Early Childhood

**Play Based Learning**

Complete the at home learning calendar and at least one additional lesson activity provided. Read to your child each day.

**Learning Calendar:** Complete the suggested activity on the calendar for each day. The calendar provides hands on activities to do with your child each day of the week. These activities incorporate all areas of children’s development and learning that are supported daily in the Early Childhood classroom setting.

**STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math:** The activities support how children naturally engage in inquiry, reasoning, and problem solving every day. The learning experiences and activities build children’s skills through nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions. This resource is obtained from the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center and National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning.

Read every day! All students can access student online databases for more books to read. See the informational flyer.
WHAT TO DO AT HOME

Talk and listen

1. When you do something together—eating, shopping, taking a walk, visiting a relative—talk about it.
2. Take your child to new places and introduce him to new experiences. Talk about the new, interesting, and unusual things that you see and do.
3. Teach your child the meaning of new words. Say the names of things around the house. Label and talk about things in pictures. Explain, in simple ways, how to use familiar objects and how they work.

PARENT TALK

“That’s a whale! It’s a great big animal, as big as a truck. It lives in the ocean.”
“This is a vacuum cleaner. We use it to clean the floor. See how it cleans up the spilled cereal?”

4. Help your child to follow directions. Use short, clear sentences to tell him what you want him to do.
5. Play with words. Have fun with tongue twisters such as “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers” and nonsense rhymes such as “Hey Diddle, Diddle,” as well as more modern nonsense rhymes.

Read together

1. Keep reading to your child. Read her a lot of different kinds of books. Reread her favorite books, even if you get tired of them before she does.
2. Read predictable books. Your child will begin to recognize the repeated words and phrases and have fun saying them with you.
3. Read poetry and other rhyming books to your child. When reading a familiar rhyme, stop before a rhyming word and ask your child to provide the word.
4. Ask your child what she thinks will happen next in a story. Get excited when she finds out whether her guess was right.
5. Talk about books. Ask about favorite parts. Help your child relate the story to his own life. Answer his questions about characters or events.
6. Build a library, or book collection, for your child. Look for books at bookstores, garage sales, used bookstores, and sales at the library. Suggest that people give books to your child as birthday gifts and on other special days.

Teach about print and letters

1. Help your child learn to recognize her name in print. As she watches, print the letters of her name, saying each letter as you write it. Display her name in special places in your home. Encourage her to spell and write her name.
2. Point out words and letters everywhere you can. Read street signs, traffic signs, billboards, and store signs. Point out certain letters in these signs. Ask your child to begin naming common signs and find some letters.
3. Teach your child the alphabet song.

(Continued on the back side of this hand-out.)
4. **Share alphabet books with your child.** Some alphabet books have songs and games that you can learn together.

5. **Put magnetic letters on your refrigerator or other smooth, safe metal surface.**

**PARENT TALK**

“Give me your hand, please.“
“Please take off your mittens and put them on the table. Then I’d like for you to bring me your jacket so that I can hang it up.“

Ask your child to name the letters as he plays with them.

6. **Play games using the alphabet.** Ask your child to find letters in books, magazines, newspapers, and other print.
Five Ways to Build Math into Your Child’s Day

Math is everywhere. That’s great news for parents, because we can talk with our kids about math in fun, natural ways. And that kind of math-talk is really important.

Studies show that a child’s math skills at kindergarten entry are a better predictor of future academic success than reading skills, social skills, or the ability to focus. As parents, we can give our kids a head start by helping them get comfortable with math concepts like measuring and counting at home.

Here are five ways to add math to your child’s day.

1. **Bake something together**

You can’t help but use math when you’re baking. Doubling recipes requires multiplying, halving a recipe requires dividing, and measuring a ½ cup or a ¼ teaspoon gets you working with easy fractions. At a more basic level, kids love counting out chocolate chips. (And so do the parents; we speak from experience!)

**Ask your child:** *How many chocolate chips do you think it will take to fill one cup? How many for 1/2 cup? Count together and see how close you came to the right answer!*

2. **Measure, count, and record**

Most kids love stopwatches, and watching the seconds tick by gives them opportunities to practice counting. Measure distances and heights. Count jumping jacks, push-ups, or consecutive kicks of a soccer ball.

**Ask your child:** *How far can you throw a ball? Take a guess, then throw the ball as far as you can and measure the distance. How many jumping jacks can you do in a minute? Try it! How many times can you jump rope or bounce a ball without missing? Count and see.*

3. **Build something together**

Big or small, any project that involves measuring includes counting, adding, and multiplying. It doesn’t matter whether you’re making a clubhouse out of shoeboxes or building a genuine tree house. Legos and other building toys are wonderful tools for incorporating both numbers and spatial thinking into playtime.

