This week in our centers, preschoolers typically explore the fascinating and exciting world of wild animals! You and your child can bring wild animals from around the world to life in your very living room.

If your child had the chance, what questions would they ask a lion? This week, you help your child become a zoo pen pal by writing a letter to lions in a language and literacy activity. Or maybe you want to play a simple game of Tape the Tail on the Monkey while helping your child reflect on their own actions and think about ways to make changes or corrections, an important executive function skill.

Together with your child, you also have an opportunity to create a time-lapse video together of a seed sprouting. Even if you’re not able to do the time-lapse video, their sprouting seeds will get them ready for next week’s theme: Plants and Gardening!

Developmental Domains are the areas of focus that support development of the whole child. Interested in learning more? Click here to discover the six developmental domains.
This Week’s Theme: Wild Animals

What you’ll find in this guide...

We’ve organized this content the way your child would be learning it in their center, but you and your child can choose your own adventures and do the activities in any order.

MONDAY
Get the Wiggles Out (Physical Development and Wellness)
Galloping Zebras Your child will get out some energy while exploring one of the many ways zebras move: galloping!

Read with Me (Language and Literacy)
Letter Search How many of one letter can you find around your home? You and your child will go on a letter hunt together and find out!

TUESDAY
Get the Wheels Turning (Cognitive Development)
Zebra Patterns What’s black and white and keeps repeating itself? Zebra patterns!

Kitchen Chemistry Your child will learn about the chemistry of popping grains as you prepare a healthy snack together!

WEDNESDAY
Express Yourself! (Creative Expression)
Animal Shadows Your child will investigate their inner artist and scientist as they explore creating shadow art.

Get the Wheels Turning (Cognitive Development)
Observing Growth with Time-Lapse Video Your child will create their own time-lapse video and watch a seed sprout into a plant!

THURSDAY
Write with Me (Language and Literacy)
A Letter to Lions What questions would you ask a lion? You and your child write a letter to lions to share what you know and ask questions about what you don’t.

Express Yourself! (Creative Expression)
“Five Green and Speckled Frogs” Find out what happens when five homemade frogs sit together on a log in this lively song!

FRIDAY
Growing Flexible Brains (Executive Function)
Tape the Tail on the Monkey Are you up for a little monkey business? Have a turn at this playful twist on the classic Pin the Tail on the Donkey.

Virtual Field Trip
Houston Zoo Webcams Your child can watch live webcams from different areas of the Houston Zoo.

EVERYDAY LEARNING EXPERIENCES
Pick an activity to weave learning experiences into your everyday routines—no preparation needed!

FOCUS ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING
The Center on the Developing Child from Harvard University just released an infographic titled, “What is COVID-19 and How Does it Relate to Child Development?”
Getting Ready for the Week: Materials to Gather

- Globe or world map (optional)
- Black paper, or paper that has been colored black
- White paper
- Scissors (for adult use)
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Flashlight (optional)
- Paper
- Pencil
- Plastic or toy animals
- Tape
- Blindfold or scarf
- Paper bag, large (or white paper if a paper bag is not available)
- An example of a selected alphabet letter to show your child, such as a letter on a block, toy, or other object in your home
- A grain to pop, such as sorghum, barley, rice, quinoa, corn, or amaranth, all of which can be popped in a microwave or on the stove
- [Popped Sorghum recipe](#)
- Your preferred popcorn seasoning (If you made Herbs de Provence last week, you can use it again to season your popped grain.)
- Microwave (for your use only)
- Paper lunch bag

- Measuring cups
- Two small bowls
- Small plate
- Medium pot
- Spoons
- Digital camera, iPad, tablet, or smartphone
- iMovie or other movie-making app
- Seeds (any will work, but some seeds like grass or beans grow faster, resulting in faster excitement!)  
  - Potting or garden soil
  - Planter or space in a garden
  - Garden gloves (optional)
  - Playdough, green and one other color*
  - [Five Frogs*](#)
  - Cardboard tube (e.g. paper towel tube)
  - “Five Green and Speckled Frogs” song poster
  - [Video link](#) to the song “Five Green and Speckled Frogs”

*See related activities for more details

Tip: At the beginning of your week, gather materials and place them in a container so you’re ready to go!
Get the Wiggles Out: Galloping Zebras
Get out some energy while exploring one of the many ways zebras move: galloping!

