

**Circle**  
ACTIVITY  
COLLECTION



**ENGLISH**

family activities

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# Welcome to the CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family

The CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family translates child development research into practice by providing a variety of hands-on activities that families can do at home. This collection is organized around seven learning domains: Language & Communication, Reading & Writing, Math, Science, Social & Emotional, Physical Development, and Art & Sensory.

## EACH ACTIVITY INCLUDES

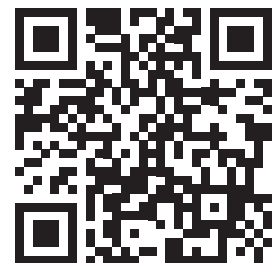
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- a **description** of the activity, the **learning areas** the activity supports, and an appropriate **age range**
- **materials** needed for the activity (usually common household objects)
- activity **instructions** and phrases that help families begin the activity
- helpful **hints**, including tips to make the activity easy to do, different ways the activity can be completed, and how to make it less or more challenging for your child

We hope you find the CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family to be useful in providing fun, playful learning experiences for your children which also support what they are learning in school. **Remember to visit us often — you are always welcome!**

Hover your smartphone camera over the QR code or join us at

**<https://cliengagefamily.org/>**



# Contents



## ACTIVITIES WITH WRITING TOOLS

Dramatic Play: Bakery	10
Meaningful Memories	19
My Favorite Things	20
Name Hopscotch	22
Nature Names	23
Post Office	25
Words, Words, Words	33



## ACTIVITIES WITH LETTERS

Buried Letters	8
Letter Lineup	17



## ACTIVITIES WITH COUNTING TOYS

Count and Match	9
Ducks in the Pond	11
Pattern Play	24
Take It Away	30
Who Has More?	32



## ACTIVITIES WITH A FLASHLIGHT

Flashlight Fun	12
Going Camping	13
Jungle Safari	15
Shadows and Light	27



## ACTIVITIES WITH A MAGNIFYING GLASS

A Home for a Bug	5
Bug Photo Hunt	7
Letter Detective	16



## ACTIVITIES WITH BOOKS

Be a Storyteller	6
Story Retelling with Puppets	29



## ACTIVITIES WITH A TOTE BAG

Mystery Bags	21
Say, Tell, Do	26



## ACTIVITIES ON THE GO (NO MATERIALS NEEDED)

I Spy Letters	14
Listening Walk	18
Silly Sentence Clap	28
What Do I See?	31

# A Home for a Bug

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Science

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, you and your child will make a home for a bug that takes care of all of its needs. Then you will go on a neighborhood or backyard walk and find a bug for your bug home.

## Materials

- plastic bag, plastic container with air holes poked in the lid, or jar with a mesh top
- grass, twigs, leaves
- a little sponge soaked with water

## LET'S PLAY

Talk with your child about what bugs are and what they need in order to live: food, water, air, and shelter (or a safe place to live). Then tell your child, “**Today we are going to build a home for a bug. We will catch a bug and watch him all day to learn more about him. At the end of the day, we’ll put him back outside so that he can go back to his real home. We need to make sure we build a home that has food, water, air, and shelter, or protection, for him. Can you help me do that?**”

Find a plastic baggie, clear plastic container, or jar. Show your child that you are going to poke tiny holes in the bag or lid to be sure the bug can get air to breathe. Then talk with your child about how he will provide the bug with food and water. Most bugs eat plants, so some blades of grass or fresh leaves will usually do the trick. A tiny sponge soaked with water can provide water, too. Next ask your child how he wants to arrange the shelter (or a safe place) for the bug; for example, your child can put in some rocks or twigs to give the bug a place to hide. Once your bug home is nice and cozy, and has everything the bug needs to live, it's time to find a bug!

Walk around outside exploring for bugs until you find a safe bug that you know does not bite or sting. Place your bug carefully into its new home.

Throughout the day, watch your bug and notice what it does. Does it eat or drink anything? Does it hide or explore? What else do you notice about the bug? At the end of the day, release your bug into the same location you found it. Review with your child what bugs need to live.