**Ask your child:** *How high can you build that stack of Legos? How many Legos do you need to stack to reach as high as the coffee table? Can you make a square? A rectangle? Other shapes? Talk about the shapes of whatever your child has created.*

*(Continued on the back side of this hand-out.)*
4. Plan dinner or a party

Whether you’re planning a party or just getting ready for a family dinner, there are plenty of math concepts involved. Have your child help set the table and count out the plates, napkins, and silverware. For a party, have your child help with the shopping. You know you’re going to have to do some math since all of those plates, balloons, and party favors are packaged in different quantities!

**Ask your child:** *How many plates, napkins, and forks do you need for dinner?*

*If you’re inviting 10 guests to a party, and the plates come 8 to a pack, how many packs are you going to need? How many are going to be left over?*

*If you’re not planning a party in the near future, get creative. Why not host a tea party for your child’s favorite stuffed animals?*

5. Mix in math to your bedtime reading

Most families read to their children at night. Why not add a math problem to the mix? Here’s one to try.

**Melt in Your Mouth**

No matter how much you love your favorite snack (apples, marshmallows, pound cake), it probably tastes even better dipped in something warm and gooey. That’s what you do when you eat fondue. You fill the fondue pot with cheese or chocolate, put it over a hot flame, and then dip pieces of food into the yummy meltedness using long skinny fondue forks.

It all started with cheese fondue in a Swiss recipe in 1699, but since then we’ve added meat fondue (where you carefully cook chunks of steak in hot oil) and, of course, chocolate fondue. But you have to pay attention while dipping: Some say that if you drop your apple slice in the pot, you have to kiss the person to your left.

**Ask your 3 or 4-year old:** *If you dip 2 apple slices and 3 banana slices into your fondue, how many pieces did you dip?*

**Ask your older child:** *If there are 2 people sharing cheese fondue and everyone wants 3 apple slices, how many apple slices do you need to serve?*

There are plenty of other ways to keep kids thinking about math—board games, stickers, and stargazing, to name a few. The important thing is just to encourage your child to see the numbers all around us and to keep things fun. This is how we’ll raise a next generation that thinks math is cool!

Laura Bilodeau Overdeck is a math-lover, mother of three, and founder of Bedtime Math Foundation, a new nonprofit that seeks to make math a fun part of kids’ everyday lives. Visit [www.bedtimemath.org](http://www.bedtimemath.org) for more math ideas to try at home.

Learning through play and games for preschoolers

All children are different, and they all have individual likes and dislikes when it comes to play. But preschoolers generally love the following kinds of learning through play:

- **Dramatic and pretend play**: preschoolers use games like dress-ups to act out confusing or scary scenarios, try out different roles like being a mom or a dad, and explore emotions.
- **Messy play**: play with paints, water, sand or dirt is a great outlet for children’s emotions. Children also enjoy exploring different textures, smells, colors and so on.
- **Physical play**: jumping, running, kicking balls and climbing over playground equipment teaches preschoolers about coordination and balance, and how far they can push their physical abilities.
- **Songs, books, riddles and silly rhymes**: these help to improve your child’s language and vocabulary. You’ll get to see the funny side of your preschooler’s personality through these activities!
- **Sorting games**: activities like sorting blocks, buttons or pegs help to build basic math and numeracy skills – just make sure to pack away small objects after play to avoid choking hazards.
- **Simple board games**: these kinds of games give preschoolers a chance to learn about taking turns, following the rules, counting and playing fair. Although turn-taking can be a challenge for children, with practice your child can learn to enjoy this type of play.
- **Rough-and-tumble play**: this kind of play gives preschoolers the chance to test out strength, space and social relationships. But play is meant to be fun – if a child is being bullied, forced or hurt, it isn’t play anymore. You can teach your child that when another child says ‘stop’, the game needs to end.

Your child needs plenty of time for unstructured play. This is play that just happens, depending on what takes your child’s interest. Sometimes it might be something active like dancing. Other times it might be quietly sorting blocks by herself. Structured music or gym classes can be fun, but your child mostly just needs time and a safe home environment to explore and play in.

**Preschooler play and games with others**

By **four years**, your child will be much more interested in playing with other children and making up games and rules together. He might be better at sharing and taking turns, but he’ll still need your support and encouragement.

At **five years**, children are much more aware of their place in the world and are keen to fit in with other children. In general, your child wants to follow the rules at home and at preschool or school.

Around this age preschoolers understand that other people have feelings too, and are beginning to develop empathy. This helps with preschooler friendships.

Family and home are still at the center of your child’s world, and you’re still the most important person in your preschooler’s life. That’s why play with you is still very high on the list of things your child wants and needs to do.

(Continued on the back side of this hand-out.)
Play ideas and games for preschoolers

All children are unique. They all have their own interests and ways they learn best. That’s why it’s important to follow your child’s interests when it comes to games for preschoolers.

