



Games and Activities to try at Home



By Andrea Oliver



Introduction

There are many ways to help support your child's learning and development at home. This booklet is designed to give you some ideas that can be achieved on a budget.

Role Play

Dressing up in costumes or different clothes is a wonderful way for children to use their imagination, creativity, and improve their social and language skills. Children are able to act out roles which assist them to learn about the world around them and pretend to be other people, which helps them to form their self-identity.

You do not have to spend lots of money to buy costumes as children will happy dress up in adults cast offs or you can improvise buy using a large scarf as a cape, belt or bandana. Introducing props such as bags, shoes, notebooks, old telephones or mobiles can help support and extend their play. Creating a small, shop, tent, den or café can also help to support their play.

By becoming involved in your child's role play you can help introduce new vocabulary and initiate new storylines.

Paper Plate Faces

Ask your child to draw, paint or collage different facial expressions onto plates.

Talk to your child about how the faces are feeling and why. Attach a lolly stick or twig to turn them into puppets and act out different stories.



Small World Toys

These are toys such as farm sets, dolls house, castle and their play people.

Using positional language such as up, down, next to, under, below, behind can help to enhance your child's mathematical concepts.

Measuring

Ribbons and building blocks can be used to measure how tall and wide objects are. For example, by building a tower next to a teddy bear your child can measure how many blocks tall the bear is.

Car Parking

Draw a car park with numbers on the car parking spaces on a piece of large paper or card. Then write a number on some stickers and stick them onto the roof of each car.

Encourage your child to drive the car into the parking space with the same number.



Kims Game

Place 5 or 6 items onto a tray and show and talk about them to your child. Cover the items with a towel or tea towel, and secretly remove 1 item. Ask your child to identify which item is missing.

This game is brilliant for promoting memory and cognitive development.

Sorting the laundry

Encourage your child to help sort the laundry into colours, match socks by their patterns or sort by their type e.g. place all the trousers and all the skirts together.

This helps to support children's mathematical concepts and language.

Stepping Circles

Place paper plates or circles of card onto the floor. Encourage your child to step over the circles.

Add colours, numbers or letters to enhance learning in other areas.

This promotes coordination and balancing skills.

Alphabet, number or animal hunt

Make cards from a cereal packet and write on letters of the alphabet or numbers onto them. Hide them around the house or garden and encourage your child to find them and name the letter or numbers.

You can also use toy animals, insects, dolls, or vehicles to hide.



Cereal Necklaces or Snakes

Cut a piece of string or wool, you may need to wrap a small piece of sellotape around one end of the wool to assist the threading process.

Tie a knot in one end and encourage your child to thread Cheerios or Wheetos onto the string or wool.

This is very good for fine motor skills and concentration.

Water painting

Give your child a bucket or pot, and an old paint brush and encourage them to paint on the wall, paths, paving slabs outside in the garden.

This helps to develop pre-literacy and fine motor skills.

Nature Walk

Take a basket or bag on a nature walk and collect different leaves, twigs, fir cones, acorns, flowers, weeds bark and so on. Talk about the different textures.

Find some card and create a nature collage using glue and sellotape.

Your child will learn new descriptive words such as rough, smooth, hard, soft, spiky etc. This can help your child learn about the natural world and about changes that happen throughout the year, if repeated through the different seasons.

Magic Potions

Give your child a buckets or old sauce pan and allow them to collect mud, water, leaves, petals, sand, stones, grass and mix the together.

Children learn about natural materials; and cause and effect when mixing items together. This also helps develop their gross and fine motor skills.



Junk Modelling

Save cereal boxes, yoghurt pots, tubes, magazines, milk bottle tops, and foil. Encourage your child to make a model using these items.

Provide scissors, glue and sellotape to assist them to find different ways to attach the items together.

This is good for problem solving, fine motor skills, and creativity.

Sequence Cards

Cut out four cards and draw on pictures of events that happen in order, such as a the stages of a plant growing, getting dressed, making a milkshake.

Ask your child to put them in the correct order.

Good for thinking skills and sequencing.

(Lemon, 1988)

Bottle and Lids Sorting

Collect some plastic bottles and their lids and place on a tray. Encourage your child to find the correct lid to fit the bottle and put on the bottle.

This is ideal for promoting fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination and size and shape mathematical skills.

(Lemon, 1988)

Box Scenes

Use an old shoe box or similar. Encourage your child to make a background for them to play with, for example under the sea, a fairy forest, dinosaur world, a cave and so on.

Help your child make trees, sky, clouds and use natural materials such as stones or sand for additional texture. Hang items from the roof of the box to hang down.

When complete find some toy people and animals so your child can engage in imaginative play.

Good for supporting creativity and imaginative play.



Hidden Pictures

Cut out a strip of card and fold it in half. On the outside of the card write a word that your child is familiar with such as cat, dog. Then draw or stick on a picture to illustrate the word on the inside. Your child can use the picture to help them to recognise the word.

This helps encourage early pre-reading skills.

(Rice, 1990)

Collections of Items

By collecting and keeping sets of objects such as buttons, conkers, shells, Christmas decorations, you can encourage your child to sort them into different group types such as colours, size, shapes and so on.

Fine motor skills, mathematical concepts and language can all be learnt from sorting these objects.

Tips...

- Do not force your child to do an activity that they are not interested in, as this will cause them to be bored.
- Your child will be more motivated to learn if they are interested in the activity and will be more immersed.
- Your child will be more likely to show a greater interest in an activity if you demonstrate plenty of enthusiasm about participating.
(Lemon, 1988)
- Give your child lots of positive encouragement and plenty of praise for their efforts and achievements as this will help to motivate them, make them feel valued and raise their confidence and self-esteem.



References

Lemon, C. (1988), Ready to Play, Warwickshire: Scholastic Publications Ltd.

Rice, M. (1990), Word Play, London: Kingfisher Books.