Connect
Play & Learn
Every Day!

Play with me!
You are my first,
my favourite,
and my most important teacher!

Ideas for more than 40 different activities
that help young children learn through play.
Lots of fun things to do
for children up to six years-old and their parents!

Small Muscle Skills | Large Muscle Skills | Reading and Learning | Numbers and Learning

Playing is learning!

Children are always ready to play! And when they're playing, they're learning skills and information that will help them do better in school and later in life. Playing helps them stay healthy and grow strong, and allows them to explore the world around them.

When children are playing, they can be active, ask questions, use their imagination, express their thoughts and emotions, and learn to make friends. Most importantly, playing together is a time for parents and caregivers to really connect with their child and build a strong, loving relationship that will last a lifetime. Research shows that children who feel connected to someone who cares about them are more likely to learn confidently and spend more time playing.

Make time for play every day!

You are your child's first and favourite teacher; playing together is one of the best ways to help them grow and develop. Use this booklet when you make time for play, every day. It has many play activities to try together at home, outdoors, and in your neighbourhood. The “Connect Play & Learn Every Day!” activities are for all developmental stages and abilities. Every child develops differently, so change the activities to suit your child’s comfort level.

For more ideas on how and where to Connect, Play & Learn, Every Day!, visit **haltoniparent.ca**

Small Muscle Skills (Fine Motor)

Small muscle coordination (for example, movement of the fingers)

Paper Play 11
Clothes Pin Pickup 13
Lace It Up! 15
Thread It Through! 19
Make It with Marshmallows! 21
Playdough Playtime 23
Playdough Letters 25
Make a Playdough Scene 27
Make a Family Memory Book 29
Picture Grocery List 31
The Touching Tray 33
Scissors Practice 35
Squishy Bag Letters 37
Pipe Cleaner Letters 39

Large Muscle Skills (Gross Motor)

Moving and coordinating big body parts such as arms and legs; running and jumping

Balancing Fun 43
Bean Bag Toss 45
Bubble Catch 47
Bunny Hop 49
Hopscotch 51
Scavenger Hunt 55
Move to the Music 59
Paper Plate Skate 61
Pompom Race 63
Tiger Tail 65
Toddler Climb 67

Reading and Learning (Literacy)

Understanding letters and words; early reading and writing skills

BINGO! 71
Full of Beans 75
Make an Alphabet Tree 77
Time for a Picnic! 79
Seek and Stick! 81
Come on Back, Letters! 83
My Alphabet Book 85
Match the Sticks 87
Sights and Sounds 89
Let's Spell! 91
Rhyme Time 93
What is in My Bag? 95
Tell Me Where 97
Guess the Letter 99

Numbers and Learning (Numeracy)

Understanding numbers; counting; adding and subtracting; early math skills

Let's Sort Cards! 103
Greater or Less Than? 107
Horse Race 111
Make 10! 115
Number Battle 117
Who is Taller? 121
The Number Match Wheel 123

Spend time playing together. Try a new game, explore a local park, or enjoy baking as a family.

Small Muscle Skills (Fine Motor)

Children are at their best when they feel connected to someone who cares about them.

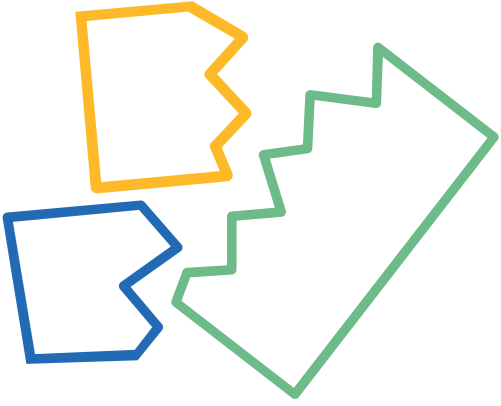
Paper Play

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; building stronger wrists, hands, and fingers; social skills such as cooperation and cleaning up

What you need

Any scrap paper at home (newspapers, store flyers, or construction, tissue, or wrapping paper); a large bowl or basket to put the paper in when finished



Paper Play

What to do

- Place paper on the table or floor in front of you.
- Together with your child, rip, tear, or scrunch the paper. Start by ripping the paper into large pieces then tear those pieces into smaller bits.
- Use the scrap paper bits to create interesting designs or an art project.
- Encourage your child to clean up when finished.

Tips

- Don't worry if your child has difficulty and cannot rip the paper right away. It takes practice.
- Practice with different thicknesses of paper.

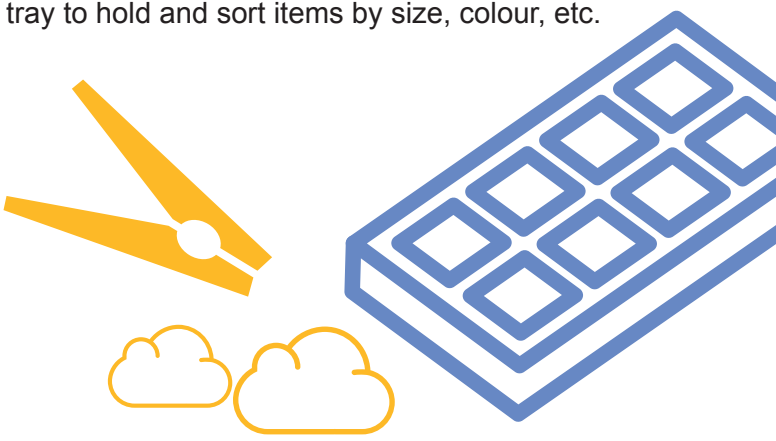
Clothes Pin Pickup

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; focus; early math skills such as counting and adding and subtracting

What you need

1 or 2 clothes pins; cotton balls and/or various sizes of pompoms; small bowls, a muffin tin, and/or ice cube tray to hold and sort items by size, colour, etc.



Clothes Pin Pickup

What to do

- Ask your child to pick up a cotton ball using a clothes pin, then place it in your hand, a bowl, or ice cube tray.
- Take turns playing.

Make it harder

- Use pompoms, ribbon, or yarn. Have your child pick up and separate them into different containers based on size or colour. Ask him to say the colour or size.
- Count the items together. Use the clothes pins to add or take away items and recount.
- Try holding and using the clothes pin in the other hand!

Tips

- If a clothes pin is too difficult to use at first, let your child use his fingers.
- If your child is bored or gets frustrated, let him play freely with the materials.

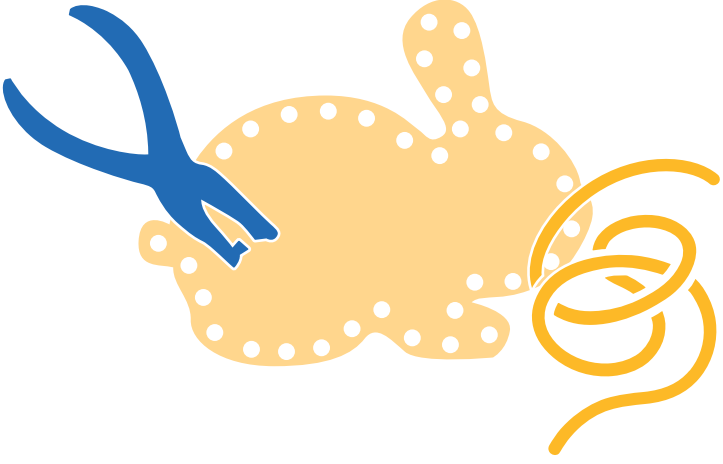
Lace It Up!

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination and focus

What you need

Shoelace and/or ribbon; hole punch; thick paper (old playing cards, construction paper, cereal box), foam sheets, and/or a pre-made lacing template



Lace It Up!

