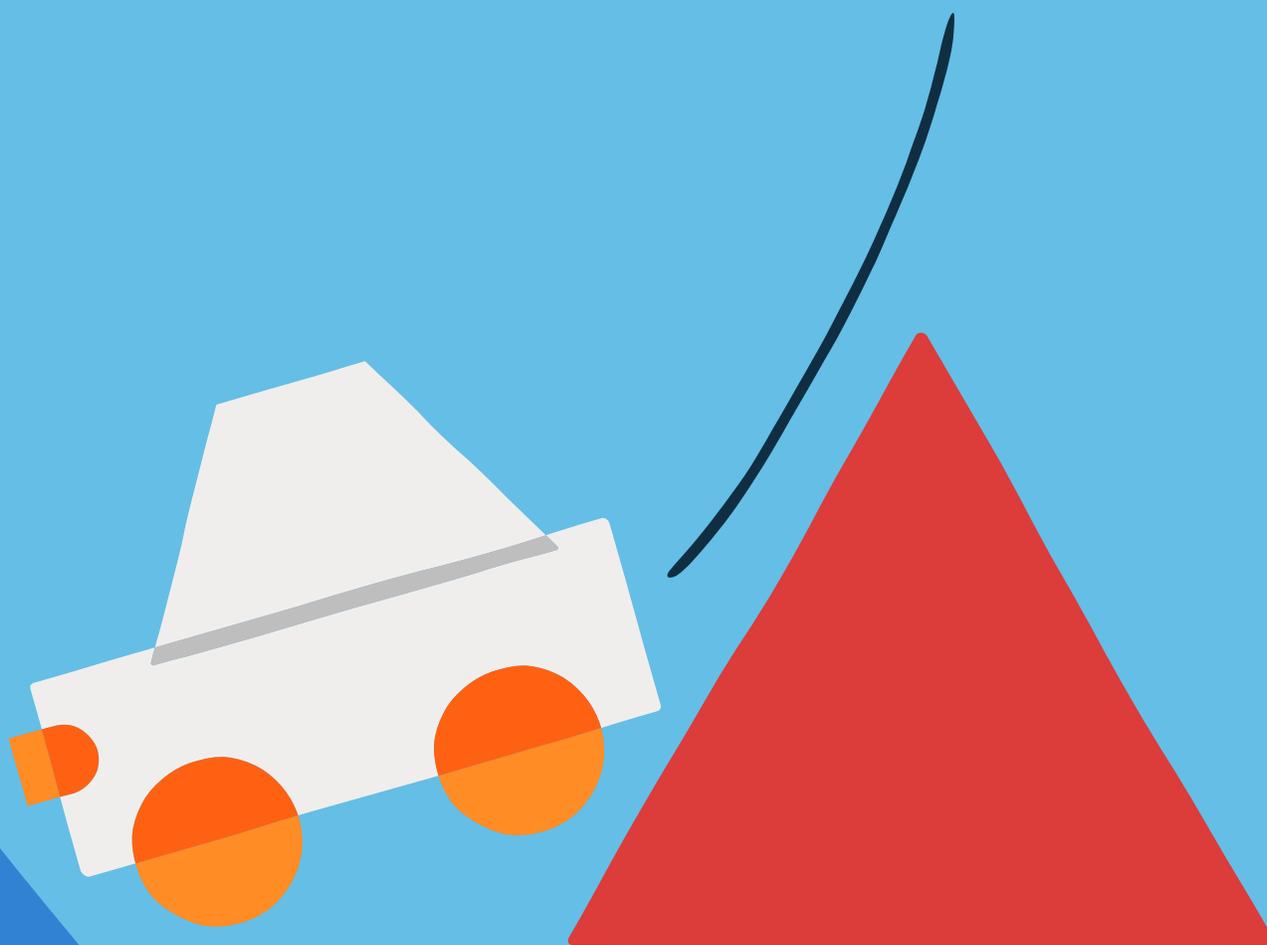


At Home Learning Guide for Preschoolers

(3 years old)

Week of April 6, 2020



This Week's Theme: In the Spring

[Getting Ready for the Week: Guidelines and Materials Prep](#)

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MONDAY

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TUESDAY

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WEDNESDAY

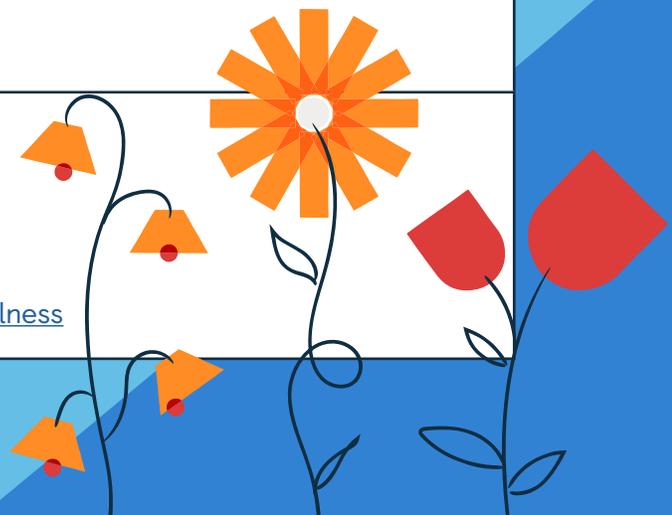
- [Cognitive Development Activity: Mud-Cake Math: Subtraction](#)
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THURSDAY