## TIPS

- Be careful not to make the air holes too big in your bug home or the bug will escape.
- Only pick up bugs you are familiar with and feel safe handling. Always wash your hands after touching any bug. You might wish to handle the bug by wearing gloves or scooping it up on a spoon.
- Remind your child to use gentle hands while holding their bug home. Shaking or pressing on the bug home will hurt the bug.
- Children love to catch and watch bugs. Make sure to show excitement throughout the activity and encourage your child to be curious and ask questions about what they want to know.

# Be a Storyteller

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, your child will use pictures from a book to retell a story.

## Materials

- a children's picture book with characters and a clear plot (beginning, middle, and end)
- chair for the storyteller (optional)

## LET'S PLAY

Begin by sitting with your child and saying, "Let's pretend to be storytellers. When we retell a story, we want to say all the important things that happened in the book. We can talk about the people or animals in our story. They are called characters. We can also talk about the setting of our story, or where the story takes place."

Read the book aloud. Next, have your child sit in the storyteller chair or on your lap and retell the events in the story.

Help your child remember as much as possible about the characters, setting, and major events by asking questions such as, "Who are the characters in our story?", "Where did this take place?" or "Do you remember what happened first?"

Your child can also look at and show you the pictures in the book to help her retell the story. If your child isn't sure where to begin, look at the first page of the book together and ask what happened at the beginning of the story. Let her use the book as much as she needs to help her retell the story.

## TIPS

- If you have a pet in your home or a baby sibling, you can invite your child to retell the story to the pet or to the baby. Even though they won't understand the words, they may be drawn to your child's voice and your child may enjoy this practice. Children can also tell stories to dolls or stuffed animals.
- If your child likes to draw, she could extend this activity by drawing her favorite scene from the book. You can model writing by writing your child's description of her picture.
- Look for props in your home (e.g., puppets, dolls, or objects from the story) that your child can use to help retell the story.



# Bug Photo Hunt

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Science

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, you and your child will walk around a park, your neighborhood, or your backyard, talking about and taking pictures of bugs you find.

## Materials

- phone or camera
- magnifying glass (optional)

## LET'S PLAY

Read a book or watch a short, child-friendly video about bugs online. After talking about what you've learned, tell your child that you are going on a bug hunt. The purpose of the bug hunt is to find and talk about bugs, not to catch or hurt them, and then take fun pictures of them. The pictures help us remember them and look at them more closely.

While walking around, have fun helping your child search for bugs by looking through grass, under rocks, and around trees. While walking around looking for bugs, you can say this chant:

*Going on a bug hunt,  
What will we see?  
Going to take pictures  
Of bugs around me.*

When you find a bug, be sure to have a bug-finding celebration with high-fives, hugs, or dancing, and praise your child for having good searching eyes! Inspect the bug, and ask a few of these questions before your child takes a picture of it:

- “What color is this bug?”
- “Do you think it can fly?”
- “Do you know what this bug is called?”
- “Where do you think this bug’s home is?”
- “What do you think this bug eats?”
- “What do you notice about its body?” (wings, legs, etc.)

After listening to your child’s responses, you can point out your own observations, too (for example, “**I think she might be able to fly because I see little gray wings on her back. Do you see them right there?**”) After you have discussed the bug, your child can take a couple pictures of it to remember it. Make sure to show your child how to take a picture on your phone or camera if she has not done so before.

## TIPS

- This activity requires close parental supervision. Never allow your child to get close to or touch a bug that may bite or sting. Always stay a safe distance away from an insect you are unfamiliar with.
- To extend this activity, print out your photos and make a bug book. Glue the pictures onto construction paper pages and write facts about them—where you found the bug, what your child noticed about it, and the name of the bug—under the pictures.
- If you are not sure what kind of bugs you have found, you might try to find a picture of a similar bug online or in a library book. Demonstrating and encouraging this kind of research encourages curiosity and will help your child see an example of how adults find out new information, which is an important lifelong skill.
- To add challenge to this activity, help your child notice bugs that look a lot like their surroundings. Talk about how this is called *camouflage*. Ask them, “**Why do you think a bug would want to blend in and look just like the tree or stick that it’s sitting on?**” Brainstorm and help your child realize that camouflage helps certain bugs hide and avoid being seen and eaten by other bugs, birds, and animals.
- Recommended books on bugs: *The Bug Book* by Sue Fliess, *Bugs A to Z* by Caroline Lawton, and *Backyard Bugs* by Jill McDonald.