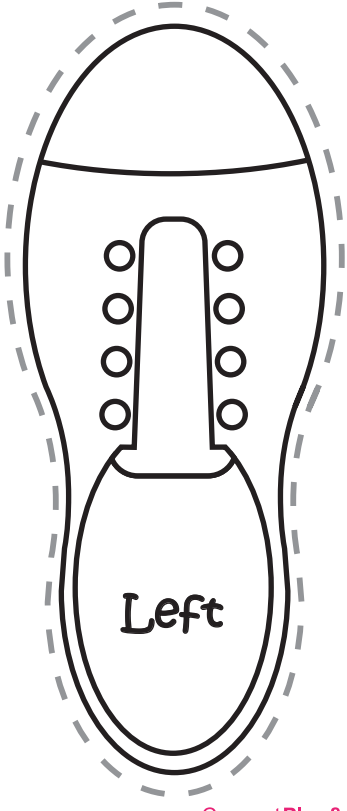
What to do

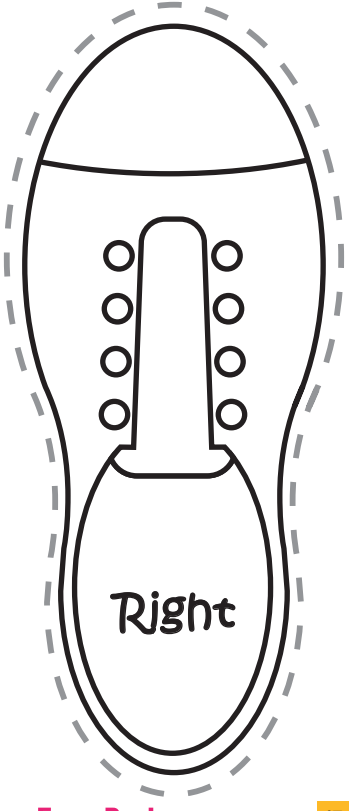
- Have your child thread a shoelace or ribbon through holes punched into a card as if sewing.
- Make a few lacing templates using different shapes, colours, and lacing materials. Use letters, animals, or cars and trucks as shapes. Find ideas and templates online.

Tips

- Show your child how to use the hole punch and ask her to help punch the holes.

Lace It Up!





Talk, read and make memories together.

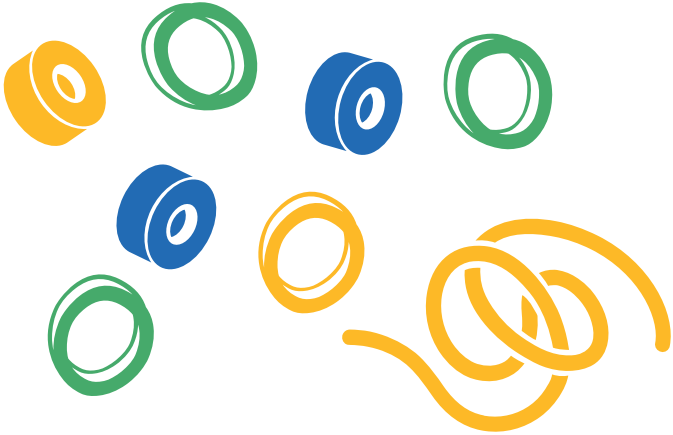
Thread It Through!

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; early math skills such as counting

What you need

Yarn; string; plastic string; pipe cleaners; cut straws; Cheerios; Fruit Loops; penne pasta; extra large beads



Thread It Through!

What to do

- Tie a knot in or tape the end of the yarn or string so items stay on.
- Use yarn, string, or pipe cleaners as thread and ask your child to put them through the holes in the cereal, pasta, straws, or big beads. Make patterns and count the items.

Tips

- Use beads with letters or numbers to help with reading and math skills.
- Start with larger items to thread, such as the pipe cleaners or stiff plastic thread.
- Help out by holding the yarn or string.
- Make a bracelet or necklace by tying off the pipe cleaner. Make a chain of Cheerios to hang outside for the birds.

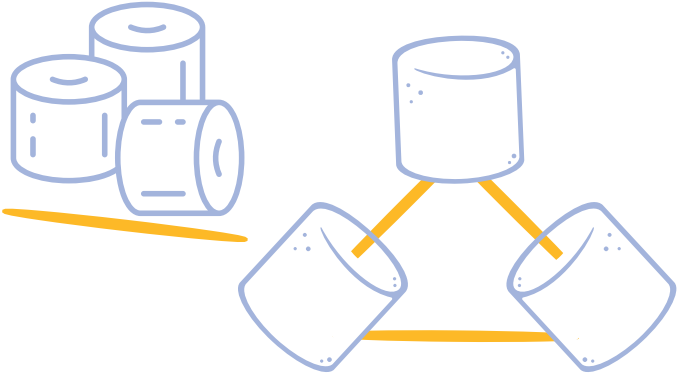
Make It With Marshmallows!

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; early math skills such as counting and adding and subtracting; understanding shapes and how they fit together

What you need

Toothpicks or uncooked spaghetti (full or broken in half); different sizes of marshmallows; a bowl



Make It With Marshmallows!

What to do

- Stick the toothpicks and/or pasta into the marshmallows and join them together to make shapes such as triangles, squares, and rectangles.
- Build a tower by putting various shapes together.

Tips

- Ask your child to try using all small marshmallows, all big marshmallows, or a mix of marshmallows and ask her if there is a difference.
- Make a few different three-dimensional shapes in advance as examples for your child. Talk about them.
- If your child doesn't want to make triangles or a tower, let her create something herself.

Playdough Playtime

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; imagination and creativity

What you need

Playdough and/or clay; cookie cutter shapes; child-safe scissors

Playdough Playtime

What to do

- Roll, pinch, flatten, and cut the dough. Use cookie cutters or store-bought Playdough tools. Roll long snakes and snip with scissors.

Tips

- You can make homemade playdough using a simple recipe found online. Invite your child to help.
- Show your child different ways to use other objects: drive small cars on a flat road of Playdough and study the marks the wheels leave; make a tree trunk and use real leaves to make a tree.

Playdough Letters

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

What you need

Playdough; playdough mat or placemat

Playdough Letters

What to do

- Show your child a letter, then make that letter with the playdough. Ask your child to make that letter. Repeat using different letters, numbers, and shapes.

Tip

- Ask your child to choose the letter or to make a letter and ask you to guess what it is.

Make a Playdough Scene

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; imagination and creativity

What you need

Playdough; plastic knives; Playdough mat or placemat; shells; other small props

Make a Playdough Scene

What to do

- Create a scene using Playdough and shells to create a beach or add construction signs and trucks to make a construction site.
- Use the plastic knives to shape the Playdough.

Tip

- Let your child set the scene based on his interests and experiences.

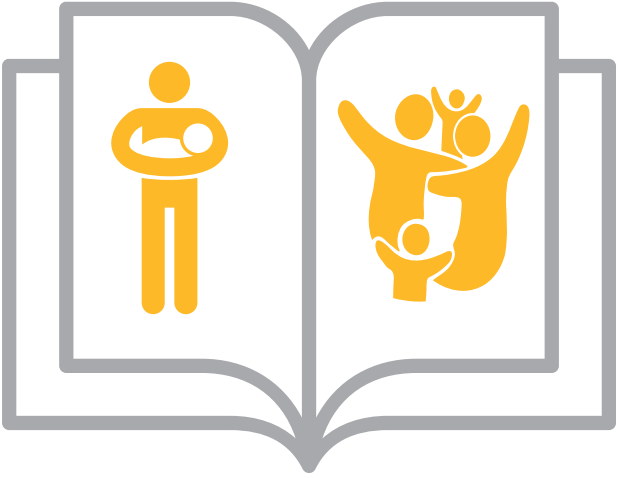
Make a Family Memory Book

How it helps

Reading, storytelling, and memory skills; helping your child feel happy to belong to her family and community

What you need

Child-safe scissors; printed photos; regular paper or construction paper; pen/pencil; glue



Make a Family Memory Book

What to do

- With your child, pick out photos of different family members, special events, or vacations. If the photos need trimming, ask your child to help cut them out.
- Use glue to stick the photo on paper. Together write out who is in the photo, what's happening, and why this is a special photo.

Tip

- Share stories of what or who is in the pictures, what the people were doing, and other things you remember. Was this a special family occasion? This is an opportunity to celebrate your child and family and share traditions and values. Children also love hearing about what you were like as a child.

Picture Grocery List

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; cutting skills; recognition skills and memory; building independence and self-esteem

What you need

Grocery store advertisements/flyers; child-safe scissors; glue; paper and/or paper plates

Picture Grocery List

What to do

- Cut out pictures of food and other items you want to buy at the store. Glue the pictures to paper to create a shopping list.
- Have your child cross off the items as you find them in the store. Name and count items.

