

# At Home Learning Guide for Prekindergarteners (4 years old)

Week of April 6, 2020



# This Week's Theme: In the Spring

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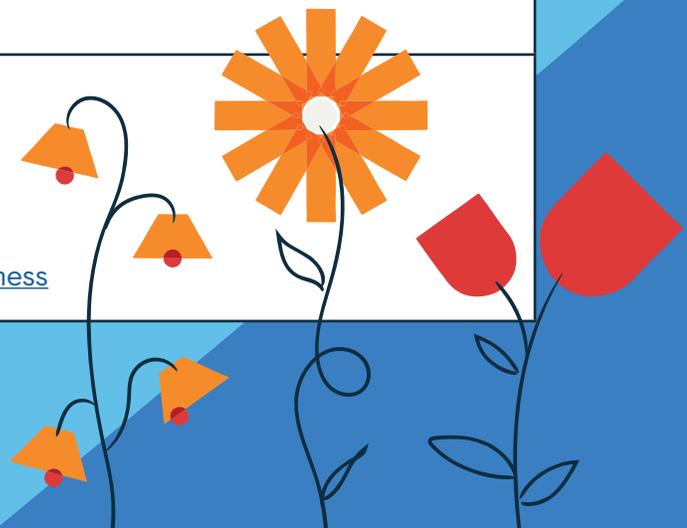
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### Getting Ready for the Week

This week in our centers, children get to explore both big and little changes that happen in the natural world during the spring season. This guide includes several experiences to help your child explore the changing 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 prekindergarten 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 connections 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.
- 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

If you'd like, you can gather these materials Sunday evening and put them in a basket or container so they are ready to go for the week!

- Paper bag, small
- Plastic toy insects, such as a grasshopper, an ant, a butterfly, and a caterpillar (optional)
- Pencils
- Paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Die
- Index cards (12)
- Corrugated cardboard
- Rubber bands, large (4)
- Scissors (for your use only)
- Tape
- Weaving materials, such as real or fake flowers, feathers, long grasses, clippings from flexible trees or shrubs
- 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.

### 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!

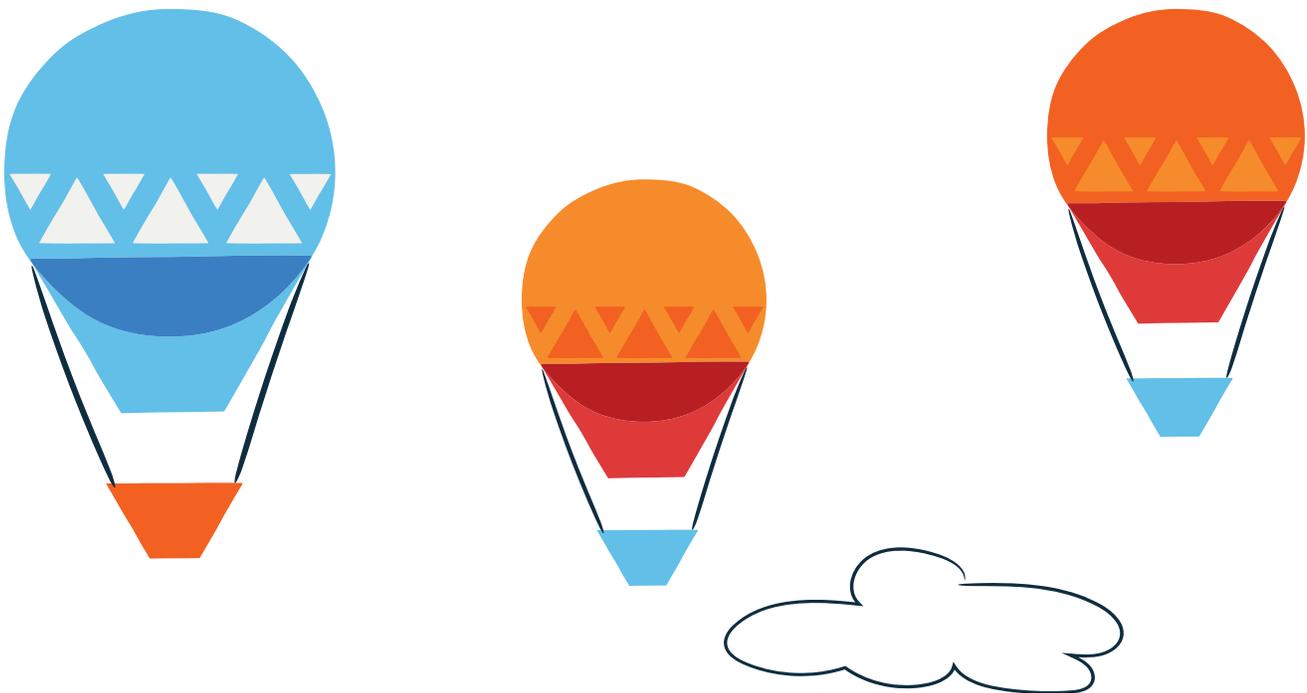
For more ideas on how to keep the learning going, look for the **Everyday Learning Experiences** described throughout this guide.