# Buried Letters

## Learning Area(s)

- Reading and Writing
- Sensory and Art

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

In this game, children will practice naming letters and their associated sounds through a game of finding buried letters. Working with letters helps children learn their names and sounds, which are important pre-reading skills.

## Materials

- plastic letters
- cornmeal, oatmeal, rice, or sand
- dish pan

## LET'S PLAY

Place a variety of letters in a pan. You may want to begin with the letters in your child's name. Pour the corn meal/oatmeal/rice into the pan and bury the letters. Introduce the activity by letting your child know that he will play a game of digging for buried letters in the (sand, rice, etc.) and naming each letter. You can say, **"Let's play! Some letters are buried in this sand like treasure that we need to find and dig out. When we find a letter, then we'll try to name the letter. I might say, 'I found a T!'"**

Demonstrate for your child by digging with your hands in the pan and pulling out a letter. Tell your child the name of the letter, the sound it makes, and a word that starts with that letter.

Now encourage your child to dig for a letter. Ask your child for the letter name, and if he knows the name, ask for its sound and a word that begins with that letter. If your child cannot give a correct answer, help him by giving a clue (for example, **"This is the letter that says [b sound]."**) or by naming the letter for him.

You can narrate aloud as your child digs to keep the game interesting and playful for him, for example, **"I wonder which letters are hiding in here. I don't know if you can find all of them. Some of these letters are very sneaky and are still hiding from you!"**

Continue taking turns in this game until you find all the letters.

## TIPS

- You can also focus on letter names and sounds when riding in the car by naming things that you see inside or outside of the car, and then naming the beginning letter and sound. For example, **"McDonald's starts with the letter M and makes the /m/ sound."**
- Try this activity when preparing your child for school or nightly care routines by identifying the beginning letters and sounds in words such as bath, bed, dinner, etc.
- If you are using the letters in the child's name, you can also help him put the letters in order to form his name.



# Count and Match

## Learning Area(s)

- Math
- Physical Development

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

The child will recognize written numbers 1 to 9 and use one-to-one correspondence to count out the correct number of items.

## Materials

- nine sheets of blank paper
- markers
- sets of one to nine small objects to count (for example, counters, bottle caps, buttons, little bears, matchbox cars, blocks)

## LET'S PLAY

Before beginning the activity, use the markers to draw large dots (about the size of a quarter) on nine sheets of paper. For example, draw one dot on one piece of paper and write “1” at the top, draw two dots on another and write “2” at the top, then draw three dots on another and write “3” at the top, and so on up to nine.

Next, explain to your child that you will be counting and placing the objects onto the dots. For example, say, **“Today, we are going to play a counting game with these papers and our toys. We have a different number of dots on each paper.”** Point out to your child that each paper has some dots and a written numeral that matches that number of dots.

Pick one paper and begin by saying, **“Now let’s see if we can put one car on each dot and see how many there are.”** Model this activity for your child. For example, if you’ve chosen the four-dot card, point to the 4 at the top of the paper and say, **“This is the number 4.”** Then place four matchbox cars on the four dots saying, **“One”** as you drive and park the first car on a dot, then **“Two”** as you park the second car on a dot, and so on. Work together with your child to continue with the other cards. If your child can guess the number of dots based on “reading” the written number, that’s great! If not, you can help him count the dots, and then point out the written number.

## TIPS

- With a younger child, you might choose to start with the one-dot card. If your child is already somewhat familiar with numbers and counting, you can pick a card at random or ask your child which number he wants to start with.
- For younger children, or those with shorter attention spans, it may be enough to work with cards 1 to 4 rather than 1 to 9, or just those your child has not yet mastered.
- Remember to praise and encourage your child to keep him interested and engaged!
- If your child is not showing interest in counting games like this one, try using a snack food such as crackers, fruit snacks, or small pretzels as the counters. Have your child play the game and count the snacks before eating them!

# Dramatic Play: Bakery

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, you and your child will engage in conversations and role play while the child pretends to be a baker in a bakery.

## Materials

- pretend (or toy) baked goods
- baking supplies: bowls, wooden spoon, measuring cups, etc.
- toy or unbreakable plates, silverware, and cups
- paper
- pen

## LET'S PLAY

To build your child's knowledge of what a bakery is and does, begin by talking to him or her about what happens at a bakery and who works there. If possible, read some books together about baking (e.g., bread, muffins, cookies, cakes) or visiting a bakery.

