

# Early Head Start

## Home Learning Activities

0 - 1 year old

# Come and Go

## Primary Objectives

2a. Forms relationships with adults

## Why It's Important

Separations can be challenging for some children. Your child has bonded with you and trusts you to take care of her. It is hard for your child to understand that she will be cared for even in your absence and that although you leave, you will return. Playing simple "disappear, then reappear" games with your child will help her learn that your absence is only temporary.

## Materials

Your child's favorite toys

## What You Do

1. Choose a time to play this game when your child is feeling comfortable and secure.
2. Show your child the teddy bear and say, *Teddy is going now. Wave bye-bye to Teddy.*
3. Wave to the bear and move it out of sight, either behind a piece of furniture or behind your back.
4. Ask your child, *Where is Teddy?* Encourage her to look for the toy.
5. Show your child the toy again and say, *There's Teddy. Teddy came back for you.* Let your child hold the toy.
6. You can take the game further by telling your child, *I'm going to go but I'll be right back.* Offer a reassuring touch.
7. Walk to another part of the room where she cannot see you. Return shortly, smile, and say, *I'm back,* as you hug your child. This will give her practice watching you come and go. Remind her in a reassuring tone, *Sometimes I go away, but I always come back.*
8. Repeat the activity as long as your child is interested. If she becomes upset or distracted, stop the game and try it again another time.

# In and Out

## Primary Objectives

4. Demonstrates traveling skills
5. Demonstrates balancing skills

## Why It's Important

Children need many opportunities to practice their growing gross-motor skills. Boxes and tunnels are an easy and inexpensive way to provide your child with new gross-motor experiences.

## Materials

Large cardboard box; tunnels

## What You Do

1. Add the tunnels or boxes to the indoor or outdoor environment. You can make a tunnel by hanging a sheet over a table.
2. Invite your child to explore the box or tunnel. Observe and describe what you see your child do. *You are crawling through the tunnel.*
3. If other children are present, watch your child to see if she interacts briefly with other children using the materials. Explain what is going on. *You are trying to get out of the box and Jason is trying to get in.*
4. Interact playfully with your child as she continues to explore the tunnel or box. For example, when she crawls under a box you might say, *Where did [Cleo] go? Oh, there she is!*
5. Encourage your child to move in new ways. *You are going around the box. Now you are sitting near the box.*
6. You can extend her interest in this activity by adding additional props or toys to her play such as balls, beanbags, or different textured fabrics.

# Pat-a-Cake

## Primary Objectives

8a. Comprehends language

## Why It's Important

Most infants are naturally interested in being with others. Engaging your child with simple songs and fingerplays is a fun way to be playful with him. Repeating the activity often will help your child learn songs, new words, and the movements that relate to the song.

## Materials

None

## What You Do

1. Sit on the floor with your child facing you, either propped securely against a cushion or lying on his back.
2. Say the following rhyme aloud and show your child the hand movements. *Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can. Roll it, pat it, mark it with a B, and put it in the oven for baby and me!*
3. Invite your child to play Pat-a-Cake with you. *Let's do it again, and this time I'll use your hands.*
4. Gently hold his hands as you clap, roll, and pat them together.
5. Continue to sing and play for as long as your child remains interested. Be sure to look for cues that tell you he is ready for something different, such as looking away, crying, or attempting to shift positions.
6. You can extend this activity by singing other songs with your child, such as "The Itsy Bitsy Spider"; "Monkeys on the Bed"; "Open, Shut Them"; and "Ten Fingers."

# Hide It, Hear It, Find It

## Primary Objectives

11d. Shows curiosity and motivation

## Why It's Important

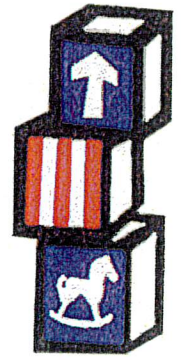
During this variation of a hide-and-seek game, your child has the opportunity to demonstrate his awareness of the hidden object (the problem) when he hears it make a sound. This is the first step of using problem-solving strategies.

## Materials

Toys that are visually stimulating and make sounds; blanket

## What You Do

1. Sit on the floor with your child in your lap. Place the toy and blanket in front of you.
2. Show your child the toy and manipulate it so it makes a noise. As you do this, describe what you are doing. *See the rattle? It makes noise when I shake it.*
3. Hide the rattle under the blanket right in front of your child. Describe what you are doing. *I'm hiding the rattle. Bye-bye, rattle!*
4. Manipulate the toy under the blanket so it makes a noise. Ask, *What was that sound?*
5. Observe your child for cues that he is aware that the rattle is missing and that he hears the sound. For example, he might look in the direction of the sound or reach in the direction of the sound.
6. Acknowledge your child's awareness. *You hear that rattle making noise.*
7. Take the rattle out and say, *Here it is!*
8. Allow your child to hold and manipulate the toy.