**What your child is learning:**
- How to gallop
- How to maintain balance while making big movements
- An understanding of speed and how movement can affect speed

**What you do:** If possible, find a socially distanced space outdoors or a large indoor area with lots of space to gallop!

Ask your child what they know about zebras. Share with them that zebras are in the same family of animals as horses. They look like horses, but with black and white stripes. If you have a globe or world map, show your child where Africa is located. This is where zebras are from!

Describe the way a zebra runs as a gallop. Demonstrate how to gallop or watch this [video](#) together:

1. Step forward with one foot.
2. Then bring your back foot forward to meet your front foot, always stepping forward on the same foot.

Invite your child to practice galloping, encouraging them to increase their speed as they become comfortable with the movement. After some practice, encourage them to gallop to different locations, such as to the coffee table or around a tree.

**If your child is ready:** Tell them that like people, a zebra can move at different speeds. Today you’re going to explore three different speeds of moving like a zebra: walking, trotting, and galloping. Ask your child to walk around the space or to a different location and back.

Then explain that trotting is a little faster than a walk, like how people jog. Invite your child to explore moving around the space using a trot by alternating their feet with quick short steps. Then introduce galloping. When your child is familiar with all three movements, encourage them to move to different locations in different ways, such as walking to the tree and galloping back.
Read with Me: Letter Search
How many of one letter can you find around your home? Go on a letter hunt together and find out!

Length of activity: 10-15 minutes*
*Duration will vary depending on your child’s interest.

What you need:
An example of a selected alphabet letter to show your child, such as a letter on a block, toy, or other object in your home

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: Medium 🌟🌟🌟
Level of Prep Required: Low 🌟🌟🌟

What you do: Select an uppercase or lowercase letter of the alphabet to focus on for this activity. For example, you might select a lowercase letter that is in your child’s name. Look around your home to make sure the chosen letter can be found in your environment, such as on wall art, book covers, toys, or pantry items.

Show your child the example of the letter. Ask questions about the letter:
- What letter is this? This is the letter __.
- What sound does the letter __ make?

Then, have them go on a letter search in your home to see how many different examples of the letter they can find. If needed, give them some hints about where they might find the letter in your home. As they find examples of the letter, talk about them. For example, you might say something like, “You found an uppercase F on this wall art. F is at the beginning of the word ‘Family.’”

If your child is ready for a challenge, look for both uppercase and lowercase versions of the chosen letter around your home. You can also give your child a clipboard and pencil to keep a tally of all the places they spot the letter, then add up the tallies at the end of the activity. Alternatively, ask your child to find an object that starts with the sound of F (or any other letter).

Questions to ask:
- What letter is this?
- What sound does this letter make?
- How many examples of an uppercase letter __ can you find?
- How many examples of a lowercase letter __ can you find?
- How many examples of a lowercase letter __ can you find in the living room?
Get the Wheels Turning: Zebra Patterns
What’s black and white and keeps repeating itself? Zebra patterns!

**What child is learning:**
- How to recognize and continue patterns
- Counting up to 10 using one-to-one correspondence
- Comparing quantities using more, less, or the same

**What you do:** Cut six 1-inch strips of each color of paper. Ask your child to share what they know about zebras. What colors do you see on a zebra? Show them the black and white paper strips. Begin a simple pattern of black, white, black, white. Ask your child what pattern they see.

Then invite your child to continue the pattern, saying the name of each color in the pattern as they do. After your child has completed the pattern using the available strips, ask them to count how many black strips and white strips they used.

Did they use more black strips than white strips? Less black than white? Or the same number of black and white? If they have trouble determining more, less, or the same, ask them to match each black strip with a white strip and set the matches aside. Once they have matched all the strips, what do they notice? Continue making simple patterns, such as AB or AABB and ask your child to identify and continue the pattern, then compare the number of strips.