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- [Music Explorers Activity: Spring Landscapes](#)
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FRIDAY

- [Creative Expression Activity: Spring Trees](#)
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Getting Ready for the Week

This week in centers, children get to explore and discuss the signs of spring in their communities as well as in other regions of the country. This guide includes several experiences to help your child explore the spring season at home. Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind as you plan for these learning activities and the week ahead.

Our guide for preschool blends active experiences with more low-key lessons. We suggest ways to incorporate independent play within a daily schedule that offers children comforting routines by alternating between family activities and solo activities. And as always, the guide makes connection between everyday tasks like cutting sandwiches and zipping up jackets and educational areas like math and motor skills.

Our activities for this age group include:

- Tips on how to “Think Like a Teacher”
- Opportunities to work on social emotional learning, and we’ve even included some Learning Adventures content.
- How to incorporate age-appropriate screen time through apps, videos, etc.
- Self-directed learning activities for children.
- Tips on mixing it up by adding mindfulness to active activities and movement to more sedentary activities.



Materials to Gather for the Week

Gather these materials Sunday evening and put them in a basket or container so they are ready to go for the week!

- A selection of your child's clothing
- Birthday candles, 5 (small twigs, sticks, or craft sticks can be used instead)
- [Brown play dough](#)
- Number cards for the numerals 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Paper
- Pen or pencil
- Child-size scissors
- Collage materials, such as construction paper, tissue paper, and pompoms
- Glue
- Green and Growing [video link](#)
- [Winter Tree Sheet](#) (or sketch a simple leafless tree on paper, if you don't have a printer)
- Spring Landscapes [video link](#)
- Digital camera, iPad, tablet, or smartphone
- Recipe and ingredients for a meal to be eaten by your family, along with items needed to prep the meal
- [What's for Lunch Sheet](#)



How to Think Like a Teacher: Teacher Talk

From counting flower petals to answering your child's 1000th question of the day, your words can guide and inspire learning no matter where you are or what you're doing. Check out these resources to help you understand the impact that talking to your child has on their development and to help you find just the right words to keep the learning going.

From Cries to Conversations Check out [this video](#) to learn how even very young children are communicating with you and how you can communicate back to help them develop language skills, guide their behavior, and strengthen your relationship.

Counting Claps and Sorting Shapes: Talking Like a Teacher All Throughout Your Day

Your child never stops learning, even when it comes to subjects like math, language, and even science. These concepts might sound a bit on the academic side, but they're easy to work into your everyday routines with your child. Here are some examples:

Math: How many steps does it take to get from the couch to the sink to wash our hands? Which cup in the dishwasher is the biggest? What is under the table and what is on top of it? Your child's day is full of opportunities to talk about numbers, size, and position, along with other critically important foundational math concepts.

Language: Rhyming words in a song; Letters on the juice carton; Words that start with the same sound as your child's name: There are as many chances to talk about letters and language during your child's day as there are words in their favorite book. From exposure to sounds and letters for younger children to building vocabularies and book awareness for older ones, you can nurture your child's language development any time of the day.

Science: Problem solving is a foundational skill in scientific thinking, and you can encourage it in your child no matter how old they are. Does a fussy baby react to the sight of a bottle or a rattle? What color crayon does your child need to draw the sun? How can your preschooler move the laundry from the basket to the drawer? These everyday problem-solving tasks are the building blocks of scientific thinking and can happen anywhere, any time of day!