Tips

- Have your child make a plan for dinner by cutting out pictures of food and gluing them to a paper plate.
- Get a second copy of a flyer from a neighbor or the store and make matching cards to play a simple memory game. (Place the cards out face down and turn them over one by one to try to make matches.)

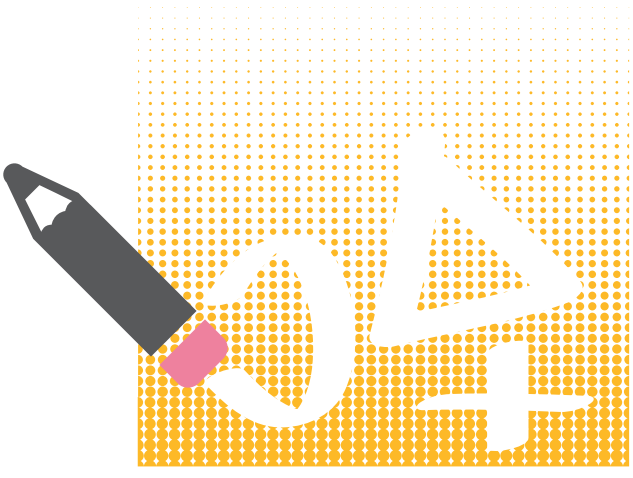
The Touching Tray

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

What you need

A tray or cookie sheet; salt and/or sand; food colouring; Q-tips; popsicle sticks; paint brush; pencil



The Touching Tray

What to do

- Cover the tray or cookie sheet with a thin layer of salt or sand. Have your child draw shapes and letters in the salt or sand with his finger, stick, eraser end of a pencil, etc.
- Start over by shaking the tray lightly and making a fresh blank canvas.

Tips

- Use the food colouring to change the colour of the salt or sand.
- Make a maze and find your way out.
- Make designs with lines then move on to shapes and letters. Letters like H and L are easier than B or R. It may help if you tell your child that a b, for example, is a line and a half-circle.

Scissors Practice

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; early printing skills; stronger grip

What you need

Child-safe scissors; various types of paper; pencil

Scissors Practice

What to do

- Get your child to cut out shapes from different types of paper – newsprint, construction paper, cardboard, etc. Draw straight lines, zig zag lines, and curvy lines on the paper and ask your child to cut along the line.

Tips

- Your child might get frustrated opening and closing the scissors. Make sure you have good quality, child-sized scissors. And left-handed scissors for left-handed children.
- Start scissors practice by cutting Playdough, then try paper with no set lines. Encourage your child to cut thin strips around the edges.
- Put your hand gently over hers to help her open the scissors as she cuts or hold the paper for her.

Squishy Bag Letters

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

What you need

Clear hair styling gel; zippered plastic sandwich bag; flash cards with a letter written on each one

Squishy Bag Letters

What to do

- Fill the plastic sandwich bag with clear hair gel.
- Place the bag on top of one flash card. Have your child say the letter and trace the letter with his finger.

Tips

- Talk about what the gel bag feels like – squishy, soft, gooey.
- Ask your child to trace other shapes or make his own creation.

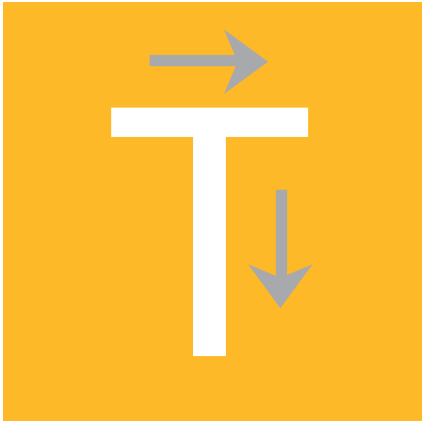
Pipe Cleaner Letters

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; recognizing letters; early printing skills

What you need

Pipe cleaners; flash cards with a letter written on each one (letters with direction arrows to show your child how to trace them)



Pipe Cleaner Letters

What to do

- Place the letter on a table. Use pipe cleaners to make the shape of the letter, following the arrows.

Tips

- Start with letters that are easy to make, such as capital I or O; later move to letters with more difficult shapes, such as S and G.

Large Muscle Skills (Gross Motor)

Play doesn't have to cost money.
Use what you already have in your home or outdoors.

Balancing Fun

How it helps

Balance, by standing on one foot, walking on tip toes, jumping, kicking

What you need

Tape and/or sidewalk chalk

Balancing Fun

What to do

- Use the tape or sidewalk chalk to create a pretend balance beam on the floor or on the ground outside. (You're making two parallel lines about eight inches (20 centimetres) apart to make a path to walk along. Pretend your path is up in the air.)
- Take turns moving along the line by walking forward and backward; walking on tip toes; hopping; or moving sideways.
- Stand on one foot then on the other. Kick with one foot, then the other.

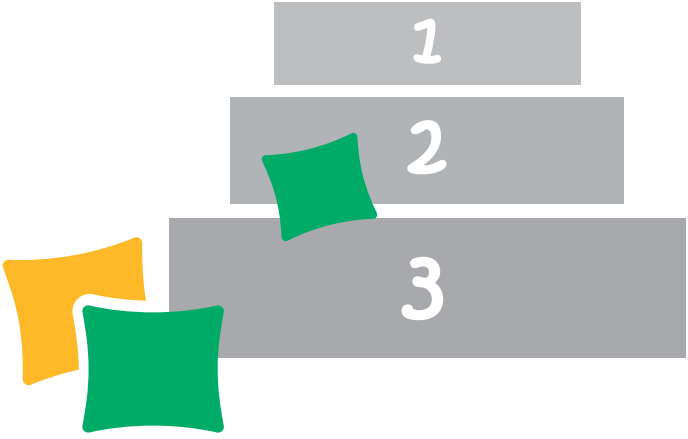
Bean Bag Toss

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; balance; throwing; catching

What you need

Bean bags; paper; pencil or coloured markers; pots or buckets



Bean Bag Toss

What to do

- Label your stairs with numbers or colours and ask your child to throw the bean bags to land on each step. Try to land on the stairs in order going up or down, or in groups of colours.

Make it harder

- Throw the bean bags in a pot or bucket. Have different coloured containers to match different coloured bean bags.
- Throw them to each other or throw them up in the air and catch them yourself.
- Balance a bean bag on your elbow, knee, and head.

Tip

- Clear the area of anything you don't want knocked over.

Bubble Catch

How it helps

Controlling breathing; controlling hand muscles; tracking movement with eyes; understanding the environment

What you need

An open area free of dangerous obstacles to walk or run after bubbles; a soap bubble-blowing toy; bubbles liquid

Bubble Catch

What to do

- Blow bubbles for your child and encourage her to try to catch the bubbles. Try catching the bubbles on a wooden spoon.
- Let your child have a turn blowing the bubbles while you try to catch them.

Tip

- Your child might be disappointed when the bubbles burst or they don't catch them. Praise her as she catches them and encourage her to keep trying.

Bunny Hop

How it helps

Balance; ease of movement; coordination; communication skills such as following instructions; playing nicely with others

What you need

An open outdoor space on grass or dry pavement; rope, string, or ribbon to mark a starting line in the grass or chalk to mark a starting line on pavement

Bunny Hop

What to do

- Talk with your child about rabbits. How do they move? Show your child how to hop like a rabbit. Feet should be shoulder-width apart. Keep your hands held up in front of your stomach or chest. Take off with both feet and land with both feet. Play “Follow the Leader” while hopping, and take turns being the leader.

Make it harder

- Create a starting line, then see who can hop the farthest with just one big hop.
- Have a relay race with teams. Create a starting line and place markers a few metres away. Each player has to hop around the marker and return to the start before the next one can go.

Tip

- Change the animal. Try crawling like a lion or a crab, or using your arms to flap like a bird.