**If your child is ready:** Instead of creating a visual pattern for your child to continue, say a pattern for your child to lay out and continue. For example, “I’m going to tell you which strips to put down. First, put down a black strip. Then a white strip. Now another black strip. And one more white strip. What pattern do you see?”
Get the Wheels Turning: Kitchen Chemistry
Learn about the chemistry of popping grains as you prepare a healthy snack!

What you need:

- A grain, such as sorghum, barley, rice, quinoa, corn, or amaranth, all of which can be popped in a microwave or on the stove
- Popped Sorghum recipe
- Your preferred popcorn seasoning (If you made Herbs de Provence last week, you can use it again to season your popped grain.)
- Microwave (for adult use only)
- Paper lunch bag
- Measuring cups
- Two small bowls
- Small plate
- Medium pot
- Spoons

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
What you do: Review the recipe and determine the number of servings you’ll need and adjust accordingly. Remember to always start any cooking activity with everyone washing and drying their hands.

Prepare about ¼-cup of boiled sorghum (or grain of your choice) according to the directions on the package and place in a small serving bowl. Give it time to cool before you bring your child into the activity.

Show your child the picture of wheat and point out that wheat is a type of grain that grows on stalks. Grains are the seeds of grasses we can eat. Tell your child that when grains stop growing and are dry, they are harvested or picked. Whole grains are grains that are less processed to make them ready to eat so they provide nutrients our bodies need to be healthy and grow strong. Processed grains like the flour used in most baked goods and pasta lose many of those nutrients when they are processed.

Give your child a plate with a spoonful of uncooked sorghum on it. Make observations together about the sorghum, including how it looks, feels, smells, and what they think it is. Tell them it is sorghum, which is a whole grain.

Next, give your child a bowl with a spoonful of the cooked sorghum. Invite them to taste it and share their observations. Explain that sorghum can be used in soups, salads, and side dishes similar to rice. It can also be used to make sorghum syrup, a sweet, molasses-like syrup, or it can be ground into flour and used for baking.

Show your child the recipe. Give them the paper lunch bag and help measure ¼-cup of uncooked sorghum into the bag. Have your child fold over the top of the bag to seal it. Microwave the bag of sorghum. While the sorghum pops, ask your child to predict what’s happening inside the bag. Explain that there is moisture inside each kernel of sorghum. As the sorghum is heated, the moisture turns to steam and causes the kernels to pop.

When the time between pops is about 5 seconds, carefully remove the bag from the microwave, handling only the folded corners. Unfold the bag and open it by gently pulling at the corners, making sure it’s pointed away from you and your child. Set the bag aside to cool. When cooled, sprinkle a little salt or seasoning and enjoy!

*If sorghum is not available but you have another whole grain on hand, you can do a quick search online for instructions on how to pop those grains on the stove or in the microwave.

Questions to ask:

- How did the grain change as it got hotter?
- What happened to the grain after it cooled down?
- What other foods change when they are heated?
- What did you enjoy about preparing popped sorghum (or other grain)?
- What does the popped sorghum smell like? How does it taste? Does it remind you of another type of popped grain? How does it compare to popcorn?
**WEDNESDAY**

**Express Yourself! Animal Shadows**

Your child will investigate their inner artist and inner scientist as they explore creating art with shadows.

**What your child is learning:**
- How to use lines and details to express their ideas through art
- Fine-motor skills as they trace the shadows and add details to their drawing
- A beginning understanding of light and shadows

**What you do:**

Tape the sheet of paper on the ground in a sunny location. Talk with your child about how shadows are created when an object blocks the sun. Look around for different shadows and objects that are making shadows.

Ask your child to experiment placing the toy animal in different locations until they create a shadow they like and then use a pencil to trace the animal’s shadow. Encourage your child to use two or three animals to create shadows. After they have traced the shadow, invite them to color in the paper, adding details to the traced animal or a background behind the shadows.

If a sunny location is not available, you can use a flashlight to create the shadow on the paper, exploring how the different angles of the flashlight change the size and shape of the shadow.