# Early Head Start

## Home Learning Activities

1 - 2 years old

# Fill and Dump

## Primary Objectives

7a. Uses fingers and hands

## Why It's Important

Children at this stage love to experiment with cause and effect by filling up a container and dumping it out. You can encourage your child's fine-motor development as she fills and dumps by providing materials that are the right size for her to pick up with a thumb and index finger. When you demonstrate how to pick up and drop the materials into small containers, you give your child the opportunity to imitate your actions.

## Materials

Small blocks or beads; large containers; small containers

## What You Do

1. Place the small blocks into a large container and arrange several small containers next to it.
2. Show the materials to your child. Allow her to explore the materials on her own.
3. If she does not use the materials for filling, pick up a block using your thumb and index finger and drop it into a small container. Then dump it out.
4. Your child may imitate your play or continue to use the materials another way. Acknowledge her efforts. *You are banging the red block on the floor. You dropped the green block into the cup.*
5. Stay nearby and periodically acknowledge her play. This will help her sustain her attention to the experience.
6. Allow your child to continue with the activity for as long as she is interested. Leave the materials where she can find them to use again during play.

# Clapping Along Together

## Primary Objectives

2a. Forms relationships with adults

## Why It's Important

Young children are interested in the rhythms and patterns of speech and music, and they can respond to simple gestures. Clapping to a song helps draw your child's attention to the sounds and rhythm of language and engages her with a familiar adult.

## Materials

None

## What You Do

1. Sit with your child facing you on your lap or on the floor.
2. Sing the following song to the tune of "Where Is Thumbkin?" as you clap to the rhythm:  
*[Child's name] is clapping, [child's name] is clapping, clap, clap, clap; clap, clap, clap.*
3. Repeat the song, and encourage your child to clap along.
4. If your child is not used to clapping, you may need to place your hands over her and clap together as you sing.
5. Continue the song for as long as your child is interested.
6. You can use the song at different times of the day by changing the lyrics. *[Child's name] is getting her diaper changed. Changed, changed, changed; changed, changed, changed.*



# I Spy

## Primary Objectives

8a. Comprehends language

## Why It's Important

Playing guessing games with your child about everyday objects in her life will help her develop listening and conversational skills.

## Materials

Objects around your home or outside that have defining characteristics (such as a color, shape, or texture)

## What You Do

1. Explain to your child that you are going to play a guessing game called "I Spy." Tell her to listen carefully to the clues you give.
2. Choose an object to describe. Begin with a very general and concrete clue, like color or size. *I spy... something yellow.* Encourage her to look for and point out yellow things as she makes guesses about the object you have chosen.
3. Give her a second clue to help narrow the choices. *The yellow thing that I spy is good to eat.*
4. Follow your child's lead and give clues until she correctly identifies the chosen object, either by saying its name or pointing to it.
5. Continue the game by offering your child a chance to lead and give you clues. Encourage her to play the game with another family member or friend.

# Picture Pointing

## Primary Objectives

17a. Uses and appreciates books and other texts

## Why It's Important

Richly illustrated books with pictures of familiar and unfamiliar objects will engage your child and encourage her interest in pictures, print, books, and reading.

## Materials

Picture books

## What You Do

1. Set up books in various areas of your home, such as near pretend play materials, in active areas, and in quiet areas. Look for opportunities to read books with your child alone or with one or two other children.
2. Select a book and tell your child that you have a book to read with her. *Remember when we saw a caterpillar outside this morning? Let's read about this very hungry caterpillar. This book is called The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*
3. As you read, talk to your child about the pictures. Encourage her to point to any familiar objects. *Look, there is a watermelon on this page. Do you see it? Yes, there it is! You love watermelon, don't you? Yum!*
4. Point out new objects to your child and describe them. *This big brown oval is called a cocoon. It is where the caterpillar stays until it becomes a butterfly. Can you say cocoon?*
5. Encourage your child to explore the book on her own. Guide her as appropriate. For example, if she holds the book upside down, turn it over for her and say, *That tree is upside-down. Can you make it right-side up? There we go.*
6. Use language to reinforce what your child does as she explores the book. *Yes, there's the strawberry. I see you pointing to the strawberry. Can you find the hole in the pickle? There it is. You found the hole!*
7. Plan opportunities for books and reading based on your child's natural preferences. If she enjoys looking at books during quieter times of the day, read books during quiet moments and before and after naps. If she prefers to physically hold and explore books, read a story beside her and allow her to listen while you read aloud.

# How Many Steps?

## Primary Objectives

- 4. Demonstrates traveling skills
- 20a. Counts

## Why It's Important

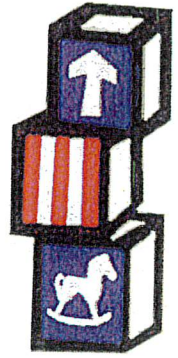
Providing your child with a goal to focus on while she practices her gross-motor skills may encourage her to move more readily, even with adult support. Counting each step slowly is a way to support your child's efforts to move purposefully and methodically.

## Materials

None

## What You Do

1. When moving from one area of the room to another, hold your child's hand or provide other appropriate support, and count together the number of steps you take.
2. Offer as much assistance as necessary for your child to move smoothly around the room. Acknowledge her movements. *Walking up stairs is hard work. You are really using your strong leg muscles today.*
3. Count when going up and down stairs, through doors, etc. *One, two, three, four, five, six. Six steps to get to the sink.*
4. When repeating a path already taken, ask your child if she can remember the number of steps it took the last time. Count again to see if the number matches. *It took us six steps to get to the sink. Let's see how many steps it takes to get back to the chair. One, two, three, four, five. Only five! Wow, you must have taken really big steps this time.*
5. Notice if your child becomes tired or frustrated. Offer time to rest when needed. Offer physical and emotional support as well. *You've done a lot of moving today. Let's take a break and relax your muscles now.*



# Early Head Start

## Home Learning Activities

2 - 3 years old

# Step, Squirt, Scrub, Swipe

## Primary Objectives

1c. Takes care of own needs appropriately

## Why It's Important

Your child needs a great deal of guidance and practice as she learns to attend to her physical needs on her own. Helping your child address her needs while also encouraging her growing abilities allows her to observe and participate in each task. As each process becomes routine for your child, your role will become secondary.

## Materials

Large piece of paper; markers; photos or illustrations of children carrying out the steps for handwashing

## What You Do

1. Create a chart that names and illustrates the following steps:
  1. Step up to the sink with help from an adult.
  2. Hold out hands to allow adult to squirt soap into them.
  3. Scrub hands together: back, front, and between fingers.
  4. Rinse hands and use paper towel to swipe hands and rub until dry.
2. Post the chart next to the bathroom sink. Refer to the chart each time that your child washes her hands. Talk through each step with your child as she completes it: *Now you are drying your hands.*
3. Use a paper towel to turn the water off. Help your child step down when she is finished.
4. Remember that the goal is for your child to complete the steps independently. Follow her cues to determine how much or how little she can do on her own.
5. Each time you practice this activity, encourage your child to use the chart as a reminder. Offer specific encouragement as she washes her hands: *I see that you spread out your fingers so you could scrub between them by yourself!*

# Writer's Journal

## Primary Objectives

7a. Uses fingers and hands

## Why It's Important

Helping your child see himself as an author will encourage him to take risks and experiment with more challenging types of writing. Journals are great for keeping a log of our ideas, thoughts, and drawings. They are also great for giving us a peek into our development as writers. As your child gets older, he may enjoy looking back on his old writing, noticing how he misspelled his name, and remembering his previous interests in TV characters, trends, or fads.

## Materials

Markers or crayons; stapler or hole punch and yarn; pencils; paper items for journal cover (construction paper, wallpaper, paper bags); colorful paper for journal pages

## What You Do

1. Talk with your child about notebooks, pads of paper, and other tools that writers use. *Writers put words down on paper so that they can share their ideas with other people. They also write things just for themselves.*
2. Invite your child to make his very own journal. Begin by gathering materials for the journal. Talk about writing as you work with your child. *What are some of your favorite things to write about?*
3. Invite him to select paper for the inside of the journal. Let him punch holes through the cover and paper, and then help him bind it all together with string, yarn, or other fasteners. Tie extra yarn through the top hole, and then tie a pencil to the other end of the yarn.
4. Encourage your child to label and decorate his journal cover.
5. Invite your child to choose a place to keep his journal so that he will know where to find it whenever he wants to write.
6. Incorporate journal writing into your child's daily routine. Add pages as needed.

# Over and Over Again

## Primary Objectives

18a. Interacts during reading experiences, book conversations, and text reflections

## Why It's Important

Reading books with repetitive texts and rereading your child's favorite books helps him to become familiar with the content of stories that you read to him.

## Materials

Book with a repeating word, phrase, or sound; your child's favorite books

## What You Do

1. Place the books on a shelf or on the floor so your child can see the covers. Allow him to select a book.
2. Invite your child to read the story with you. Read the book slowly enough for him to respond to your pauses.
3. Point to the pictures to indicate the next response in the repetition. For example, read, *Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the...* and point to the picture of the fiddle.
4. After your child has had an opportunity to respond, read the missing word or phrase.
5. Offer to read the story again when you are finished.
6. Continue the activity for as long as your child is interested. Allow time for him to explore the books on his own. When he is no longer exploring the books, return them to a low shelf so he can easily access them later.

# Coins in the Bank

## Primary Objectives

20a. Counts

## Why It's Important

Putting coins in a bank gives your child practice in understanding how to put objects where they belong. Listening to each coin as it falls into the bank helps to reinforce your child's attempts at counting the coins individually.

## Materials

Plastic piggy bank or plastic container with a coin-size slot cut into the top; real or pretend coins

## What You Do

1. Set up the coin bank and coins at a table.
2. Invite your child to sit with you at the table. Explain that you need her help to put the coins in the bank, one at a time.
3. As your child picks up each coin, encourage her describe its shape, size, texture, and color.
4. Point out the sound that a coin makes as it falls into the bank.
5. Invite your child to join you as you count the number of coins going into the bank. Accept all of her attempts to count, even if the numbers are not in the correct order.
6. Encourage her to point out other areas in the room in which one object fits inside another (e.g., a shovel in a bucket, a pencil in the pencil tray, or a flower in a vase).