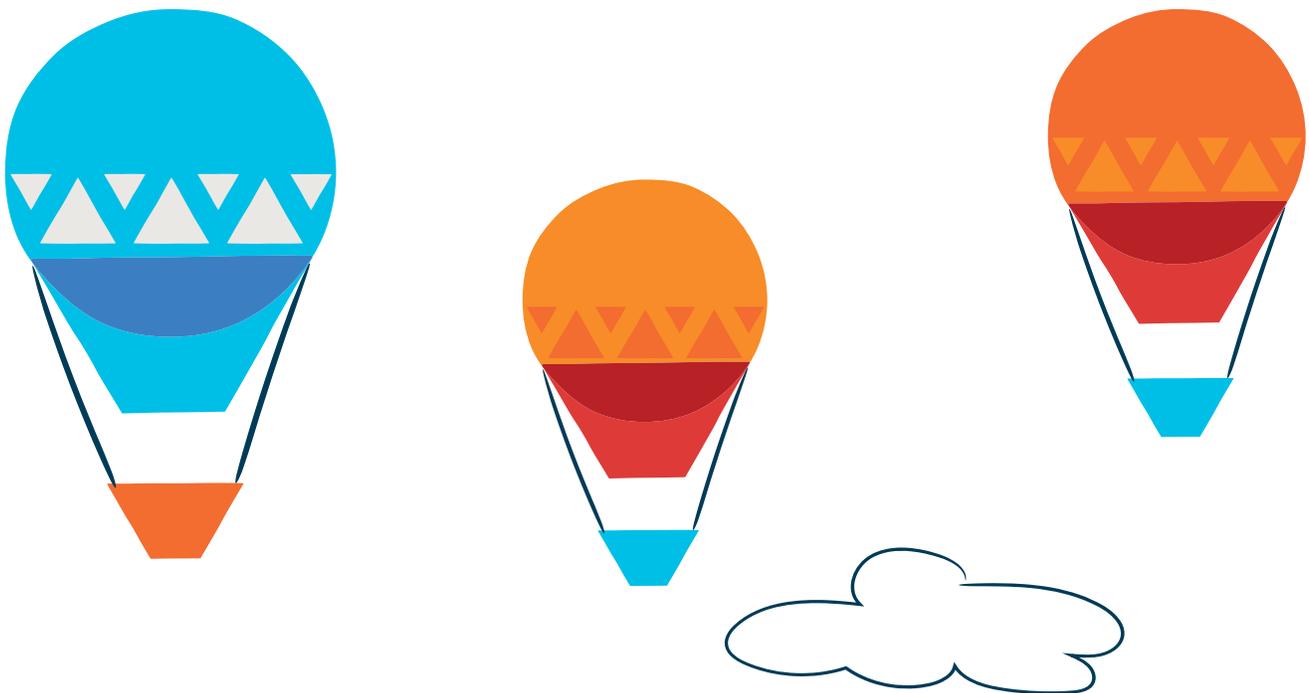
For more ideas on how to keep the learning going, look for the **Everyday Learning Experiences** described throughout this guide.



Tips for Talking to Young Children

- **Use positive statements.** Tell children what they CAN do, instead of what they can't.
- **Give simple instructions.** Too many instructions at once can be overwhelming and confusing.
- **Model "I" messages.** Use language that expresses your feelings and the reasons behind them.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Talk to children, not at them. Ask open-ended questions that allow children to explain their thought processes, and stay curious.
- **Offer choices you can live with.** Give children a choice whenever possible, but be ready to honor their decision.

Want even more great tips on talking to your child? Check out [this article](#) from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)





IN OTHER WORDS

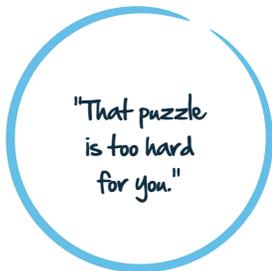
COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

Read the speech bubble. Then, rewrite the text so that it sends a clear, positive message, and encourages learning.



"You can walk to the bedroom. How many steps will it take to get there?"

"I see that you want to run. Let's go outside and run to the blue chair!"





Try It! Pick a developmental area where you want to encourage your child's growth, such as math, art, science, or language. Think of ways that you can build their skills in those areas throughout your daily routine. Can you combine more than one learning area in the same experience?



Nutrition and Wellness Tip of the Week

Meal Planning and Preparation

Does it feel like a good part of your day is spent engaged in meal planning, preparation, and clean-up, just to turn around and do it all over again? We know you are juggling full-time parenting with keeping your child learning, all while you may even be working from home. Here are some meal planning tips for your busy family.

Spend **5-10 minutes** each evening planning and doing some advanced prep for dinners, lunches, and snacks for the next three days. A few minutes spent planning and prepping each night will save you hours of time and headaches spent making meals and snacks for your family. Look through your pantry/cupboards and refrigerator and **write down** all the possible meal/snack combinations you can make with what you have on hand (this is also the time to update your shopping list). Recipes can be great for guidance, but they can quickly take you down a rabbit hole, robbing precious time. Think of ways you can incorporate three basic components – protein, vegetable, and fruit and grain – into one-pot meals like soups or casseroles.

For soups: Choose a protein, such as beans, meat/seafood, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, tempeh. Add vegetables, herbs and spices, broth or stock, and water. You can either add the grain to this soup (e.g., noodles) or you can serve a grain such as whole-wheat bread on the side. Soup is a fast, healthy meal option and a great way to use up fresh produce.

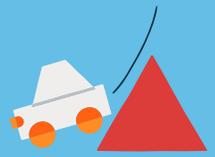
Casseroles: The same concepts as with soups apply here, but substitute a sauce for the broth or stock and bake the dish in the oven.

One-pot meals: Prepared in a slow cooker or instapot, these meals can save valuable time as well. Simply add all your components, such as frozen chicken breasts, a jar of salsa, corn, and rice or black beans to the pot, set your cooking time, and go.

For snacks, select foods from two food groups, such as a fruit or vegetable paired with a protein that contains healthy fats.