**If your child is ready:** Invite them to tell you a story about the animals in their picture.
WEDNESDAY
(continued)

Get the Wheels Turning: Observing Growth with Time-Lapse Video
Create your own time-lapse video to watch a seed sprout into a plant!

Length of activity: 20–30 minutes*

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: High

Level of Prep Required: Medium

What you need:

- Digital camera, tablet, or smartphone
- Movie-making app (most smart phones have their own app included such as iMovie)
- Seeds (any will work, but some seeds like grass or beans grow faster, resulting in faster excitement!). Don’t have seeds? You can also time lapse something simple like moving clouds or a building block project.
- Potting or garden soil
- Planter or space in a garden
- Garden gloves (optional)

What your child is learning:

- How digital tools allow us to observe growth in different ways
- How to make time-lapse videos
- The necessary stages that seeds need to grow

What you do: If you aren’t already familiar with iMovie (or similar movie-making app), spend a little time exploring the app before doing this activity with your child.

Have a conversation with your child about how digital tools with cameras like laptop computers, tablets, and smartphones have made it easier to take photos and create videos to share with others. These tools have also made it easier for scientists to make observations about how things grow and change over time.
Explain that you are going to work together to create a time-lapse video showing how a seed grows into a plant. Begin by planting a few seeds in a small pot or area of your garden. Make sure the seeds are in a place where the soil will get good sunlight and can be easily photographed. Water and care for the seeds as specified on the seed packet.

Next, help your child take a picture of the pot or garden spot that shows the top of the soil. Take a new picture each day from a similar angle. Continue taking daily photos, until the seeds have sprouted, and the plant has begun to grow. Then use a video-editing app, such as iMovie, to make the pictures into a video that shows how the seeds have grown into a plant over time.

Questions to ask:

- How many days do you think it will take for the seeds to sprout?
- Why should we take the photo from the same position each day?
- What do seeds need to sprout and grow into plants?
- How are you feeling while waiting for the seeds to sprout? Does it feel like it’s taking a very long time? Short time? Why do you think the seeds need this time to grow?

A note about technology today: Your child is a native user of screen-based technology. While it is important to curb excessive exposure to screen time, you can also take this opportunity to teach your child how to be a responsible, creative, and effective user of technology. Digital communication tools allow us to text, email, video conference, share photos, and post to social media, among other things. These tools have become even more important to us for keeping in touch with one another during this time of social distancing. This type of activity fosters critical thinking, creativity, and the skills needed for them to become an active creator with technology, rather than a passive consumer of technology.
**Write with Me: A Letter to Lions**

What questions would you ask a lion? You and your child write a letter to lions to share what you know and ask questions about what you don’t.

**What your child is learning:**
- How to participate in group or shared writing experiences
- How to ask questions to gain understanding
- How to share information learned in prior experiences

**What you do:** Invite your child to help you write a letter to lions, or another animal they enjoy. Begin by talking about how many personal letters begin with the greeting “Dear,” so you’ll begin with “Dear Lions.” Then ask what they would like to include in their letter to the lions.

Is there anything they’ve learned about lions or any questions they would like to ask? Help your child craft their ideas into sentences. When the letter is finished, share that letters end with a closing, such as “sincerely” or “yours truly.” Help your child select a closing for your letter and have them sign their name. Read the completed letter aloud.

If they are interested, you can send your letters to the animals at the Dickerson Park Zoo in Springfield, Missouri. Due to Covid19, the zoo is currently closed to visitors. The zoo has asked for Zoo Pen Pals to write letters to the animals that they’ll read to them. Some letters will be read live and/or posted to the zoo’s social media sites.

If you and your child would like to be a Zoo Pen Pal, you can send your letter to jpowell@dickersonparkzoo.org. For more information, or to see videos of some of the letters that other children have written, visit the Dickerson Park Zoo on Facebook.

**If your child is ready:** Invite them to write additional letters to other animals they are interested in, or if possible, record video letters. Alternatively, you and your child could conduct research to answer some of the questions that were asked during the activity.
Express Yourself! “Five Green and Speckled Frogs”
Find out what happens when five homemade frogs sit together on a log in this lively song!

*Note: This is the same activity as in the Preschool At Home Activities Guide; however, it is also developmentally appropriate at this age. An older child may experience the activity with more drama, more details, and more advanced math skills. This is a great multi-age activity!

What you need:
- Playdough, green and one other color
- Five Frogs*
- Crayons*
- Scissors* (for adult use)
- Clear tape*
- Cardboard tube (e.g. paper towel tube)
- “Five Green and Speckled Frogs” song poster
- Video link to the song “Five Green and Speckled Frogs”

*Note: No playdough? No sweat! Print the Five Frogs, invite your child to color them green, and cut them out. If you aren’t able to print the sheet, make your own simple drawing of five frogs for your child to color. After cutting them out, lightly tape them to the cardboard tube in a row.

What your child is learning:
- How to act out a song using props
- Fine motor skills while making and moving playdough or paper frogs
- Recognizing rhyme and patterns in song lyrics
- Beginning subtraction skills

Length of activity: 15–20 minutes*

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: High

Level of Prep Required: High

*Duration will vary depending on your child’s interest.
**What you do:** Talk with your child about how frogs are one of the animals we might see—and hear—in spring. Show them the Five Frogs and explain that you are going to act out a song together about five green and speckled frogs.

If you have play dough, ask them to use it to make five little speckled frogs. If you don’t have playdough, you can use the adaptation given on the previous page.

Show your child the “Five Green and Speckled Frogs” song poster and share that the song is about five speckled frogs who sit on a log and love to eat bugs. Say the first verse of the song, pausing at the word hollow. Share that hollow means empty inside. Show your child the hollow cardboard tube that will represent the log in the song.

Play the video of the song and sing along together to “Yum, yum” after “ ... delicious bugs,” and “Ribbit, ribbit” at the end of the song.

Next, help your child place their five playdough frogs in front of the cardboard tube log (if using paper frogs, lightly tape them onto the cardboard tube). Play the video of the song again and this time, invite your child to take away one frog each time you sing a verse.

**Questions to ask:**

- Where have you seen frogs before? Where do frogs live?
- What can you tell me about the place where you have seen frogs?
- What sound do frogs make?
- How do frogs move? Show me how.
- What does it mean for something to be speckled?
  
  What other word means the same as speckled?
- How could you make speckles on your playdough frogs?
- If we start with five frogs on the log and one frog hops away, how many frogs are left?
Growing Flexible Brains: Tape the Tail on the Monkey

Are you up for a little monkey business? Have a turn at this playful twist on the classic Pin the Tail on the Donkey.

**What you need:**
- Blindfold or scarf
- Paper bag, large (or white paper if a paper bag is not available)
- Markers
- Scissors (for adult use)
- Tape

**What your child is learning:**
- Using flexible thinking as they play a new or different version of a familiar game
- Reflecting on their abilities and ways to make changes or corrections
- If playing with others, taking turns develops patience and impulse control
- Making observations and comparisons

**What you do:** Cut the paper bag open to create a larger sheet of paper. If a paper bag is not available, tape together 4–6 sheets of paper to create a larger sheet. Draw a simple outline of a monkey on the paper. Invite your child to color the monkey and add details to the monkey like ears and facial features. Cut out the monkey and tape it to a wall or door so the body of the monkey is at your child’s eye level. Cut three or four monkey tails from the remaining paper scraps.

To play the game, have your child stand about 3 feet in front of the monkey and give them a tail with a piece of tape on it. If they’re comfortable, use a blindfold or scarf to gently cover their eyes. If they would...
prefer not to be blindfolded, ask them to close their eyes. Have them walk forward and tape the tail on the monkey, guiding them as needed to keep them safe. After they have placed the tail, remove the blindfold or have them open their eyes and see how close they were. Ask them to reflect on the experience. Was it easy? Hard? Were they frustrated? How did they feel when they saw where they had placed the tail? What changes could they make the next time they tape the tail on the monkey?

Repeat the process for the other tails or invite other family members to have a turn. When all the tails have been placed, talk about which tail is the closest to where a monkey’s tail would be, and which is farthest away.