To set up the play, you can create "menus" using pictures of baked goods, such as a muffin, a cupcake, a loaf of bread, etc. You can draw these pictures together or cut out photos from a grocery store ad or magazine. You can also make "Open/Closed" and "Bakery" signs to enhance the play. The bakery area can contain bowls, measuring cups, a rolling pin, apron, etc.

One person can be the baker and the other can be the customer at the bakery. You and your child should take turns playing these roles. The customer can place a checkmark on the menu next to the item he or she is purchasing and the baker can make it.

You can also model conversations by demonstrating what the baker would say and how the customer would respond. For example, the baker might say, "**Welcome to the bakery! Would you like to order something to eat?**" And the customer might respond, "**Good morning! I would like a blueberry muffin, please.**"

## TIPS

- There are many variations on this activity. You can create a restaurant, a coffee shop, an ice cream parlor, a flower shop, shoe store, etc.
- You may need to teach your child vocabulary words that go with this activity, like the names of objects and actions. This is a great opportunity for your child to learn new words and concepts!
- Model (demonstrate) writing for your child as you write signs and menu items.

# Ducks in the Pond

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Math

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, your child will play a game of counting objects and creating sets of objects.

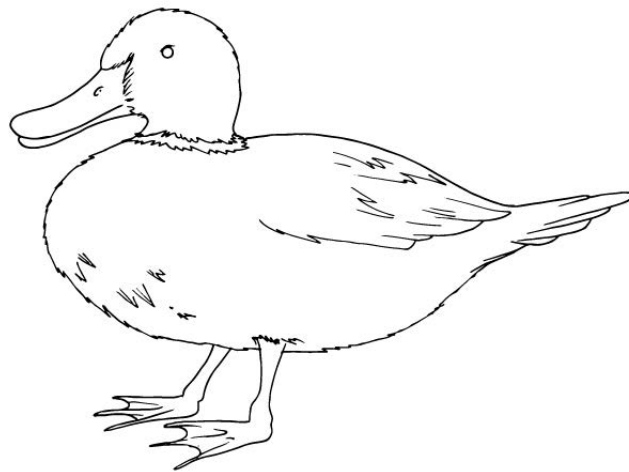
## Materials

- ducks: 12 small items of the same kind (for example, pom poms, counting chips, small cube-shaped blocks, or small rubber ducks)
- ponds: three circles about eight inches across, cut out of blue construction paper

## LET'S PLAY

On the floor or table, lay out the three blue circles and explain to your child that the circles are ponds for some ducks. The ducks are represented by the counters.

Place one “duck” into each pond. Count the ducks together with your child and explain that you have three ducks, one in each pond (three equal sets of one item each). Next, tell her that the ducks are lonely in their ponds and they each need a friend. Ask your child to add one “duck” to each pond and then count how many are in each pond (two). Then ask her to count how many ducks there are all together (six). Continue by pretending that the other ducks who are not yet in the ponds want to join their friends, but there’s a rule that there have to be the same number of ducks in each pond. Help your child count and compare until he ends up with four ducks in each pond.



## TIPS

- If your child enjoys this game, you can extend it by creating different stories about the “ducks” and moving the counters in and out of the “ponds” to match the story. For example, you could start over and make just two ponds with three “ducks” in each. Then say, **“Two ducks in this pond want to visit their friends in this pond.”** Have your child move two counters from one pond to the other. Then ask, **“Now how many ducks are in each pond?”** or say, **“Now the pond is getting too crowded. Quack, quack! Three ducks want to go back to the other pond.”** Have your child move three counters from the more crowded pond to the less crowded pond, and then ask how many are in each pond.
- Your child may want to start making up her own stories about the ducks to have them move in and out of ponds, add ducks, subtract ponds, etc. Help her use sentences to explain what she has done and what the new sets are, for example: **“I moved one duck from this pond to that pond, and now there are three in each pond.”**

# Flashlight Fun

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Science

## Age Group(s)

24-36 months old;  
3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Your child will observe and describe how a shadow is created with a flashlight.