Some nutrient-rich examples:

- Apples and nut butter/sun butter
- Hard-boiled eggs and carrot sticks
- Vegetable sticks and, hummus
- Whole-grain bread/crackers with hummus, nut butter, or avocado
- Unsweetened yogurt with fruit
- Turkey slices and cucumber
- Beans and tortilla (for a tasty treat, sprinkle with cheese and broil for four, minutes)



Monday, April 6, 2020

Physical Development and Wellness Activity: Animal Moves

Length of activity: 10-15 minutes

What your child is learning: In addition to learning about baby animals born in the spring, your child is exploring body movements, moving in creative ways, and learning about the different ways their body can move within a given space.

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: Medium

What you need: N/A

What you do: Talk with your child about different animals that are born in spring, such as baby chickens (chicks), sheep (lambs), rabbits (kits), bears (cubs), cows (calves), ducks (ducklings), and deer (fawns). Invite your child to think about how each of these animals moves by suggesting one animal at a time and allowing time for your child to explore that movement. Continue through each of the animals you and your child discussed.

If your child is ready: Encourage your child to think about how the baby animal's movements would be different from the adult animal, such as how an adult duck can fly, but a duckling cannot.

Phonics Adventures Activity: Green and Growing

Length of activity: 15 minutes

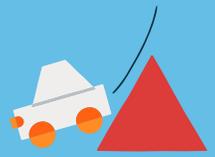
What your child is learning:

- How to listen carefully for a /g/ word that is repeated
- How to say /g/ as the beginning sound in familiar words
- To control the body to move in a certain way

Level of engagement required by adult: High

What you need:

- Indoor or outdoor plant (optional)
- [Video link](#) to see this activity in action!



What you do: Talk with your child about plants when they start to grow. What color are plants when they first start to grow? Plants can be many colors when they first start to grow, such as purple, red, yellow, or white, but most plants start out green. Talk about the words green and grow and the letter sound at the beginning of each word, /g/. Say the /g/ sound together a few times.

Sit with your child on the floor, with your bodies curled up, as if you are inside a seed. Say the names of some random things, such as the items listed below, inserting words that begin with the /g/ sound here and there. Ask your child to “grow” with you a little by rising from your curled-up position each time you say a word that starts with the /g/ sound.

House	Train	Gloves
Table	Popcorn	Goldfish
Grass	Gardenia	Grapes
Garden	Foot	

Questions to ask:

- What happens when a seed sprouts and begins to grow?
- What color are most plants when they first start to grow?
- What sound do you hear at the beginning of the word grow?
- What letter makes the /g/ sound?
- What are some of the words you heard that begin with the /g/ sound?

Everyday Learning Activities

Try this to help your child develop the skills described today no matter what you’re doing:

During a time when you and your child need to move to a new space, such as from the living room to the kitchen, ask them to move like an animal. Let them pick the animal and show you how the animal would get to the new place. Keep them interested by asking them to show you how a baby version of the animal would move differently to get where they’re going.



Social and Emotional Learning: Focus on Routines

No matter what your daily schedule looks like, children thrive when they know what's expected of them right now and what's going to happen next. Knowing what comes next can also be a great motivator to get through the task at hand.

Try this: When there's something your child needs to do, like wash their hands or clean up their toys, before they can do what they want to do, like eat a yummy snack or start a new activity, use "first, then" language:

"First we wash our hands, then we eat."

"First we put the blocks in the basket, then we pick a book to read."

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Language and Literacy Activity: How Do We Dress for Spring?

Length of activity: N/A

What your child is learning: Your child is making observations about the weather and season and applying those observations to answer questions and make informed decisions.

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: Medium

What you need: A selection of your child's clothing

What you do: When you are helping your child get dressed for the day, talk with them about what types of clothes they wear during the spring. Invite them to look outside and talk about the weather, then to select clothing that would be appropriate to wear for the day's weather. Talk with your child about how the clothes they select for spring are different than clothing they wear during other times of the year, such as during the winter when weather may be much colder or summer when weather may be much warmer.

If your child is ready: Present your child with two or three options for each item of clothing and have them select which option is the most appropriate based on the weather. For example, you might present your child with a T-shirt, a sweater, and heavy jacket and ask them which one is best for the day's weather.



Cooking Academy Activity: Helping in the Kitchen

Length of activity: 20–30 minutes

What your child is learning:

- Literacy and math skills such as reading, following instructions, and measuring
- Food safety
- Cooking-related vocabulary
- How foods change during the cooking process
- Increased openness to trying foods they've prepared
- [What's for Lunch Sheet](#)

Level of engagement required by adult: High

What you need: A recipe and ingredients for a meal to be eaten by your family (an example showing how you might select different foods for lunch is given here); cooking utensils, pans, pots, or other needed prep items

What you do: Include your child in lunch or dinner preparations! Always start and end by washing hands, of course, then give your child age-appropriate jobs to do that meet or slightly exceed their skill levels. Many preschoolers can complete tasks like mashing, sprinkling, mixing, spreading, cutting with a butter knife, squeezing, tearing, scooping, stirring, whisking, wrapping, and dipping independently. With help, they can assist with pouring and measuring.