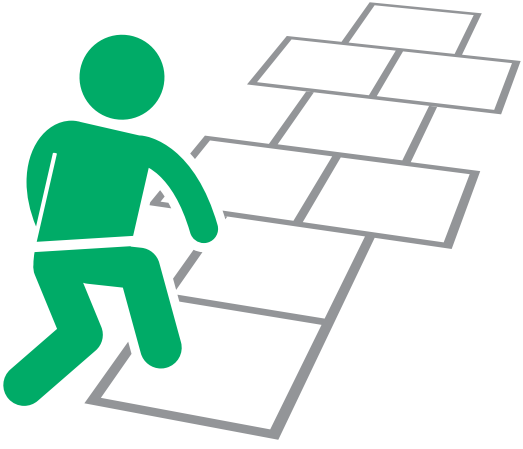
Hopscotch

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; balancing; jumping; throwing; playing nicely with others

What you need

Sidewalk chalk; painter's masking tape; a small stone, sock, or piece of crumpled paper to use to mark your spot



Hopscotch

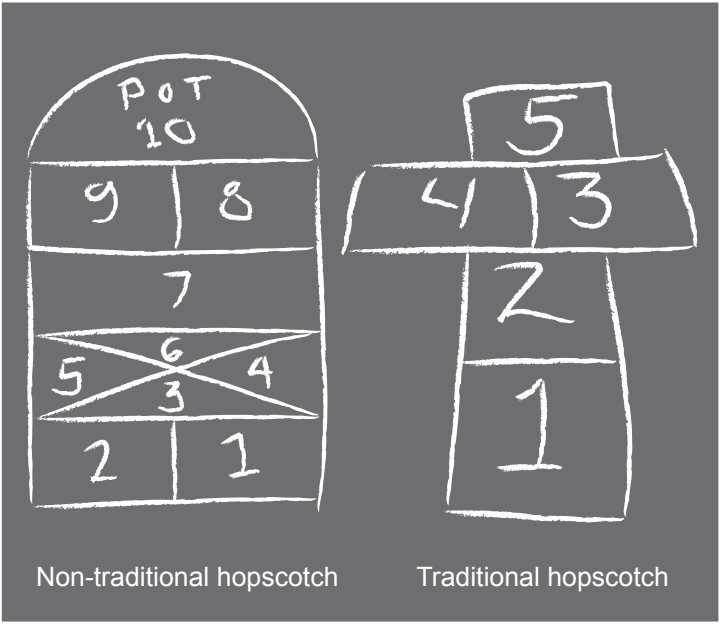
What to do

- Create a hopscotch game outside (with the chalk) or inside (with the tape). Toss your marker ahead onto the hopscotch; hop to the end and back, skipping the square your marker landed on.
- Play traditional hopscotch with numbers or use shapes, colours, or letters.

Make it harder

- Draw an unusual pattern that encourages your child to move diagonally or make extra big jumps.

Hopscotch


POT
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
5
4
3
2
1
Non-traditional hopscotch
Traditional hopscotch

Cuddle and laugh with your child.

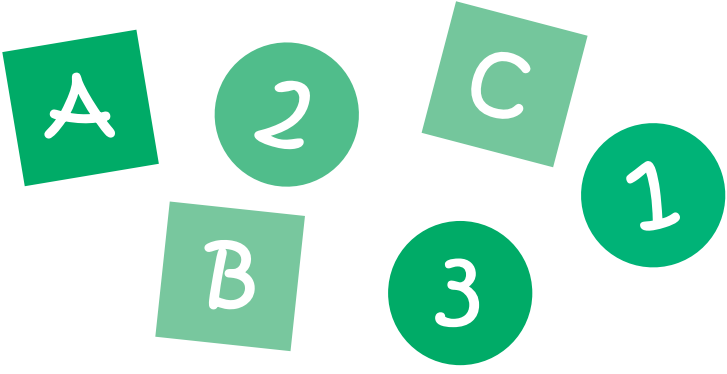
Scavenger Hunt

How it helps

Physical development; early reading and math skills such as recognizing letters and numbers; problem-solving

What you need

Plastic letters and numbers, or letters and numbers written on cards; an answer sheet; pencil or marker



Scavenger Hunt

What to do

- Set out letters or numbers for your child to find throughout the house. When he finds one, have him match it to his answer sheet and mark it off as found.

Make it harder

- Once your child is ready, ask him to find items of a certain colour, shape, or size.

Tip

- Do a few letters or numbers each day. You don't need to do the whole alphabet at once.

Scavenger Hunt

Scavenger Hunt Answer Sheet	
Letters	Numbers
A	1
B	2
C	3
D	4
Something blue	
Something square	
Something big	

Go outside and explore together.

Move to the Music

How it helps

Physical activity through dancing, jumping, hopping, and marching; communication skills, such as listening to words in songs and following instructions in songs ("the people on the bus go up and down…")

What you need

Scarves, long ribbons, or flags; shakers; pots and wooden spoons

Move to the Music

What to do

- Put on music and move to the rhythm. Play different types of music – fast, slow, marching bands, classical. Run, walk, hop, march, glide. Clap to the beat.
- Use scarves, ribbons, or flags to move to the music.
- Make your own music by drumming on pots with wooden spoons.

Tip

- Make your own shakers. Try putting different things (pasta, rice, Lego) in plastic containers with lids.

Paper Plate Skate

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; balancing; understanding the environment

What you need

Paper plates

Paper Plate Skate

What to do

- Grab a couple of paper plates; step on them, and (carefully) skate around the house on hard floors.

Tips

- Involve the whole family.
- You may want to hold your child's hand during her first attempts. Stay away from any furniture with sharp edges.

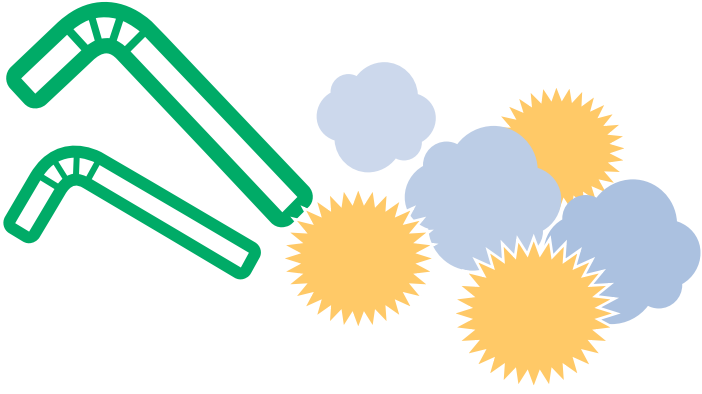
Pompom Race

How it helps

Hand eye coordination; controlling breathing; social skills such as teamwork, taking turns, and managing winning and losing

What you need

Straws; pompoms; cotton balls; some way of marking a finish line (tape or a line on a paper)



Pompom Race

What to do

- Blow through the straw to move the pompom or cotton ball along a track. You can do this across a table or along the floor or ground outside. First one to the finish line wins!

Tips

- Work as a team to get it across the line in the least amount of time.
- Make a maze to move through.
- Talk about how to win and lose with grace. Help your child understand sometimes we win and sometimes we lose.

Tiger Tail

How it helps

Physical activity and developing agility; balancing; running quickly

What you need

An open outdoor space on grass or dry pavement, free of sharp obstacles or falling hazards; scraps of colourful fabric (50 to 100 cm/a few feet long); pictures of various big cats (lions, tigers)

Tiger Tail

What to do

- Show your child pictures of big cats such as tigers, lions, leopards, and cheetahs. Explain that the two of you will pretend to be big cats.
- Tuck one end of the fabric into the back of your child's pants and explain that this is his "tail." Say "I'm going to get your tail!" and encourage him to run away. Chase your child and snatch his tail.
- Change roles and tuck the fabric into your own pants, and then encourage your child to chase you. Make "big cat" noises as you play.

Tip

- Create "safe zone" places where you are not allowed to grab tails. Tell your child to run from one safe place to another without having his tail snatched. You can "prowl" around at a distance and give him the opportunity to decide whether or not to run.

Toddler Climb

How it helps

Physical activity and developing agility; balancing; coordination; building strength

What you need

Indoors: staircase, sofas, large chairs, beds, cushions, pillows. Outdoors: simple climbing obstacles such as benches and garden walls, or structures at the playground.

Toddler Climb

What to do

- Encourage your toddler to climb obstacles that are free of sharp edges. Be ready to catch her if she loses her balance, her footing, or her hand grip. Don't allow her to climb too high or out of reach. Use encouraging words, not words that will make her fearful. Lift her down from any place where you feel she is at risk.
- Indoors, have your child climb the stairs or climb onto beds and sofas. You can also create a climbing/crawling obstacle course using sofa cushions and pillows.
- Outdoors, your child can climb park benches, garden retaining walls, logs, and low playground equipment designed for toddlers.