## 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?"

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

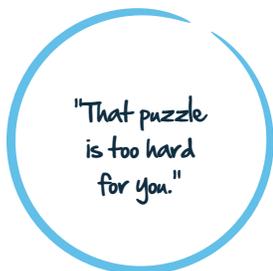
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**Try It!** Pick a developmental area where you want to encourage your child's growth, such as math, art, science, or language. Think of ways that you can build their skills in those areas throughout your daily routine. Can you combine more than one 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
- Unsweetened yogurt with fruit
- Hard-boiled eggs and carrot sticks
- Turkey slices and cucumber
- Vegetable sticks and, hummus
- Beans and tortilla (for a tasty treat, sprinkle with cheese and broil for four, minutes)
- Whole-grain bread/crackers with hummus, nut butter, or avocado



### Monday, April 6, 2020

#### Physical Development and Wellness Activity: Bug Moves

**Length of activity:** 10-15 minutes

**What your child is learning:** Your child is learning to show awareness and coordination of their own body while moving creatively, as well as developing communications skills as they share what they know about each insect.

**Level of Engagement Required by Adult:** Low

**What you need:**

- ❑ Paper bag, small
- ❑ Plastic toy insects, such as a grasshopper, an ant, a butterfly, and a caterpillar (optional)

**What you do:** If available, place the plastic insects inside the paper bag. Have your child select one insect out of the bag. Ask your child to name the insect they have selected, providing assistance as needed. Invite your child to share what they know about how this insect moves and explore moving like the insect. When they are ready, have them select another insect and repeat the process. If plastic insects are not available, you can name insects or select insects from images in books.

**If your child is ready:** Invite your child to think about other things they see in the spring, such as animals or flowers, and encourage them to think about ways they could move like these things or show these things through movement.

#### Phonics Adventures Activity: Green and Growing

**Length of activity:** 15 minutes

**What your child is learning:**

- How to listen carefully for the /g/ sound at the beginning of a word
- How to say /g/ as the beginning sound in familiar words
- How to identify additional words that begin with the /g/ sound
- To control the body to move in a certain way

**Level of engagement required by adult:** High

# At Home Learning Guide - Prekindergarteners

Week of April 6, 2020



## 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 sound at the beginning of each word, /g/. Say the /g/ sound together a few times. What letter makes the /g/ sound?

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	

If your child is ready for more of a challenge, try adding a few words that end with the /g/ sound to the list, like gig, fig, big, and dig.

## 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?
- What are some other words you can think of that start with the /g/ sound?



### Everyday Learning Activities

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

While completing chores at home, ask your child how their favorite animal would accomplish the task. How would they use their hands, feet, and whole body to get the job done? If the job is hard for that animal, what other animal might do it better?

### 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: "Spring Walk"

**Length of activity:** 10-15 minutes

**What your child is learning:** Through this activity your child is learning to recall information from prior experiences to answer questions and share information. Your child is also practicing early writing skills.

**Level of Engagement Required by Adult:** Medium

**What you need:**

- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Pencils
- Paper



**What you do:** Write the words to the chant “Spring Walk” on a sheet of paper. Show the paper to your child and read the words aloud pointing to each word as you read it. After reading it, point to the blank space and ask your child what they might see on a spring walk. Invite your child to use inventive spelling to write their response in the blank. Reread the chant including what your child wrote. Invite your child to illustrate what they saw on their spring walk.

### “Spring Walk”

I went on a spring walk.

What did you see?

I saw a \_\_\_\_\_.

What else could there be?

**If your child is ready:** Make several pages with the chant. Invite your child to fill in a different object on each blank and illustrate what they saw. Help your child combine the pages to create their own book.

## 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 prekindergartners can complete tasks like mashing, sprinkling, mixing, spreading, cutting with a butter knife, squeezing, tearing, scooping, stirring, whisking, wrapping, weighing, and dipping independently. With help, they can assist with pouring, cracking eggs, 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:

Whatever space you're in, ask your child what else people might do there. What activities might other families do? Where else might certain items go? Can they recall similar scenes where different things happened?