Offer your child praise throughout the process to boost their confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth. After the meal, have your child help with clean up, giving them specific jobs to complete. Thank your child for helping.

Questions to ask:

- What did you enjoy about preparing this food?
- What did you find challenging about cooking this meal?
- How did it feel to share the food you made with our family?



Everyday Learning Activities

Try this to help your child develop the skills described today no matter what you're doing:

While folding the laundry or relaxing around the house, ask your child what the weather is like outside. What kind of clothes should they wear? What if the weather was different?

Social and Emotional Learning: Focus on Environment

Pictures are a great way to help children remember your daily routine and prevent challenging behaviors. They can also cut back on the number of verbal reminders you have to give, freeing you up for other tasks and giving your child the chance to build independence and confidence.

Try this: As you go through your day, snap a quick picture of the things your child is doing, such as getting dressed, eating breakfast, taking a nap, and putting their toys away. No camera? You can also work together to draw pictures of your day. Arrange the pictures, in order, into a collage. Use this “visual schedule” to help your child remember what’s happening now and what’s going to happen next.

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Cognitive Development Activity: Mud-Cake Math: Subtraction

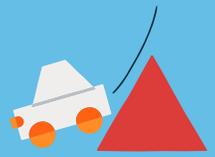
Length of activity: 10-20 minutes

What your child is learning: Through this activity, your child is gaining mathematical skills in subtraction, as well as practicing fine motor skills by grasping candles or twigs while counting. This activity also offers opportunities to build attention skills as they work to solve the subtraction problems created by the cards.

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: Low to medium

What you need:

- ❑ Birthday candles, 5 (small twigs, sticks, or craft sticks can be used instead)
- ❑ Number cards for the numerals 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- ❑ Brown play dough (if you do not have play dough, you and your child can use [this recipe](#) to make your own)



Play dough Recipe

Ingredients:

- ❑ 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- ❑ 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
- ❑ 2 cups flour
- ❑ 1 cup salt
- ❑ 1 cup hot water
- ❑ Food coloring, brown (made by mixing red and green)

Instructions: Combine all ingredients and mix well. Store in an airtight container.

What you do: Place the number cards for 3, 4, and 5 in one pile, and the number cards for 0, 1, and 2 in a second pile. Have your child make a “cake” using the play dough. Ask your child to select a card from the first pile and place that number of candles on the cake, assist them in recognizing and naming the number as needed. Then have your child select a card from the second pile, assist them in recognizing and naming the number as needed. Have them remove that number of candles from the cake and count how many candles are left on the cake. Reinforce the subtraction process by stating the math sentence for the problem they are solving, for example, “You had 4 candles, you took away 1 candle, and now there are 3 candles left.” Continue the process going through different card combinations.

If your child is ready: Invite your child to share the math sentence for the problem they are solving.

STEM Innovators Activity: I Spy

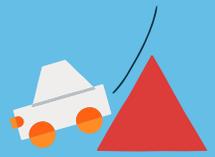
Length of activity: 15-20 minutes

What your child is learning:

- STEM skill of observing details in the world around them
- How to examine objects closely using technology
- Fine motor control

Level of engagement required by adult: High

What you need: Digital camera, iPad, tablet, or smartphone



What you do: Show your child the close-up photos. Explain that these are photos of things they have probably seen before but they are “zoomed in.” Invite your child to think about what each picture could be, then ask them to share their ideas.

You can create this same kind of magnification effect using technology! By using the zoom function on an iPad, tablet, or phone camera, you can look at objects more closely than you are able to with just your eyes. Play a variation of the game “I Spy” with your child using a digital camera or the camera on a smartphone or tablet. Without your child seeing, use the zoom function to take a close-up photo of an object. Then show your child the photo and give a clue about the object, such as “I spy with my little eye something soft.” Invite your child to use the zoom function on the camera to take a close-up look at objects that match your clue. Continue giving clues until your child identifies the object.

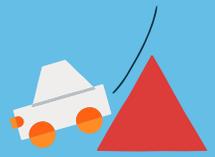


See if your child can stump you by taking their own close-up photo of an object and giving you clues about it!

Questions to ask your budding scientist:

- What did you notice in the picture that made you think that?
- What else could it be?
- How would you describe the color? The texture?
- I notice you’re looking very closely at the picture. What do you see?
- How does the actual object look different than the zoomed-in picture?

A note about technology: When we hear the word technology, computers, electronics, artificial intelligence, and advanced machines like self-driving cars often come to mind. But technology includes much more! Technically speaking, technology is anything people create or design to do a job or to make life easier. Technology changes over time. For example, at one time, the magnifying glass was an exciting new technology; these days, we would consider an electron microscope or the zoom feature in an iPhone’s camera to be much more technologically advanced than a magnifying glass.