Tip

- If your toddler needs encouragement to climb, place one of her favourite toys on top of an obstacle in full view, or move to climb the obstacle yourself and encourage her to climb with you.

Reading and Learning (Literacy)

Enjoy time together. Build a pillow fort, play board games, or read a book.

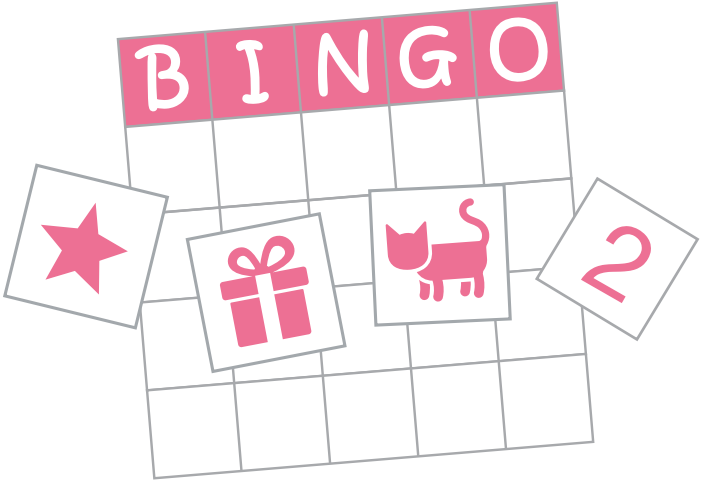
BINGO!

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; focus; counting; adding and subtracting.

What you need

Paper; stickers, a bingo dabber, or markers; smaller pieces of paper to use as cards



BINGO!

What to do

- Draw a grid on a sheet of paper, 5 squares across and 5 squares down. Write B I N G O across the top row, with one letter in each square.
- Draw different letters, numbers, or shapes, filling all the remaining squares.
- Make one card to match each symbol you've drawn and put the cards in a bowl.
- Together with your child, choose a card from the bowl. Using a sticker, bingo dabber, or marker, find the matching symbol on the grid and cover it. Repeat until you have BINGO. (BINGO could be one straight line of covered symbols, or the whole card filled.)

Tip

- Make the BINGO card personal to your family with symbols chosen by your child.

BINGO!

B	I	N	G	O
		A		3
		D		2
		B		4
		C		1

Follow your child's lead during play.

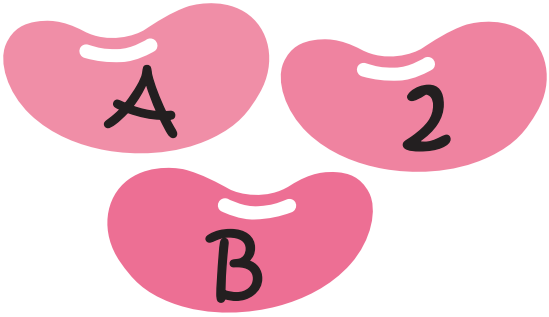
Full of Beans

How it helps

Early reading skills such as matching letters to sounds and knowing the order of the alphabet; early math skills such as recognizing numbers, ordering them, and counting.

What you need

Permanent marker; light-coloured beans; a basket or bowl.



Full of Beans

What to do

- Write a letter on each bean. Place them in the basket. Ask your child to pull out a bean and say the letter.
- Write numbers on the beans. Play "I Spy." "I spy with my little eye…the number 4." Your child finds the right bean.

Make it harder

- With your child, arrange the letters to spell words such as "dog" and "sun." Spell your child's name.
- Arrange the beans in the order of the alphabet, continuing to ask your child, "What comes next?"
- Play simple math games. "What do two beans plus one bean make?"

Tip

- Early on, use only a small number of beans until your child starts remembering the names of letters and numbers.

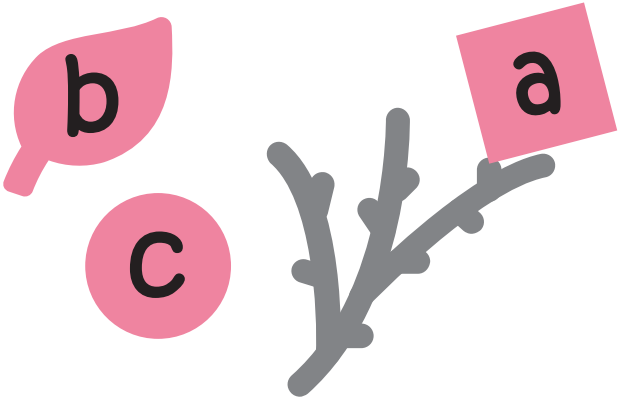
Make an Alphabet Tree

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing letters; early math skills such as recognizing numbers and counting; hand-eye coordination.

What you need

Construction paper in brown and green (or fall leaf colours); ruler; markers; scissors; glue stick.



Make an Alphabet Tree

What to do

- Help your child come up with shapes to form a tree. A large rectangle could be the tree trunk, smaller rectangles could be the branches, and circles, diamonds, or triangles could be leaves.
- Draw and cut out the shapes.
- For the leaves, cut out 26 shapes, at least as big as a coin.
- Glue the shapes onto a piece of paper to form the tree and let it dry.
- Work with your child to write each letter of the alphabet on the leaves.
- Have your child practice saying the name of the letter and the sound it makes.

Tip

- While doing this art project, read a related book, such as The Alphabet Tree by Leo Leonni or Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault.

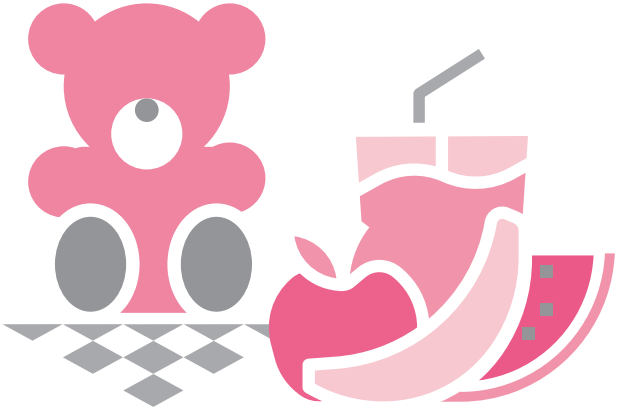
Time for a Picnic!

How it helps

Social and emotional development through taking turns and using imagination; early math skills; learning about healthy eating.

What you need

A blanket; a light meal or snacks; plates; utensils; a basket; pillows; books; stuffed animals or dolls.



Time for a Picnic!

What to do

- Place the picnic blanket on the floor.
- Prepare some light food that is easy to eat, such as cut up fruit and vegetables, crackers and cheese or hummus, sandwiches, and drinks. Pack the food in a basket if you have one.
- Sit down and enjoy a picnic together!

Tips

- Use this time to talk to your child about her favourite things or her day, or read a book or tell a story.
- This is a great activity for a rainy or winter day. In summer, take it outside.
- Have your child help plan the picnic, wash the vegetables, count the plates, etc.
- Invite stuffed animals or dolls to the picnic.

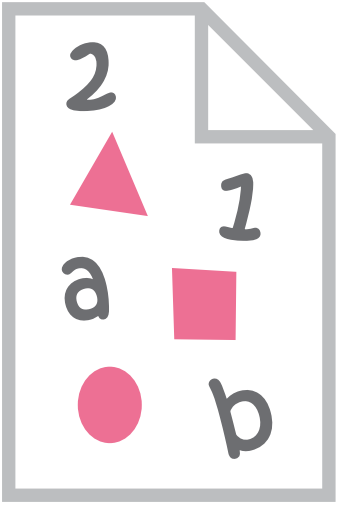
Seek and Stick!

How it helps

Early reading and math skills such as recognizing letters, numbers, and shapes

What you need

A sheet of paper; markers, stickers, or a bingo dabber



Seek and Stick!

What to do

- Draw a few different shapes, letters, or numbers on the paper. Start by using 3 or fewer of the same symbols (all letters or all numbers).
- Hand your child a marker, sticker, or bingo dabber, and ask him to find all the As, all the triangles, or all the number 1s, for example. Once he finds one, he can circle it, put a sticker on it, or dab over it.