## 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: How Many Petals?

**Length of activity:** 10-15 minutes

**What your child is learning:** Through this activity your child is practicing counting skills while demonstrating the ability to focus their attention on a given task, and to follow the rules assigned to that task.

**Level of Engagement Required by Adult:** Low

**What you need:**

- ❑ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ❑ Die
- ❑ Index cards (12)

**What you do:** Have your child roll the die and count the number of dots on the side of the die facing up. Then ask your child to draw a flower with same number of petals on an index card. Have your child roll again. If they roll a new number, they create another card. If they roll the same number, they roll again. Have them continue until they have created one card for each number. After they have completed one set of cards, have them play the game a second time to create a second set of cards. Both sets of cards will be used in Thursday's Matching Flowers game.

**If your child is ready:** Use two dice and have your child count the total number of dots on both dice, and then create a flower with the same number of petals.

#### 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

# At Home Learning Guide – Prekindergarteners

Week of April 6, 2020



**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:**

While completing a task involving several objects, such as doing laundry or putting away dishes, ask your child for a specific number of items. If possible, show or write the number somewhere they can see. Then, ask them for one, two, or three more. Can they count the original number and then add the requested number, too?

### 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: Matching Flowers

**Length of activity:** 10 minutes

**What your child is learning:** Your child is demonstrating and practicing their skills in memory, persistence, attention and prolonged focus, and counting.

**Level of Engagement Required by Adult:** Low

**What you need:** 2 sets of flower petal cards 1 through 6 (from Wednesday How Many Petals? activity)

**What you do:** Show your child how to shuffle the cards and place them face down to create a 3-card by 4-card grid. Invite your child to select two cards to turn over and to count the number of petals on each card. If the number of petals on the cards match, remove them from the game. If the number of petals does not match, flip them over and try again. Encourage your child to continue until they have matched all the cards.

**If your child is ready:** Have your child create a larger matching game by adding flower petal cards 7 through 12 to the game.



### 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:**

Notice and name an object in your space that is identical to or like one elsewhere in your space or home. Then ask your child to find the match. For example: "Here's a blue cup. Do we have any other blue cups somewhere in the house? Where are they?"

### 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 Weaving

**Length of activity:** 10-20 minutes

**What your child is learning:** Through this activity your child is creating artwork using a variety of materials, as well as practicing their fine-motor skills as they weave the materials through the rubber bands.

**Level of Engagement Required by Adult:** Low to Medium

#### What you need:

- ❑ Corrugated cardboard
- ❑ Rubber bands, large (4)
- ❑ Scissors (for your use only)
- ❑ Tape
- ❑ Weaving materials, such as real or fake flowers, feathers, long grasses, clippings from flexible trees or shrubs



**What you do:** Cut the corrugated cardboard into a 6-inch by 8-inch rectangle. Create a weaving board by stretching the rubber bands across the length of the cardboard, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Tape the ends of the cardboard to help hold the rubber bands in place.

Show your child the weaving board and weaving materials you have collected. Demonstrate how to use an over-under pattern to weave one of the items through the rubber bands. Invite your child to continue weaving items through rubber bands for as long as they would like.

**If your child is ready:** Create a larger weaving board using a larger sheet of cardboard, wrapped with strings placed 1 inch apart and taped on the edges to secure.

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

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

### Everyday Learning Activities

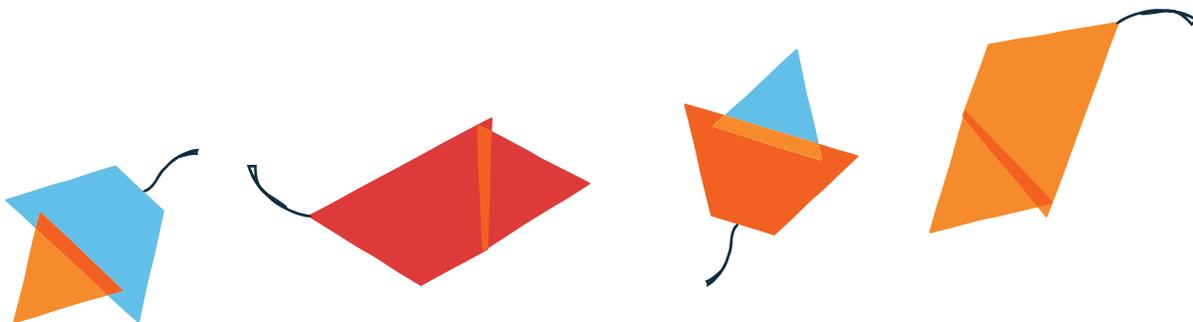
**Try this to help your child develop the skills described today no matter what you're doing:**

During a time when you are using multiple items at once, such as different types of food, items of clothing, or colors of paper, ask your child to make layers of the items. For example, blue clothes on the bottom, black clothes in the middle, and white clothes on the top. Can they create patterns based on the types of items you have on hand?

