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.

Extend the Fun

Mix It Up:

- Create a wash station for toy animals, vehicles or blocks. Give your child a bath then rinse and repeat. Have your child give them a bath then rinse and repeat!

- Another idea: Fill a clear, plastic bottle with water, then add food coloring, glitter, beads or small toys. Glue the lid shut and let your child tip, roll and shake to their heart's content!

- What do they do?
  - Your child’s lead. Have your child do another activity. Next, add a cup of water for your child to fill with a little bit of dirt or soil!

Adapt The Challenge

- What was right and see if their prediction was right. They can drop them in. Materials will sink or float. Have your child guess whether different materials will sink or float.

- Adjust The Challenge
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 different shapes to be filled.
- Using the tape, create the shapes.

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, see if you can level the wall at the floor.
- Instead of tape, try filling a shoe box lid or plastic bin to keep the pieces contained.
- Separate the objects into 'fit' and 'don't fit' piles.

Paint the floor a different color on the floor and the inside of the tape. Say, 'Circle objects in the fit pile can fit inside the tape. Square objects in the don't fit pile. See if you can cover the space by stacking materials. If you can, see if you can level the wall at the floor.'
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!

**Mix It Up:**
- Choose another category to keep things going: soft things, toys, funny things, things you like. Any category will work.
- Have your child run to the object instead of pointing.

**Another Take:**
- Instead of looking around a whole room, focus on something smaller, such as a favorite toy or doll. Use the rhyme to label parts. “Let’s find an arm.”

**Extend the Fun:**
- Make it a memory game for older children.
- The rhyme is optional. This activity can be done as a simple finding game with concrete objects. “Can you find an animal?”
- “Let’s think of red things. It’s your turn now. A fire engine is red. You got it! Wow!”
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.

Extend the Fun

Mix It
- Use different matching colors, pictures of animals, or patterns. Or take the game outside!

Another Take:
- Pick squares out of a bag instead of rolling a dice. Find the matching square on a table.

Ups:
- Shake or toss it again: the number of circles on the dice to the number on the floor. Match the number of circles on the floor to the number on the dice.

Math
- Adjust the challenge. See if they can adapt the tissue box to use a regular dice or squares on the floor and write 1-6 on the floor.

Creativity
- Roll the colorful dice across the floor and let your little one crawl or toddle after it. Let them explore the cube with their hands. See if they shake or toss it again!
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

If being separated is too scary, have both friends on the same island. Together they can build a bridge to a third island to visit.

Another Take:
- Draw the bridge. Do it on paper. You draw the islands and have your child draw the friends. 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?

Mix It Up:
- Add a third island with another friend. How many bridges do you need now?

Adjust the Challenge
- Did the friends feel once they could be together? Did the friends feel once they could be together? Ask your child to tell you the story when they finish.
Texture Hunt

Set-up: 1 min

Children love to discover the natural world around them. Let them use their senses to hunt for objects of different textures outside.

**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.

   **Mix It Up:**
   - Select an object outside or inside, for example a tree or a bed. How many different textures can you find on one object?
   - 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!

   **Take Another:**
   - 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.

   **Adjust the Challenge:**
   - 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 feel with their hands and feet.

   **Extend the Fun:**
   - Fill an opaque bag with a fun texture object you collected during the scavenger hunt. 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!
Shake & Make Music

Children love to explore sounds and rhythms. These simple shakers help get the music started!

**What You Need:**
- Toilet paper or paper towel tubes
- Tape (strong enough to hold in the filler)
- Filler – rice, corn, lentils, beans, beads, or other material
- Markers, pens, paints, or colorful tape to decorate the outside

**Make Your Shaker:**
1. Use tape to cover one end of the tube, then wrap the tape around the tube to cover the tape ends.
2. Fill the tube ¼ full with filler material.
3. Repeat step one to close the tube.
4. Decorate as much as you like.

**To Play:**
1. Count a simple rhythm and have your child shake along.
   One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four...
2. Count along with music and have your child shake along.
3. Play faster or slower music and do it again!

**Mix It Up:**
- Try different patterns. Your child can match it. Try new shakers. Roll it. Tit it! Different materials to create the container and filler different sounds. Switch up different materials make different sounds. See what other sounds your shaker can make. Roll it! Tit it! Try tapping too.
- Hold your child’s hands and help them shake in time to the music. Extend the Fun.