Make it harder

- As your child grows more confident, add more shapes, letters, or numbers.
- Practice counting and do math. Ask your child to count all the number 3s on the page, or add up all the number 2s.

Come on Back, Letters!

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing letters, matching letters to sounds, learning the order of the alphabet, and making simple words; communication skills; when using numbers, early math skills

What you need

Magnetic letters and a magnetic board (or use your fridge or dishwasher)

Come on Back, Letters!

What to do

- Lay out the letters in the order of the alphabet.
- Ask your child to find certain letters, or a letter that begins a certain word or ends a word. She removes the letter and hides it from view.
- Make up a sentence using the letter name and sound the letter makes and call for the letter to come back to the board. “Let B bounce back to the board!” Have your child repeat your sentence and put the letter back.

Make it harder

- Find something in the house that begins with the same letter you removed.

Tips

- Early on, use only a small number of letters.
- Try using numbers. Remove the number then find a matching number of objects in the room.

My Alphabet Book

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing letters and words; language development

What you need

Construction paper; glue stick; child-safe scissors; markers; hole punch; stickers; magazines, newspapers, and/or pictures printed from your computer; yarn or a stapler to keep book together

My Alphabet Book

What to do

- Have your child pick 26 pages of construction paper. Write one letter of the alphabet at the top of each page.
- Use magazines, newspapers and photos. Starting with A, ask your child to look for pictures or words that begin with A.
- Help print a large A on the page. Glue on photos and words. Repeat for all letters.
- Put the 26 pages in order from A to Z. Decorate a cover and help your child add a title and his name. Staple the pages or use a hole punch and yarn.

Tips

- For tougher letters, like X, help your child by finding pictures on the computer.
- Try making similar books with different themes: animals, food, vehicles, nature, words, etc.

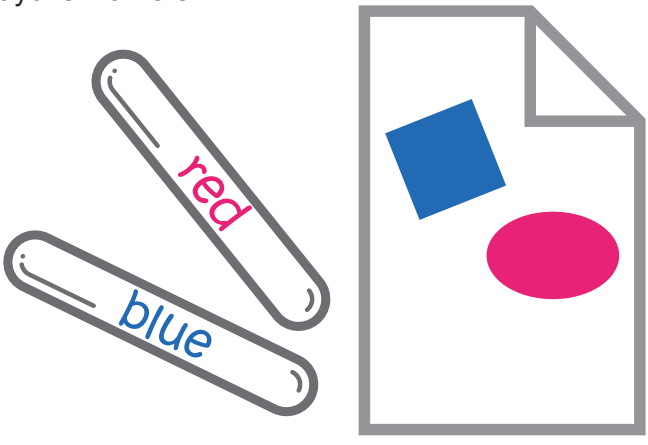
Match the Sticks

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing letters and words; early math skills such as learning shapes and numbers

What you need

Popsicle sticks; markers to label popsicle sticks; construction paper or paper coloured with crayons/markers



Match the Sticks

What to do

- Write the name of a different colour on each popsicle stick. Colour names should match the colours of your paper.
- Cut a shape from the coloured paper (circle, square, or a popsicle shape). Write the name of that colour on the shape.
- Ask your child to match the paper colour with the correct popsicle stick.

Tip

- Use the same idea and try matching numbers with written words (1 and one).

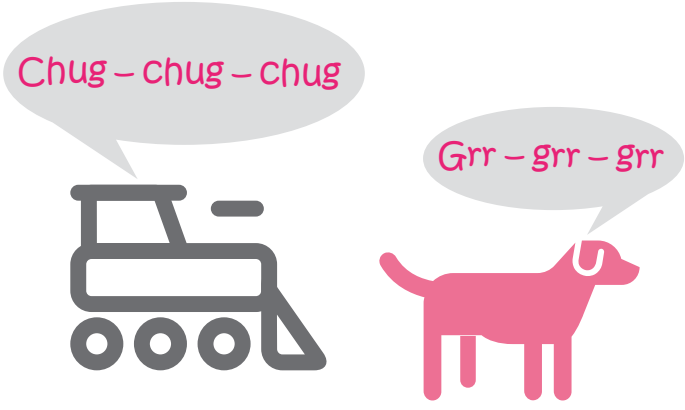
Sights and Sounds

How it helps

Early reading skills; communication skills; listening skills; memory skills; using imagination; paying attention and focusing

What you need

Nothing. You can use toys, books, or items around the house or outdoors as ideas for words and sounds.



Sights and Sounds

What to do

- Say a word to your child and ask him to make the sound. “What sound does a dog make?” Child says, “woof,” “grr,” or “bark.”
- Repeat using different words. Animals: from the farm, wild animals, pets, birds, frogs, insects, dinosaurs. Vehicles: a car, truck, firetruck, train, boat, spaceship. Nature sounds: rain, wind, water dripping, thunder, splashing in a puddle. Emotions: someone who is happy, sad, angry. Funny or imaginary sounds: a musical instrument, a tickle monster, a dragon.

Tips

- Take turns. Let your child say words so that you can make sounds, too.
- Play while waiting in line, or in the car.
- Keep introducing new words.

Let's Spell!

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing letters and matching letters to sounds; memory skills

What you need

Strips of paper, some long, some short; child-safe scissors; pencil or marker. Use thick paper (card stock or a cereal box) if you have it.

Let's Spell!

What to do

- Write your child's name or a word on a long strip of paper.
- Write a single letter on each short strip (letters that match the letters in the name or word you chose).
- Give your child the letters that make up the name or the word. Ask her to match the single letters to the word on the long strip. She can place the letters on top.

Make it harder

- Have your child arrange the letters without using the long strip.
- Try uppercase letters (SAM) and lowercase letters (Sam).
- Use the name of family members and friends.

Tip

- Make the letters large enough to handle easily.

Rhyme Time

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing words that sound alike; developing language skills; memory skills; following directions

What you need

This rhyme/song: “Teddy Bear Teddy Bear says touch your toes. Teddy Bear Teddy Bear says touch your nose.”

Rhyme Time

What to do

- With your child, say the rhyme and do the actions.
- Change the words to rhyme other body parts or actions (hips and lips; skin and chin; make a frown and sit down; reach for the sky and wave goodbye)

Make it harder

- Tell your child to do the action ONLY if he hears "Teddy Bear Says" first. Practice slowly then speed up.

Tips

- Change the words to another animal or person, such as "Green Gecko says."
- Visit your library and read a book about Teddy Bears or write a story about a Teddy Bear. It's ok if it just looks like scribbles! Ask your child to tell you the story.

What is in My Bag?

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing words that sound alike; listening skills; language skills

What you need

A bag with a drawstring and objects found around the house or outdoors

What is in My Bag?

What to do

- Hide an item in the bag. Say to your child, “What is in my bag? It starts with ___.” Or try, “It rhymes with ___.”
- Have your child guess what the item is. Take turns.

Tip

- Expect lots of guesses. Add more clues when needed.

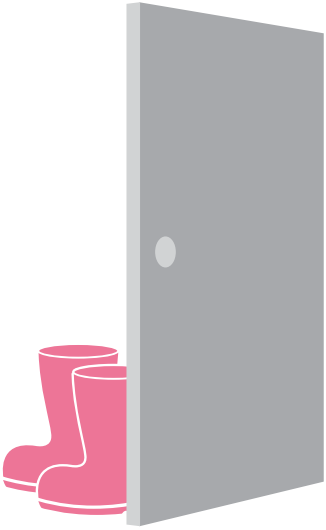
Tell Me Where

How it helps

Developing language skills; memory skills; social skills such as taking turns; paying attention and focusing

What you need

Nothing needed



Tell Me Where

What to do

- Ask your child questions and get her to point to or show you an object. “Where is your nose?” or “Where are your boots?”
- Repeat using different words. Body parts; clothing items; outdoor objects such as a tree, a cloud, a bird, a car, flowers, a bicycle, a plane flying; indoor objects such as your backpack, the fridge. Get your child to say different words and take turns playing.

Tips

- Play in the car or while waiting in line.
- Keep introducing harder words.

Guess the Letter

How it helps

Early reading skills such as recognizing letters and matching letters and sounds; memory skills; paying attention and focusing

What you need

Plastic zip sandwich bag; glitter; hair styling gel; food colouring

A = aah

Guess the Letter

What to do

- In the sandwich bag, mix the glitter, gel, and food colouring. This is your tracing pad.
- Using your finger, trace a letter on the bag. “What is the letter I am thinking of?” Offer clues. “This letter sounds like aah.” (A) “This letter sounds like yuh.” (Y)
- As your child gets more confident, say a letter and ask her to trace it on the bag. “Make a letter D.” “What word begins with the letter D?” Help when needed. “Letter D. Dog starts with D.”

Make it harder

- Trace the first letter or two of a word. Ask your child to guess the word. Offer clues. “We put them on our feet” (socks, shoes) “Hens lay them.” (eggs)
- Write the end of a word and have your child guess what the word is. (“_ _ e e” for tree)

Numbers and Learning (Numeracy)

Children learn best when they are free to explore, move about, use their imagination, and be curious about the world around them.

Let's Sort Cards!

How it helps

Early math skills such as recognizing numbers and counting; social skills such as cooperation and taking turns; language development

What you need

One deck of playing cards

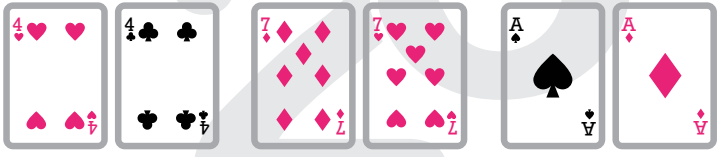
Let's Sort Cards!

What to do

- With your child, sort the playing cards into groups by common characteristics, such as by colour, number, or suit

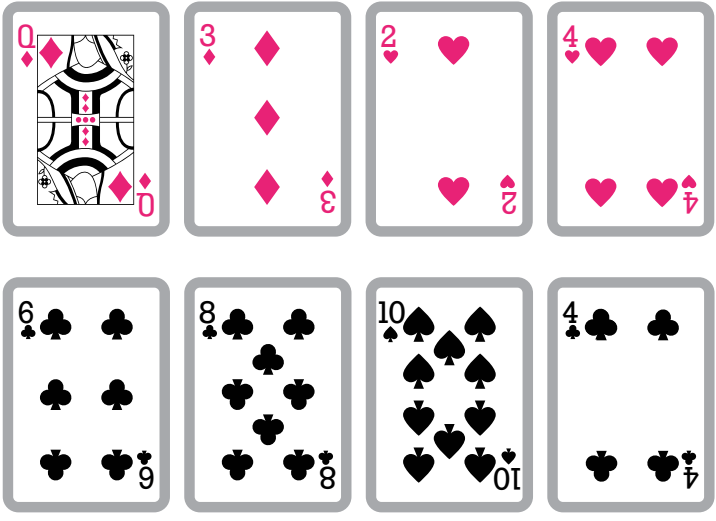
Tips

- Watch for when your child can recognize the number on the card without counting the symbols first.
- Encourage your child to sort in all the different ways.



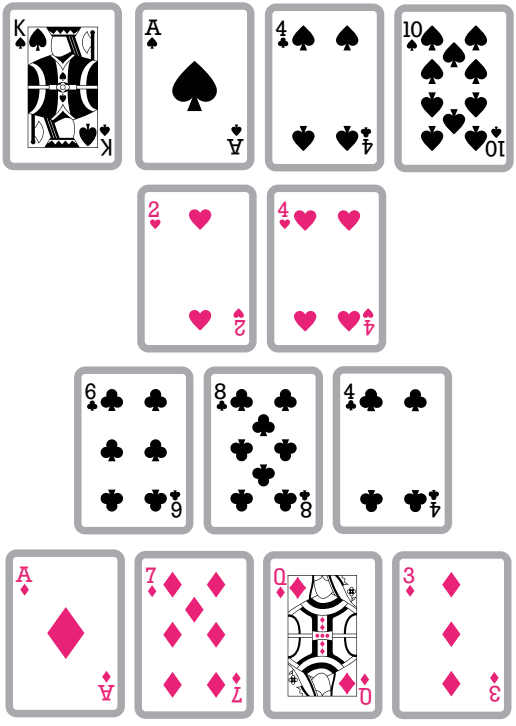
Sort by number

Let's Sort Cards!



Sort by colour

Let's Sort Cards!



Sort by Suit

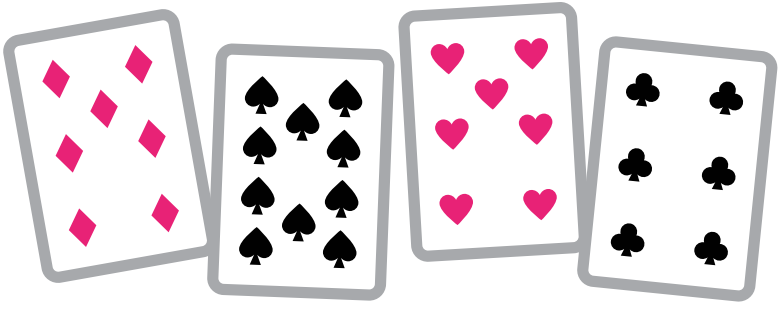
Greater or Less Than?

How it helps

Early math skills such as recognizing numbers and counting; social skills such as cooperation and taking turns; language development

What you need

Playing cards, just ace through number 10 – no face cards (Jack, Queen, King)



Greater or Less Than?

What to do

- You and your child each get a set of cards containing ace through number 10 (ace is 1).
- Have your child choose any card from her hand and place it facedown.
- Guess what the number on the facedown card is by selecting a card from your hand and placing it face up.
- Your child says whether her secret facedown card is greater than or less than the face up card. You keep guessing by showing different cards.
- Switch roles.

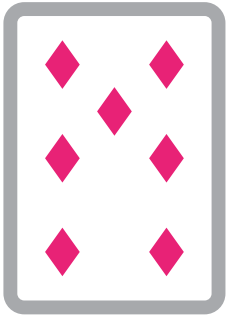
Tips

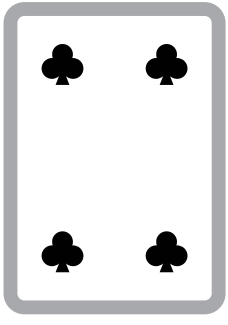
- Watch for when your child can recognize the number on the card without counting the symbols first.
- Encourage your child to “think out loud.” Model this during your turn. If you guess 6 and your child says less than, you can say “I know that 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are less than 6 so I am going to guess…”

Greater or Less Than?

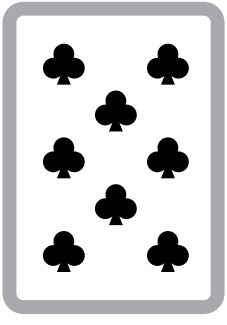
Connect
Play & Learn
Every Day!

Flip over
when correct

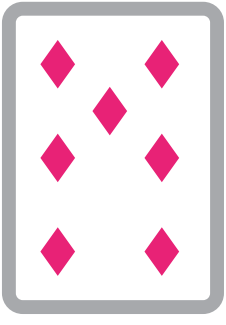




1st guess

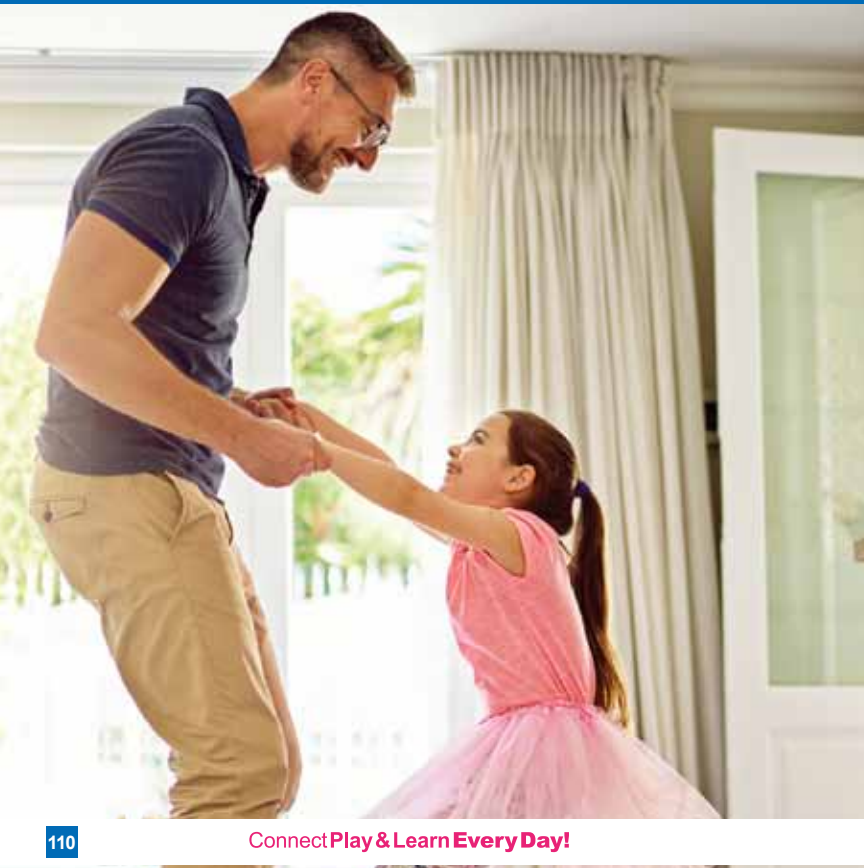


2nd guess



3rd guess

Make time for play everywhere, every day.