## Materials

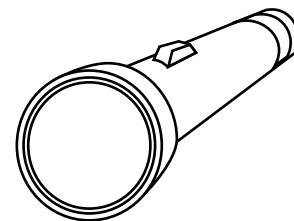
- flashlight, mini flashlights, or lamp
- blank wall or hanging sheet
- your child's favorite toys

## LET'S PLAY

First go to a dark room or turn off the lights so that you can explore how flashlights work with your child. Turn the flashlight on and off several times. Shine the light onto the wall or sheet, and talk about where the light is going as you take turns moving it across the walls and over the ceiling. For example, “**Watch the light. See how it's moving across the wall? Oh, look! I made the light jump to the ceiling! I can make it move really fast. Watch!**”

Next, take turns placing your hands or other body parts in front of the flashlight so that a shadow is projected onto the wall or sheet. Explain to your child that a shadow is formed when something blocks the light. Experiment by making fun shapes with your hands to see what the shadow looks like. You could even see if you can create some shadow puppets. Ask your child to make more shadows using his favorite toys.

As your child investigates light and shadows, use words such as *light, dark, shine, bright, dim, shake, high, low, look, flashlight, shadow, on, and off* so that he relates these vocabulary words to what he is doing.



## TIPS

- For safety, make sure you and your child do not shine the flashlight purposefully into someone's eyes.
- You can compare indoor shadows to outdoor shadows using the sun!
- You can expand upon this activity by talking about different sources of light (sunlight, light bulb), what powers the light (electricity vs. batteries), what we should do when we lose electricity in a storm, and/or safety rules associated with light, heat, or electricity (for example, do not touch outlets or stick anything in them because they can hurt or burn you).
- Try creating “shadow creatures” by using objects around the house to make more uniquely shaped shadows! Have your child pick a combination of objects to hold and wear (e.g., hats, tools, handheld kitchen utensils). Then have your child stand between the flashlight and the wall so that you can both see the outline of his shadow on the wall. For example, what would it look like if your child wore headphones, stuck a hammer through a belt loop on his pants, put a whisk in his pocket, held a large wooden spoon in one hand and an action figure in the other hand, and added a robot walk? Take turns turning the flashlight on to reveal your shadow creatures!

# Going Camping

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

24-36 months old;  
3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Families will read a book on camping and then pretend to go camping.

## Materials

- book on camping (see suggestions in Tips)
- tent or bed sheet/blankets
- chairs
- flashlight
- snacks

## LET'S PLAY

Read a book on camping with your child. Then talk to her about camping. Your conversation will depend on her age.

**“When people go camping, they go out into the woods and sleep outside. They cook their food over a campfire and walk around in the woods where there are so many trees. Would you like to go camping? We can pretend by building our own tent inside!”** Talk with your child about what things you want to bring along on your “camping trip.” You can use this chant to make it more playful and take turns coming up with things you want to bring. (Don’t forget to bring some food!)

**We’re going to go camping,  
What should we bring?  
(Child’s name)’s going to bring a \_\_\_\_\_!**

Allow your child to collect some items she named, like a favorite toy. With your child, arrange blankets over chairs to make a pretend “tent.” When your tent is stable and cozy, turn on a flashlight (or the flashlight on your phone) to help your child imagine that you are camping together in the woods. Eat a snack in your tent and pretend it is a picnic.

While playing, ask your child questions like:

- **“Where should we pretend we are right now? Are we in the woods or at the beach?”**
- **“Let’s pretend. Do you think it is cold or hot outside? Is it raining or sunny?”**
- **“What camping activities do you want to do?”** You could pretend to swim in a lake, hike up a mountain, or fish in a river!
- **“I see some animals in the woods, hiding behind those trees. What kind of animals do you see?”**

## TIPS

- Here are a few child-friendly books on camping:
  - » *Curious George Goes Camping* by Margret Rey
  - » *Llama Llama Loves Camping* by Anna Dewdney
  - » *Fred and Ted Go Camping* by Peter Eastman
  - » *A Camping Spree with Mr. Magee* by Chris Van Dusen
  - » *Biscuit Goes Camping* by Alyssa Satin Capucilli and Pat Schories
- If you don’t have access to child-friendly books on camping, you can visit your local library or look online for read alouds of children’s camping books.
- If you want to continue imaginative play, you can make binoculars out of toilet paper rolls and make s’mores in the microwave (2 graham crackers, 1 large marshmallow, and 1 piece of chocolate)!
- Younger children might just enjoy working on the construction of the “tent.” That’s okay, too! It’s great to allow them to explore and be creative.