### Social and Emotional Learning: Focus on Mindfulness

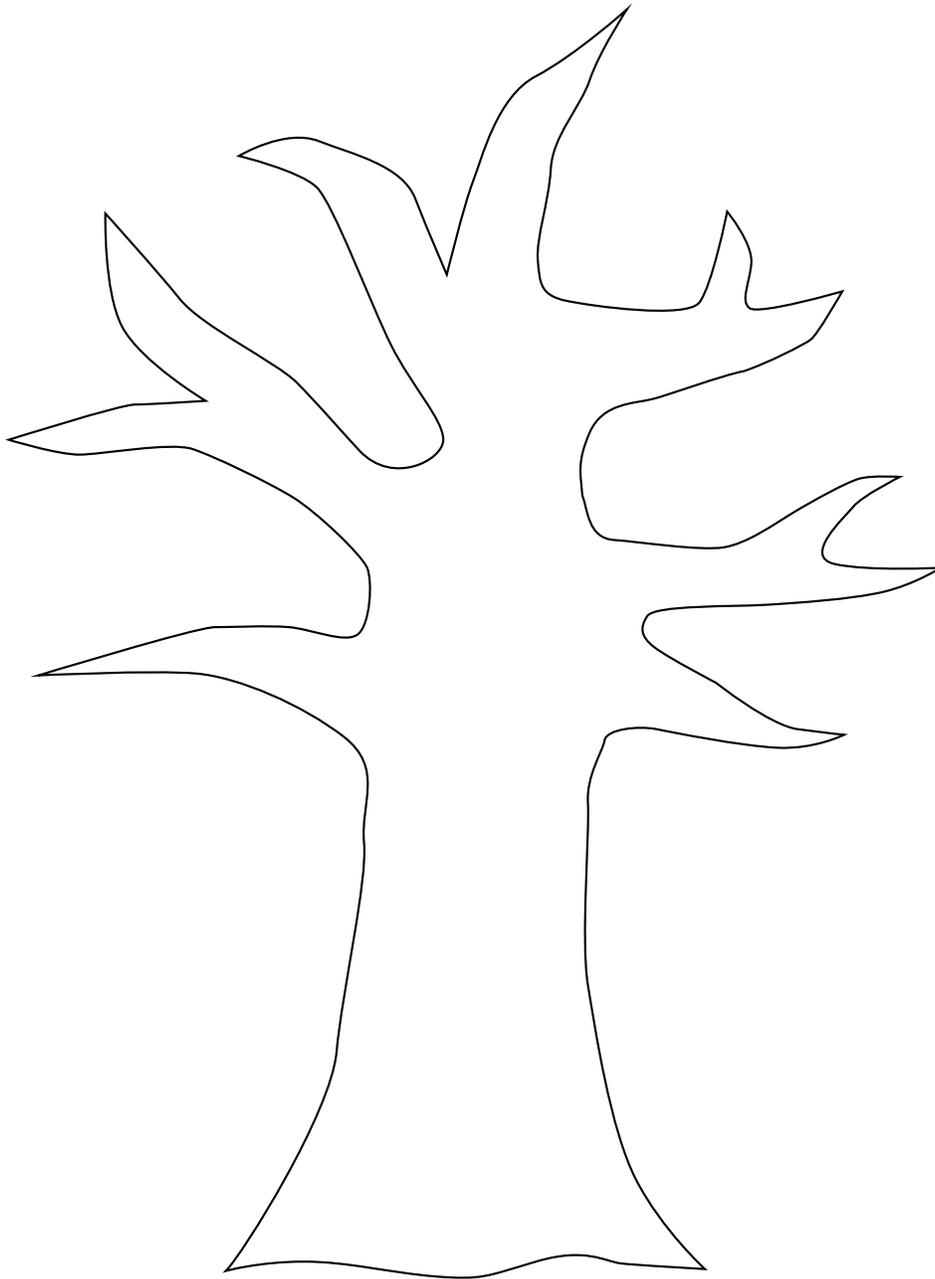
Deep breaths help all of us feel calm and centered throughout the day. Making deep breathing fun for children is a great way to get them in the habit, and practicing alongside them will help you stay grounded, too.

**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    
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.