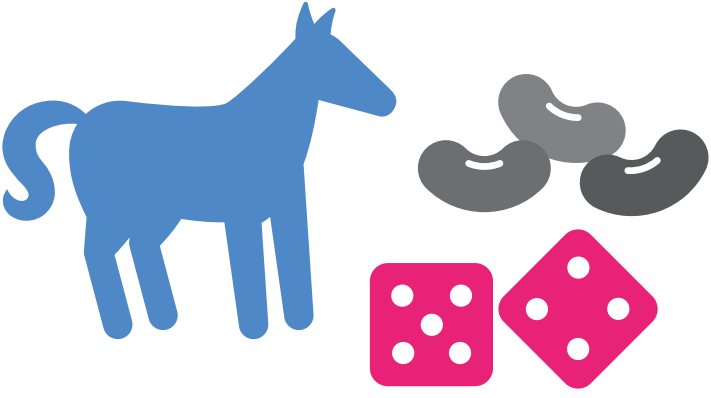
Horse Race

How it helps

Early math skills such as recognizing numbers and counting; social skills such as cooperation and taking turns; language development

What you need

Dice (2), a “horse” (a counter such as beans, beads, coins, or pompoms), horse race game sheet



Horse Race

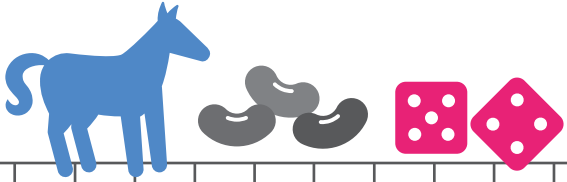
What to do

- This is a two-player game.
- Make yourself a game sheet like the one you see on the next page.
- Players take turns rolling the dice. Count the dots on each die and add them together.
- Place a counter (horse) in the column (lane) for that total number (the total of all the dots).
- Continue rolling until one horse reaches the finish line (the top of the game sheet). That's the winning horse.

Tips

- Watch for when your child can recognize the number rolled without counting the dots first.
- Guess which number will win; ask which number will never win (1 is not possible).
- Encourage your child to count out loud, beginning with the larger number; for example, if a 6 and a 2 are rolled, have your child count 6, 7, 8.

Horse Race Game Sheet



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Make chores and cleaning fun.

Make 10!

How it helps

Early math skills such as recognizing numbers and counting; social skills such as cooperation and taking turns; language development

What you need

Dice (1 or 2); paper and pencil to keep score

Make 10!

What to do

- This is a two-player game and the goal is to make 10 from the number rolled.
- Roll one die and try to be the first one to shout what number is needed to make 10. (If 3 is rolled, shout 7.)
- The number you add to make 10 is the player's score. (The player who shouted 7 gets 7 points.)

Make it harder

- If playing with two dice, try to be the first player to shout out the number that needs to be added or subtracted to make 10. (If 11 is rolled, shout 1.)

Tips

- Watch for when your child can recognize the number on the die without counting the dots first.
- Modify the game to use numbers other than 10.
- Encourage your child to count out loud, beginning with the larger number; for example, if a 6 and a 2 are rolled, have your child count 6, 7, 8…then 9, 10. “Two!”

Number Battle

How it helps

Early math skills such as recognizing numbers and counting; social skills such as cooperation and taking turns; language development

What you need

One deck of playing cards

Number Battle

What to do

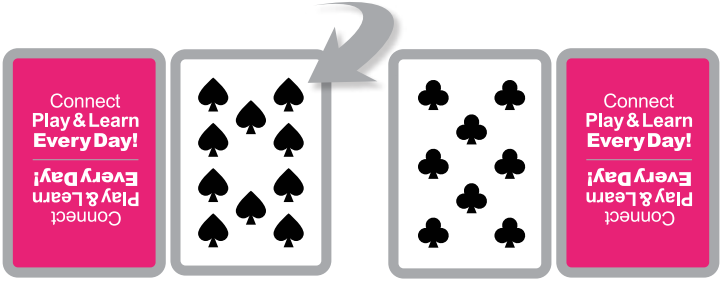
- This two-player game, commonly called “War”, helps children recognize large and small numbers. The winner is the one with the most cards at the end.
- Each player gets half the cards. Flip over one card each at the same time. Highest value card wins the pair. Ace is worth 1; Jack, Queen, King are worth 10.
- If the cards are the same value, lay three cards face down, then a new card face up. The new card with the highest value wins all the cards, including the face down cards. The one with the most cards wins.

Tips

- Watch for when your child recognizes the numbers without counting the symbols first.
- Encourage your child to think out loud. If your card is 5 and your child's is 9, say, "Nine is greater than 5, you win!”

Number Battle

The highest-value card wins the pair



Player 1: Value is 10

Player 2: Value is 8

The highest-value card wins the pair

Player 1: Value is 6

Player 2: Value is 9

You can build connection and help your child learn by making time for play anywhere.

Who is Taller?

How it helps

Early math skills such as recognizing numbers and counting; social skills such as cooperation and taking turns; language development; small muscle (fine motor) skills

What you need

Cloth measuring tape or rulers

Who is Taller?

What to do

- Measure the heights of family members, or toys or dolls. Teach your child how to read a measuring tape. Encourage her to write down the measurements.
- Ask your child, “Who is taller?” and “Who is shorter?”

The Number Match Wheel

How it helps

Early reading and math skills such as recognizing letters, numbers, and shapes and counting; gripping skills (pincer grip) helpful for learning to write

What you need

Thick paper (card stock or construction paper); marker; stars stickers if you have them; 10 clothes pins

The Number Match Wheel

What to do

- Copy the wheel onto thick paper.
- On each clothes pin, write a number from 1 to 10.
- With your child, lay them out in order, 1 to 10. Say the numbers as you count them.
- Without counting the stars on the wheel, talk about the parts of the wheel that have the most or least number of stars.
- Talk about the number 10 being a bigger number, with more value, than number 1.
- Count the number of stars in each section of the wheel and place the matching clothes pin onto that section. Once all placed, count while pointing to each number.

Tip

- Repeat, repeat, repeat to help your child learn!

The Number Match Wheel

Replace screen time with play time.

When children have routine, they are more likely to be happy and ready to learn.

Many thanks to the Our Kids Network Early Years Initiative North Central Oakville Committee, authors of the Connect Play & Learn Every Day! Activity Booklet.

Oakville Parent Child Centre, Csilla Fazekas-Gyulai
Oakville Parent Child Centre, Nikki Taylor
Halton Catholic District School Board, Jaclyn Priest-Brown
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, June Cockwell
Halton Children's Aid Society, Anastasian Shamoun
Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre, Michelle Knoll
Halton Region Public Health, Early Years Team, Lilly Sulug
Halton Region Public Health, School Years Team, Linda Lambert
Town of Oakville Recreation and Culture, Daniel Ridsdale
Halton Region Children's Services, Inclusion, Genevieve McMurdie
Halton Region Children's Services, Inclusion, Alison Corcoran
Our Kids Network, Early Years Initiative, Shawna Scale

Ontario Trillium Foundation / Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

HALTON KIDS Our Kids Network

Funding for the Our Kids Network Early Years Initiative provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.