Everyday Learning Activities

Try this to help your child develop the skills described today no matter what you're doing:

When you see a number (i.e., 1, 3, or 5) somewhere around you such as on TV or on your phone, point it out to your child. Then ask them if they can help you find that number of objects in the space you're in. Is there 1 bowl on the table? Are there 3 chairs in this room? Can they count them out loud with you?

Social and Emotional Learning: Focus on Behavior

For children, behavior is a form of communication. This means that everything they do is motivated by an underlying feeling or need. The more we can help children learn to name their feelings, the better they'll become at recognizing them and developing strategies for coping with them.

Try this: If your child resists participating in an activity like cleaning up or getting ready to rest, let them know you understand why. Then offer a solution that works for you:

"I see you're frustrated that it's time to clean up. You're having so much fun with those blocks. You're not ready to put them away. Let's build one more tower before we put them back in the box."

Thursday, April 9, 2020

Executive Function Activity: Spring Scavenger Hunt

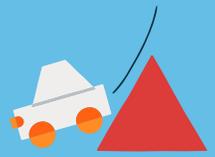
Length of activity: 10-20 minutes

What your child is learning: Through this activity your child is focusing their attention to complete a task, learning early literacy by connecting pictures to words, and is becoming more confident in taking risks and seeking challenges as they work to complete the scavenger hunt.

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: Medium

What you need:

- ❑ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ❑ Paper
- ❑ Pencil or pen



What you do: Create a picture-based scavenger hunt list of five or six spring things your child can find around your home or by looking out a window. Your scavenger hunt might include a tree, a bird, a yellow flower, a red flower, and a flowering tree. Draw simple pictures and write the name of the items below the pictures. Review the list with your child, and then invite them to go on a scavenger hunt to find the items.

If your child is ready: Create a larger scavenger hunt list, either with more items or with multiples of the same item, such as 3 different red flowers.

Music Explorers Activity: Spring Landscapes

Length of activity: 15-20 minutes

What your child is learning:

- Seasonal changes in nature, how music can express a scene or feeling
- Fine motor skills while creating visual art

Level of engagement required by adult: Medium

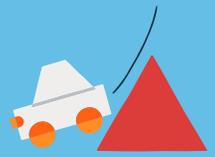
What you need:

- Real-life example or image of a tree blooming in spring
- [Winter Tree Sheet](#) (or sketch a simple leafless tree on paper, if you don't have a printer)
- Crayons
- [Video link](#) to see this activity in action!

What you do: Show your child an image or real-life example of a tree blooming in spring. Explain that many trees lose their leaves in fall and don't get them back until spring.

Give your child the printout (or your sketch) of a winter tree, without blossoms or leaves. Play the video and have your child use crayons to transform the winter tree into a spring tree. Afterward, tell your child that the piece of music they heard is called "Spring." Talk about what your child drew, what they "hear" in the music that made them think of spring, and how they felt while listening to the music.





Questions to Ask:

- Where have you seen a tree getting new leaves or blossoms – are there any trees outside right now that have blossoms?
- What can you draw on the winter tree to turn it into a spring tree?
- What else could you add to your drawing?
- What does this music make you think of?
- How does this music make you feel?

Everyday Learning Activities

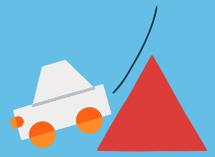
Try this to help your child develop the skills described today no matter what you're doing:

When doing household chores such as cleaning, cooking, or putting clothes away, make a list of a few items you'll be working with. Talk with your child about the items or invite them to draw the items. As you work on your task, ask them to help you find each item. Can they find each object on your list?

Social and Emotional Learning: Focus on Play

Chances are, you can't always get on the floor and play alongside your child when they want you to or you wish that you could. You can still interact with them while juggling other tasks! Narrating your child's every move or giving a "play by play" of their actions, is a great way to give them the attention you want and to add extra learning to their play.

Try this: Set your child up with an activity while you work on a task of your own that still allows you to see them and talk to them. For five minutes, describe everything you see them doing in detail. Although you'll be multi-tasking, be sure to make eye contact and specific language so your child knows you really are paying attention. Use opening phrases like "I see you..." or "now you are..." to let them know you're watching and interested, even while you're working on something of your own.



Friday, April 10, 2020

Creative Expression Activity: Spring Trees

Length of activity: 15-20 minutes

What your child is learning: Through this activity your child is learning to use art materials to create two- and three-dimensional artwork and demonstrating an understanding of seasonal changes.

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: Low

What you need:

- ❑ Child-size scissors
- ❑ Collage materials, such as construction paper, tissue paper, yarn, and pompoms
- ❑ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ❑ Glue
- ❑ Paper

What you do: Place the gathered materials at a table where your child can create. If possible, go outside or look out a window at the trees in your community. Ask your child to think about trees in spring, and how they might look different than trees during other seasons. Talk about how the bare branches of trees that lose their leaves in winter are starting to get new leaves, and how some trees have flowers that bloom before there are leaves. Show your child the materials you have gathered and invite them to create their own representation of a spring tree. If needed, tell your child that they can cut and tear the materials provided to create their spring tree. If your child did the Music Explorers activity *Spring Landscapes*, invite them to compare the two-dimensional spring tree from that activity to the three-dimensional spring tree from this activity.

If your child is ready: Invite your child to help collect the collage materials. Talk with your child about spring trees, then explain that they can create their own representation of a spring tree and ask them what materials they would like to use. Help them collect the materials they would like that are readily available in your home.

Virtual Field Trip: [Spring Eagle Nest](#)

Like many birds, eagles lay their eggs in the spring. This Bald Eagle nest located in Decorah, Iowa has three eggs that are anticipated to hatch around the first week of April!



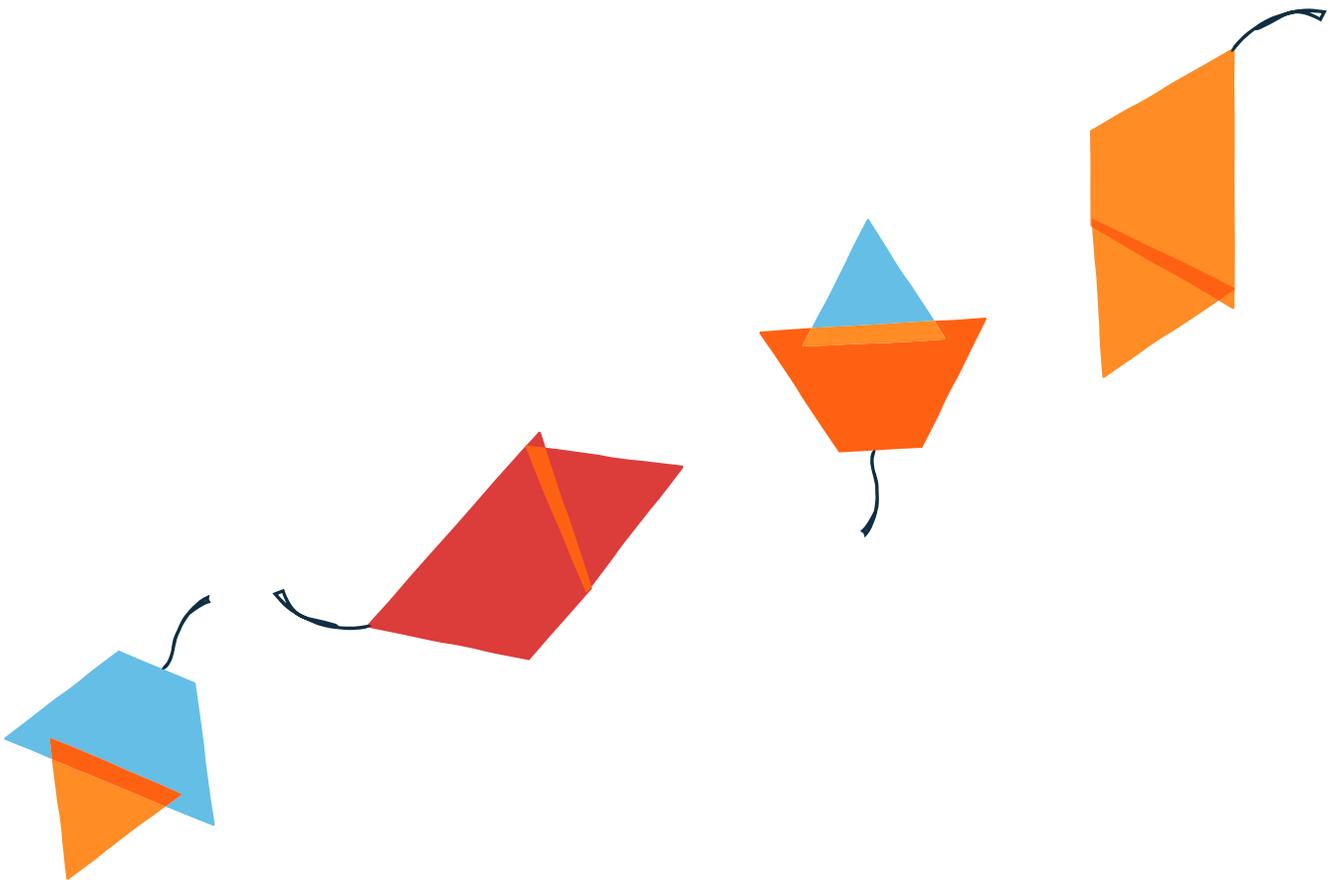
Everyday Learning Activities

Try this to help your child develop the skills described today no matter what you're doing: Ask your child what item they are most interested in around them, such as a lamp in your living room or your cat in the window. Then ask them how they would use art to recreate the item. Would they use crayons? Clay? Paint and glitter?