If your child is ready: Add a challenge to the game by spinning them in a circle two or three times before they tape the tail on the monkey.
Virtual Field Trip: Houston Zoo Webcams

Would you and your child like to see some amazing animals in action? Check out live webcams at the Houston Zoo! Which animals are they interested in seeing? As you watch the live cams, ask your child questions about what the animals are doing, what they notice about the animals, and what they wonder about the animals.

Did you take a virtual field trip to the San Diego Zoo last week? Which animals are different? Which animals are the same?
When children make observations, they’re learning to look at something with a more critical eye, to take in details, to wonder about what they observe, and to ask questions. You can help develop your child’s observation skills by asking simple questions: the size of a bird, the shape of an orange, the color of tomato, the texture of their shirt. Comparison questions will also help them to determine whose hand is bigger, which cup has more water, which blanket feels softer. All of these require your child use the power of observation!

Patterns, patterns, everywhere! Finding patterns in your surroundings is easier than you think. Maybe it’s the stripes on your child’s shirt, the design of the floor tiles in your kitchen, or the repetition of colored dots on a favorite blanket. Point out the patterns you find and help them identify what the pattern is.

Where there’s light, there are shadows. Sunlight, moonlight, lamp lights, nightlights—they all cause shadows. Talk with your child about the different shadows you see throughout the day. Where do they see shadows? What object is making the shadow? Where is the light source that is causing the shadow? Can they have an effect on the shadow by moving the light source or by moving the object?

Counting with your child can happen anywhere, any time! Look for opportunities throughout your day to count objects with them. From counting the number of crackers on their snack plate to the number of buttons on their shirt, practicing counting helps to build foundational math skills in a way that is relevant to what they are experiencing every day.

Explore moving in different ways around the house or yard. Maybe you’re going to gallop like a zebra, swim like a fish, or hop like a kangaroo. Ask your child to choose how you’re going to move from one place to the next and whenever possible, let them take the lead!

Pick an activity to weave learning experiences into your everyday routines—no preparation needed!
Focus on Social and Emotional Learning: The Power of Play

Social and emotional learning isn’t just for children. It’s also important that adults understand and take care of their own needs and stressors so that we are at our best for our children. For this week, we wanted to refer you to an infographic developed by the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University that gives some quick pointers on how you can take care of yourself through this time. You can also go to their website for some great resources on child development in general that you might find interesting including, among so many other topics, brain development, play, helping your child deal with stress and build resilience, and self-regulation. Next week we’ll have some targeted resources for you and your family on not just how to cope with the challenges that so many are facing, but how to use this time to build strong family bonds and help your child flourish!
Five Green and Speckled Frogs

Five green and speckled frogs
Sat on a hollow log
Eating some most delicious bugs.
  Yum! Yum!
  One jumped into the pool
  Where it was nice and cool.
Now there are four green speckled frogs. Glub! Glub!

Four green and speckled frogs
Sat on a hollow log
Eating some most delicious bugs.
  Yum! Yum!
  One jumped into the pool
  Where it was nice and cool.
Now there are three green speckled frogs. Glub! Glub!

Three green and speckled frogs
Sat on a hollow log
Eating some most delicious bugs.
  Yum! Yum!
  One jumped into the pool
  Where it was nice and cool.
Now there are two green speckled frogs. Glub! Glub!

Two green and speckled frogs
Sat on a hollow log
Eating some most delicious bugs.
  Yum! Yum!
  One jumped into the pool
  Where it was nice and cool.
Now there is one green speckled frog. Glub! Glub!

One green and speckled frog
Sat on a hollow log
Eating some most delicious bugs.
  Yum! Yum!
  It jumped into the pool
  Where it was nice and cool.
Now there are no green speckled frogs. Glub! Glub!
GROOVY GRAINS

Ingredients:
- ¼ cup whole-grain sorghum
- Salt (optional)

(makes 1 cup popped)

Instructions:
1. Pour ¼ cup into a small . Fold top of to close.

2. Place in with folded side down.

3. on High 2-3 minutes. Remove after popping has slowed to 5 seconds between pops.

4. Open carefully - away from face. Pour in a . Add , if desired.

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