# I Spy Letters

## Learning Area(s)

Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Children will play “I Spy” with letters in words displayed in their surroundings. This activity will reinforce letter knowledge and letter sounds in a fun way.

## Materials

sunglasses (optional)

## LET’S PLAY

While in the house, in the car, out doing errands, or in the community (somewhere with printed material displayed), introduce the activity: **“We are going to play I Spy Letters. To spy something means to see something. As we play this game, we will look all around and find letters. I will go first to show you. I spy the letter S. Do you see the letter S anywhere?”** Have your child look around until he locates the letter. If he needs help, you can give clues about where to look for it.

Then say to the child, **“Now it’s your turn to pick a letter that you see.”** If your child is hesitant, give him the words to say to start (**“Say, ‘I spy the letter . . .’**”).

## TIPS

- When your child is old enough to sequence alphabet letters in order, you can start this game with A first, and after finding an A, look for a B, and so on to try to complete the whole alphabet!
- A variation on this activity is to have your child find something in his surroundings that begins with a certain letter, for example, a cat. Then he would say, **“I spy something that begins with the letter C, or the sound /ck/.”** Then you or others can guess the object.





# Jungle Safari

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

24-36 months old;  
3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Using imagination and props, you and your child will act out a “jungle safari,” searching for stuffed animals in your house. This activity includes a chant with gestures that promotes language skills and vocabulary.

## Materials

- picture book about animals in the jungle
- stuffed animals or plastic animals
- flashlight

## LET'S PLAY

Start by reading a picture book about animals in the jungle and talk about how they live, what they eat, etc. See Tips below for book suggestions. Before or after reading the book, hide several stuffed animals around the house (for younger children, start in more obvious locations). Then, together, you and your child can go on a jungle safari by turning off the lights and using a flashlight to look for “animals.” Explain to your child that a *safari* is when you go out into nature, such as the jungle, to see wild animals where they live.

As you walk around the house, you can say this chant:

*We're going on a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ (insert name of animal) hunt.*

*(Shake head no.) We're not afraid.*

*(Spread arms wide.) We're going to catch a big one!*

*(Shine flashlight on animal.) And look what I see!*

*(Place your hand above your eyes as though you were looking far away.) Who's that ahead?*

*It's a \_\_\_\_\_! (Insert name of animal.)*

Encourage children to act out the phrases as you look for the animals.

## TIPS

- Examples of books include:
  - » *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen
  - » *Over in the Jungle: A Rainforest Rhyme* by Maryanne Berkes
  - » *Roar, Roar, Baby!* by Karen Katz
  - » *Touch and Feel: Jungle Animals* published by DK
  - » *Baby Animals in the Jungle* published by Kingfisher
  - » *Nature: In the Jungle* by Ruth Martin
  - » *Let's Explore... Jungle* by Lonely Planet Kids
- You can also make binoculars by taping together two empty toilet paper rolls. Look through them to search for animals during the safari.
- In the past, a safari usually included hunting and killing animals, but now there are safaris just to go see and photograph the animals. The emphasis in this pretend activity is on finding and talking about the animals, not harming them. Families may wish to talk about appreciating and protecting wild animals in their natural environments.
- A variation on this activity would be to change the type of animals you search for and where they live. For example, you could go on an “ocean dive” and pretend to be swimming underwater to look for sea creatures. Look for whales, dolphins, fish, octopi, turtles, and other animals that live in the ocean. Instead of looking through pretend binoculars, you could pretend to look through swim goggles or a snorkel mask. Read a book about sea animals to go with this version of the activity.

# Letter Detective

## Learning Area(s)

Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

This activity reinforces letter recognition as children use detective skills to search for letters in printed materials.

## Materials

- magnifying glass
- magazines
- newspapers
- crayon or marker

## LET'S PLAY

Spread out some magazines and newspapers on a table or on the floor.

Tell your child that he is going to be a Letter Detective. His job is to find as many letters as he can using his magnifying glass.

Start with one letter. You might choose a letter in your child's name or let your child choose which letter he would like to look for first. For example, say, **"Your first detective job is to search for the letter H."** If the child is unsure of what this letter looks like, write the letter to show him. Then encourage him to use his magnifying glass to search for as many H's as he can. