. Place colored bases on the floor. Spread them out – children love to move!
2. Have your child roll the dice and run, hop, or crawl to the base on the floor that matches the color.
3. Take turns rolling and moving to the matching base.

Mix It Up:
- Shake or toss it again! They may shake hands, or they may explore the cube without their hands. Let them roll their little one crawl across the floor and let their little one crawl across the floor and let
- Make different matching pairs, pictures of animals, shapes, or patterns. Or take the game outside!
- Pick squares out of a bag instead of rolling a dice.
- Find the matching square on a table instead of playing on the floor.

Extend the Fun
- Roll the colorful dice across the floor and let your little one crawl or toddle after it. Let them write 1-6 on the squares on the floor and use a regular dice or adapt the tissue box dice. Match the number of circles on the dice to the number on the floor.
- Adjust the challenge.
Friend Bridges

Set-up: 3 min

Simple prompts and activities can provide rich imaginary play. Help your child bring two imaginary friends together with this repeatable activity!

**What You Need:**
- Two friends – dolls, stuffies, toys, or photos
- Two ‘islands’ made out of any material you like, or circles in the sand or dirt
- Bridge materials

**Material Ideas:**
For the bridge you can use blocks, cards, paper, sticks, stones – anything!

**To Play:**

1. Mark off the islands.
2. Place the friends on separate islands.
3. Have your child build a bridge to bring them together.

**Extend the Fun**

Ask your child to tell you the story when they finish. How did they build the bridge? How did the friends feel once they could be together? If being separated is too scary, have both friends on the same island. Together they can build a bridge to another island to visit. Ask your child if being separated is too scary, have both friends on the same island. Together they can build a bridge to another island to visit. Ask your child if being separated is too
Children love to discover the natural world around them. Let them use their senses to hunt for objects of different textures outside.

Set-up: 1 min

**Texture Hunt Ideas:**
- Smooth
- Soft
- Wet
- Fluffy
- Squishy
- Crunchy
- Rough
- Hard
- Dry
- Prickly
- Slippery
- Fuzzy

**To Play:**

1. Head outside together – anywhere will do!
   
   Choose a texture and encourage your child to start exploring. Give an example and offer a prompt if your child needs it. “Feel how smooth this rock is. Can you find something else that’s smooth?”

2. Record or collect objects for each texture.

3. Use the objects you collected during the scavenger hunt to make texture rubbings. Place an object under a white sheet of paper then rub over it with a crayon to reveal unique patterns.

4. Create a sensory bin by filling a plastic container with objects of different textures like sticks, leaves, and large rocks. Let your child explore how they feel on their hands and feet.

5. Select an object outside or inside, for example a tree or a bed. How many different textures can you find on one object?

6. Put an object with a fun texture inside an opaque bag. Ask your child to feel inside (no peeking!) and describe the texture. Can they guess what the object is? Add a different object and play again!

**Extend the Fun**

- Fill a plastic container with objects of different textures. Invite your child to explore how they feel on their hands. Let them sprinkle their own fun textures like sticks, leaves, and large rocks on a table or in the yard, with or without the container.

- Create a sensory bin by placing objects of different textures inside a plastic container. Invite your child to explore how the objects feel on their hands and feet. You can also use this as an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words related to texture, such as “smooth,” “hard,” “soft,” “slippery,” and “prickly.”