Social and Emotional Learning: Focus on Mindfulness

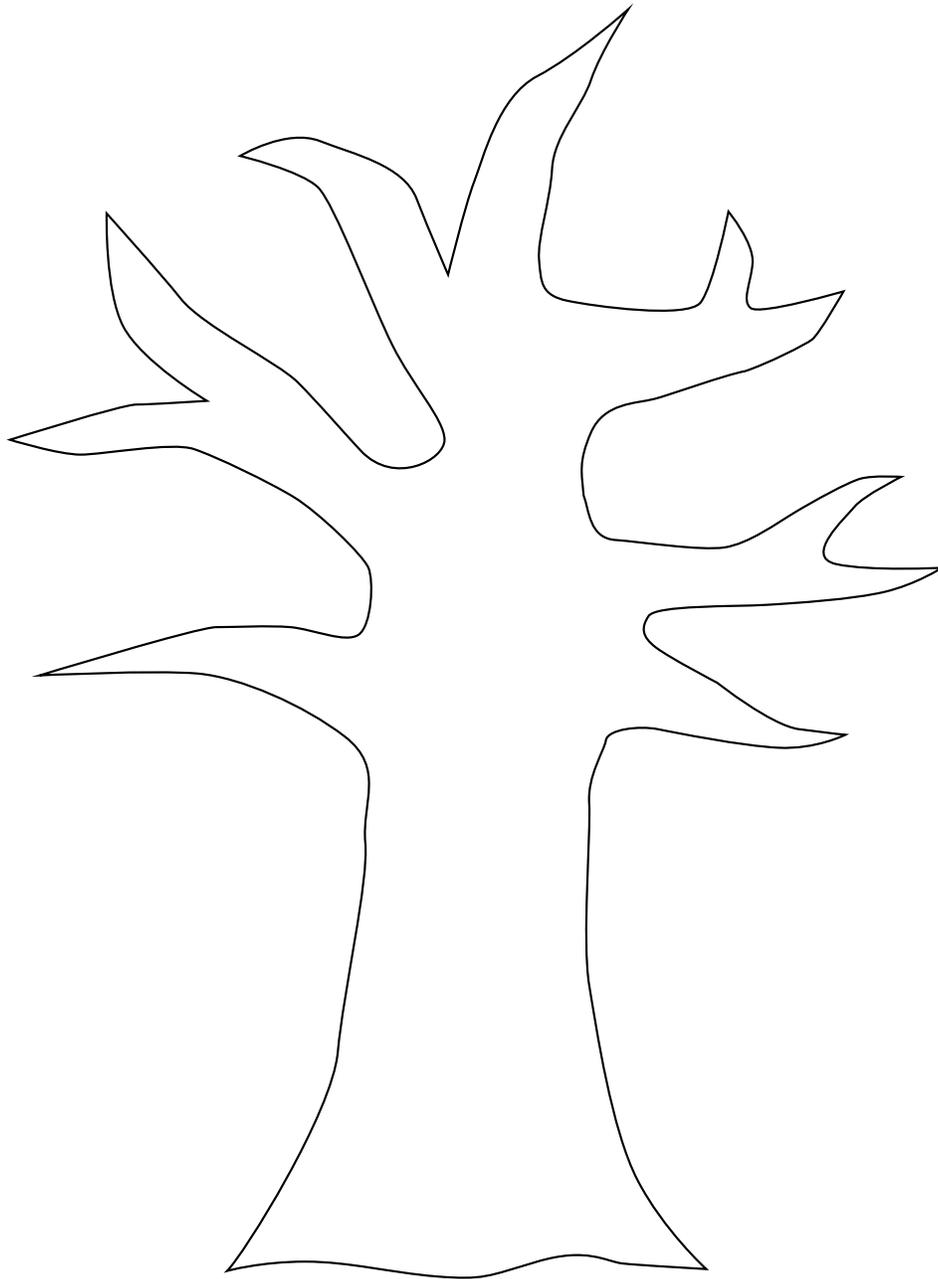
Deep breaths help all of us feel calm and centered throughout the day. Making deep breathing fun for children is a great way to get them in the habit, and practicing alongside them will help you stay grounded, too.

Try this: Using pictures or real items from outside, practicing taking a deep breath in and blowing it out hard by "smelling the flower" and "blowing the leaf." How deeply do you need to breathe in to smell the flower? How hard do you have to blow out to move the leaf?





Winter Tree Sheet (for Music Explorers Activity: Spring Landscapes)





What's for Lunch Sheet (for Cooking Academy Activity: Helping in the Kitchen)

REUSE IT, REDUCE IT!

What's for Lunch?

Select one food from each food group:

- Fruit of your choice, like   ,  , or 
apples , oranges , or bananas
- Grain and protein of your choice, like whole-grain  with 
sunflower-seed butter
or  with sliced  and 
tortilla rollup with sliced cheese and turkey
- 
Milk
- Vegetable of your choice, like  ,  , or 
cucumbers , bell peppers , or carrots

1. Prepare the lunches and put them in bento-style food boxes.

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