

Introduce your child to numbers and counting

JANUARY:

Use number words and point out written numerals as you and your child do things together.

- In the kitchen:
 - “On this package of rice it says to add 2 cups of water.”
 - “I need you to put 5 forks and 3 plates on the table.”
- Grocery shopping:
 - “That sign says bananas are 49cents a pound.”
 - “Pick out 4 apples and put them in this bag.”
- At play:
 - “See if you can stack 6 pennies.”
 - “Can you put 4 blocks in a row?”

Involve your child in number and counting activities.

- Play “Simon Says.” Say to your child “Simon says clap your hands 5 times.” “Simon says take 3 steps forward.”
 - Let your child have a turn being Simon.
- Make numbers cards. Write on index cards the numerals 1,2,3,4,5, one number per card. Ask your child to place the correct number of pennies on each card.

Read, tell stories, sing songs and say nursery rhymes about numbers and counting with your child.

- Read or tell stories to your child such as The Three Bears.
- Say nursery rhymes such as “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe” and “Baa Baa Black Sheep” with your child.
- Sing counting songs you remember such as “This Old Man.”

Encourage your child to listen and use words to express ideas and feelings.

FEBRUARY:

Take time each day to listen to and talk with your child.

- While traveling together
 - Turn off the radio CD player in your car when you and your child are going places together.
 - Encourage your child to talk with you about where you are going and what might happen when you get there.
- At home together
 - Turn off the TV at meal time and talk with your child about things that interest him or her.
 - Talk with your child about some things each of you did that day.

Use pictures to encourage your child to express ideas.

- Look at the pictures in books or magazines together.
 - Ask your child to tell you what he or she sees in each picture.
 - Look at a picture book together and have your child try to predict what will happen next before turning the page.
- Have your child draw a picture and then tell you about it.

Involve your child in activities that require listening and following directions.

- Give your child directions that involve two steps. Here are some examples:
 - Pick up your plate and put it in the sink.
 - Hop to the door and open it.
- Ask your child to do certain things with an object. Use words such as under, over, behind, in front of, beside, etc. Here are some examples:
 - Put the bean bag under your chin.
 - Hold the ball over your head.

Help your child learn about and express different feelings.

- Read books that tell about and explore different feelings.
 - Talk about situations that make people feel sad, happy, angry, frustrated, scared, etc.
 - Use facial expressions and different tones of voice to help dramatize different emotions.
- Encourage your child to talk about and label his or her feelings in different situations.

Enjoy the sounds of language with your child.

MARCH:

Read rhymes with your child.

- Read Mother Goose rhymes with your child. Encourage your child to complete the rhymes with the correct rhyming word, such as “Hickory, Dickory, Dock, The mouse ran up the Cclock.”
- Invite your child to say his or her favorite rhymes with you over and over again. Your child will soon be able to say the rhymes alone.
- Read simple poems with your child. Encourage your child to complete the poem with the correct rhyming word.

Play with rhyming sounds.

- Use a collection of objects or pictures of objects such as sock, rock, hat, cat, soap, rope, spoon and moon. Invite your child to match the objects or pictures that rhymes and name them.
- Use objects found around the house—such as a sock, ball, and hat. Encourage your child to say a word that rhymes with the chosen object. Accept nonsense words that rhyme as well.

Help your child match letters to objects or pictures.

- Select an object or picture, a banana for example, and have your child say the name of the object to hear the beginning sound of the word.
- Ask your child to name the alphabet letter that matches the beginning sound of the word.
- Write down a letter and tell your child the sound that letter makes. Have your child find pictures in a magazine or book of things that have that beginning letter sound.

Make the most of TV, videos, and computers.

APRIL:

Use media as learning tools.

- Select TV programs carefully. Ask yourself, “Does this program teach what I want my child to learn?”
- Check out videos and DVDs from the library on exciting topics that interest your child. Discover the world of animals, explore underwater sea life, or visit outer space.
- Reinforce basic skills like colors, shapes, and counting with quality computer games.
- Encourage listening by playing different types of music.

Limit children’s total screen time.

- Set limits for TV and computer use.
- Turn the TV off when no one is watching it. Turn it on only when you want to watch a specific program.
- Remove television and computers from your child’s bedroom and put in a public area of your home.

Monitor the media your child is using.

- Select age appropriate TV programs, videos, music, computer games and web sites.
- Preview programs, videos and web sites, Previewing lets you know exactly what your child will see.
- Watch together and talk about what you see. Use this time to connect to your child.

Avoid making TV a centerpiece of home life.

- Encourage other forms of entertainment such as reading, drawing, playing outdoors, listening to music, or playing cards or board games.
- Turn the TV off at meal time and talk about some things each of you did that day.
- Be a role model and set an example by watching less TV yourself.

Play learning games with your child

MAY:

Collect materials for learning games.

- Cut out 2 circles, 2 squares and 2 triangles, all the same color and about the same size.
- Make matching pairs of cards with stickers or pictures of animals. For example; cut cardboard in 3"x 3" squares, place a sticker or picture on each card.
- Or use "Old Maid" and "Go Fish" Cards, memory/matching cards, or a deck of playing cards.

Play matching games.

- Start with six pairs of matching cards. Use either the cards you have made or cards you have purchased.
- Shuffle the cards and lay them face up on the table or on the floor.
- Invite your child to find the two cards that match.
- Add additional pairs of cards as your child becomes more skilled at finding the pairs.

Have fun as you play "I Spy" color games.

- Play the game by spying different colored objects in your home or outdoors.
- Begin with one color such as red. Say "I spy something red. It's round and you can throw it. What is it?" (red ball)
- Add another color such as yellow. Say "I spy something yellow. You peel it and eat it. What is it?" (banana)
- Continue playing the game by adding other colors.

Play "shapes" and "sizes" games.

- Show your child the shapes you have cut out. Help your child name them: circle, square and triangle.
- Hide one set of shapes somewhere in the room—each shape in a different place.
- Give your child one shape at a time and have him or her find the matching shape and name it.
- Show your child a collection of coins and name them.
- Invite your child to put together all the coins that are the same size.

Invite your child to think and solve problems.

JUNE:

Collect materials that encourage thinking and problem-solving.

- Cut out pictures of things that go together and paste them on separate cards. Examples might include:
 - shoe and sock
 - flower and vase
- Collect real objects that go together, such as:
 - hammer and nail
 - comb and brush

Involve your child in discovering things that go together.

- Begin with real objects.
 - Place the real objects you have collected on a table or on the floor.
 - Make sure the objects that go together are separated from each other.
 - Ask your child to find the two objects that go together.
 - Invite your child to tell you why the two objects go together
- Use pictures next.
 - Lay the picture cards of things that go together face up on the table or floor. Make sure pictures that go together are separated from each other.
 - Ask your child to find the two pictures that go together and tell you why they do.

Play pattern games with your child.

- Create a movement pattern and ask your child to repeat it. For example: step-step-jump, step-step-jump (take 2 steps forward, then jump).
- Start a pattern using objects and ask your child to “Make a pattern just like this one.” For example:
 - With eating utensils: fork, spoon, fork, spoon.

Provide opportunities to experience and resolve challenges cooperatively.

- Give your child lots of time to play with other children. Encourage activities that involve sharing such as blocks, crayons, playdough and dress up.
- Develop a conflict or argument with stuffed animals or puppets. Talk first about how the different animals are feeling. Discuss with your child how to resolve the conflict.

Help your child know personal information

JULY:

Create with your child an "All About Me" book.

- Help your child make a book by stapling or tying blank sheets of paper together with yarn.
- Help your child create the cover of the book. Use a photo of your child or a picture he or she draws for the cover page.
- Let your child decide on the title of the book and write that on the paper.
- Add your child's name to the cover as the author of the book. Write or have your child write his or her name on the cover of the book. Include both the first and last name.

Involve your child in adding personal information to the book.

- Begin writing a sentence and ask your child to complete it. Add to the sentence what your child says; helping as needed. The information should be correct and complete.
- Here are some examples of what to include:
 - My name is _____
 - (child's first and last name).
 - Sometimes my family calls me _____
 - (nickname).
 - I am a _____ (girl or boy).
 - I was born on _____ and I am _____ years old.
 - My eyes are _____ (color) and my hair is _____ (color)
 - I like to _____ .

Help your child add a family and friend section to the book.

- Add photos or drawings of family members and friends. Help your child decide what to write about each person. Here are some examples:
 - This is my mother. Her name is _____ (first and last name). She makes good spaghetti.
 - This is my grandfather. He lives with us. His name is _____.
 - Add pictures of favorite neighbors and pets.

Make “going to kindergarten” plans with your child

AUGUST:

Get ready for kindergarten.

- Begin to gather school supplies to your child.
- Play school with your child. Take turns being the teacher. Ride in the bus or car, read stories, sing songs, draw pictures, eat lunch, and play outdoors.
- Eat a meal on trays with your child. Encourage your child to carry his or her own tray to the table and return the tray to the kitchen after the meal. Eat a meal from lunch boxes and bags. Show your child what should be brought back home.
- Pretend to take your child to school. With your child, think of lots of ways to say goodbye. Decide how you will say goodbye to each other on the first day of kindergarten.

Visit your child’s school and preview school activities.

- Attend your school’s family open house or “meet the teacher day.” Here are some things to do when you visit:
 - Explore the classroom. Look at the books and materials, find out where the children store backpacks and hang coats.
 - Find out about daily schedule for your child’s class. For example, when do they have a story time, lunch, outdoor play and rest time?
 - Look for the cafeteria, playground, restrooms, principal’s office, library and other special areas of your school.

Maintain predictable family routines.

- Establish a regular bedtime for your child. We are healthier when we go to bed and wake up at about the same time every day.
 - Be prepared for your morning “before school” time. Getting everyone up and off to school can be hectic. Planning can eliminate some of those morning hassles.
 - Designate a place to collect things that are needed for school.
 - Before bedtime, talk with your child about what clothes he or she wear tomorrow. Be sure that everything is ready.
 - Have a pleasant conversations with your child on the way to school or as you wait for the bus.

READ WITH YOUR CHILD EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER:

Create a reading area for your child:

- Store your child's books in a special place that's easy to reach such as a basket, drawer or on a low shelf
- Place a small rug or pillow in the area to create a cozy and comfortable place for reading
- Join your child and read together in this special place
- Talk to your child about how to care for books, including how to return books to their storage place

Give your child a variety of books for reading:

- Get a library card for your child.
- Visit your local library or bookmobile with your child
- Let your child look at the picture books in the children's section of the library and select several books to take home
- Look for other places to find books like garage sales, friends or relatives, and thrift shops

Set aside a special time each day to read with your child

- Find a special place away from distractions
- Hold your child close to you while you read to help develop a positive attitude toward reading
- Remember, children enjoy and learn by repetition. Read your child's favorite books over and over

Let your child participate in book reading:

- Show your child how to read a book (from left to right, from front to back, and how to turn pages)
- While reading a book with your child, talk about the story
- Ask your child to look at the pictures and predict what the book is about
- Ask your child to retell the story in his or her own words
- Help your child relate the story to his or her own life

GOOD BOOKS FOR four and five year olds:

- Never too little to love by Jeanne Willis
- Clifford's First School Day, by Norman Bridwell
- Corduroy by Don Freeman
- Abiyoyo by Pete Seeger
- Ten Minutes Till Bedtime by Peggy Rathmann
- Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose

Let your child use school tools such as pencils, markers, crayons and scissors.

OCTOBER:

Gather and organize materials for drawing, writing and cutting

- Help your child select a container for storing drawing and writing materials. Help decorate and label it—for example, “Amy’s Drawing and Writing Box.”
- Decide on some simple rules for your child for using the drawing and writing materials—for example, “Markers may be used at the kitchen table or outdoors.” Or “Scissors are for cutting paper.”

Encourage your child to explore with drawing materials.

- Suggest that your child draw pictures in different places:
 - in the kitchen while you prepare dinner
 - in the park while you enjoy the bright fall days
- Draw pictures with your child about family events and experiences.
- Talk with your child about the pictures and decide on a place to display your favorites.
- Praise your child’s efforts. Remember, perfection is not the goal.

Let your child see that written words are a part of daily life.

- Make a grocery shopping list together.
- Clearly label your child’s belongings with his or her name.
- Encourage your child to use the materials in the drawing and writing box to write letters of the alphabet if he or she is interested in writing.

Support your child as he or she practices using child safety scissors.

- Designate appropriate places for your child to use scissors and discuss safety rules and what is okay to cut.
- Be sure that your child knows how to hold the scissors, how to open and close the blades, and how to hold the paper.
- Encourage your child to snip play dough snakes and soda straws into little pieces.
- Provide strips of construction paper, old magazines, and cards from junk mail for your child to snip

Give your child daily opportunities to use large muscles.

NOVEMBER:

Collect safe toys and equipment to help your child develop large muscles:

- Empty plastic water bottles to use as bowling pins.
- Bean bags to toss, made by partially filling a sock with beans and tying a knot in the sock.
- A tricycle to steer and pedal.
- Balls to throw, catch and bounce (9 to 12 inch rubber balls).

Let your child spend time outdoors and have space and freedom to use large muscles.

- Have a safe outdoor place for your child to run and play.
- Let your child pedal a tricycle outdoors.
- Set up a basketball hoop low enough so your child can successfully “make a basket.”

Join your child in active play.

- Play toss and catch with your child using 9 to 12 inch rubber balls.
- Set up an obstacle course and encourage your child to steer a tricycle through it.
- Draw a Hop Scotch pattern on your sidewalk or driveway or make one indoors using masking tape. Show your child how to hop the pattern. Let your child hop according to his or her ability.
- Recall singing games from your childhood such as the “Hokey Pokey” and involve your child and other family members or friends in playing the game.

Give your child opportunities to use large muscles indoors.

- Invite your child to toss bean bags or bean socks into a basket or a masking tape circle on the floor.
- Let your child try balancing a book on his or her head while walking.
- Create an obstacle course in a room with space for moving. Include a taped line to walk on, a table to crawl under, chairs to crawl through, a book to jump over and a large box to crawl through.
- Suggest that your child move like different animals: hop like a rabbit, slither like a snake, crawl like a bug and fly like a bird.

Help your child become aware of letters and words at home and in the community.

DECEMBER:

Help your child recognize his or her first name in print.

- Make a name card for each member of your family. Use an upper case letter to write the first letter of the name and lower case letters for the remaining letters—for example, “Matthew.”
- Help your child place the cards at the right spot at the table.
- Invite your child to watch you write his or her name as you label personal belongings such as coat, sweater and backpack.

Help your child recognize the letters in his or her first name.

- Use alphabet letter magnets to spell your child’s name on the refrigerator or a cookie sheet.
- Encourage your child to arrange the letters in the correct order using his or her name card as a guide.
- Place the alphabet letters in a bag or other container. Encourage your child to pull out the letters one at a time and name them.

Encourage your child to “read” familiar signs.

- Give your child printed materials such as telephone books, magazines, grocery store ads and menus from favorite restaurants to play with.
- Invite your child to “read” road signs and business signs with you as you drive.

Give your child opportunities to recognize and name letters of the alphabet.

- Encourage your child to find letters in his or her own name in signs that you see.
- Read alphabet books with your child and allow him or her to name the letters he or she recognizes.