Here are some play ideas to get you and your preschooler going:

- **Give your child a cardboard box.** Your child’s imagination can turn it into a cubbyhouse, a boat or a car. A small table turned on its side covered with a blanket or sheet can also be just as good.
- **Put together a dress-up box of old clothes,** shoes, handbags and other odds and ends: an old backpack transforms your child into an explorer. A towel makes a superhero. Both boys and girls have a lot of fun playing dress-ups.
- **Introduce new challenges.** By four and five years, your child might want to try activities like bike-riding and simple card or board games like ‘Snap’, dominoes or ‘Memory match’.
- **Read with your preschooler.** When reading favorite books, leave out words and let your preschooler fill them in. Point out individual letters and words. You can also ask your child what she thinks might happen next in an unfamiliar story.
- **Sort blocks** or other objects by color, size or texture (smooth, soft, hard or rough). Your child could also make repeating patterns – like red, blue, red, blue – using these objects. This can be fascinating play for young children.
- **Make up an art and craft box** for your child. You can fill it with pencils, crayons, glue, wool scraps, bits of different colored and textured papers, small cardboard pieces and other odds and ends. Many children enjoy making their own creations from these simple materials.
- **Let your child try lots of different playthings.** For example, your child might like playdough, sand, plastic containers or any household boxes with lids, plastic spoons and cups, kitchen pots and pans (with smooth edges), Duplo, simple puzzles, jigsaws and colored blocks.
- **Involve your child in simple household ‘chores’.** Let your child choose how he wants to help. But remember that it’s more important for your preschooler to pretend that he’s a grown-up than it is for him to get the job done.

**Screen time**

**Screen time** can be a fun, learning experience for your child. But it’s important to balance screen time with other activities that are good for your child’s development, like lots of face-to-face creative play or physically active time with you and other caregivers.

The latest guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggest that children aged 2-5 years should have no more than one hour a day of screen time with adults watching or playing with them.
**Activity BINGO**

As you and your child complete each activity, put an X on each box and a heart in each box for every story you read together.

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<td>Walk around the inside of your house and count the number of windows with your child. Now go outside with him/her and count again.</td>
<td>Discover with your child, how quickly and how slowly he/she can walk.</td>
<td>Find shapes in your home! Circle, square, triangle and rectangle!</td>
<td>With your child, find something to wear that is blue.</td>
<td>Have your child: X sit on a chair X walk up stairs X go into a bedroom X get into the bathtub Discuss words underlined with your child.</td>
<td>Give your child forks and spoons. Hold up a spoon. Have him/her find all the spoons.</td>
<td>Count your fingers. Have your child count his/her fingers.</td>
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<td>With your child, look for reasons to say, &quot;thank you.&quot;</td>
<td>Say the nursery rhyme, &quot;Humpty Dumpty,&quot; with your child.</td>
<td>With your child, count how long he/she can balance on his/her right foot; his/her left foot. Which foot can he/she stand on longer?</td>
<td>Label your child’s toothbrush, cup, and bedroom door with his/her name.</td>
<td>Listen to the sounds in your home with your child. Ask your child to name the sounds.</td>
<td>Have your child tear old newspapers into large and small pieces.</td>
<td>Explore your house with your child to find four purple items.</td>
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<td>Have your child help you bake cookies. Take turns with him/her adding ingredients and stirring. Talk about texture and color changes.</td>
<td>Search for circular items in the bedroom with your child.</td>
<td>Write the first letter of your child’s name on paper. Take the paper to the grocery store and find three things that begin with that letter.</td>
<td>Record how long your child can stand on each foot. How many times can they toss a ball in the air and catch it? Measure the distance your child can hop. Check these weekly in the spirit of fun.</td>
<td>Have your child help sort the laundry.</td>
<td>Does your child know his/her address, phone number, full name and parent/s'/parents’ full name? Make up a song or story to help him/her learn this information. Practice this all summer.</td>
<td>Encourage your child to draw a picture of a make-believe animal. What will they name it?</td>
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<td>Have your child point to body parts; i.e., point to his/her chin, jaw, ankle, heel, hip, wrist, etc.</td>
<td>Take a walk with your child. Tell stories as you walk together.</td>
<td>Count with your child how many times he/she can hop on one foot?</td>
<td>Play “Simon Says” with your child. Point to body parts as you play.</td>
<td>With your child, line up different-sized shoes from largest to smallest.</td>
<td>Sing the abc song!</td>
<td>Look at family photos or pictures from a newspaper or magazine with your child. Have him/her tell what is happening in each picture.</td>
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<td>Go outside with your child and ask what’s up in the sky and down on the ground…</td>
<td>Have your child walk backwards!</td>
<td>With your child, count how many people live in your home. Have him/her draw a picture to show each of them.</td>
<td>What words do you know that rhyme?</td>
<td>Have your child find objects taller and shorter than they are.</td>
<td>Play copy cat. Can you do the same thing that I do?</td>
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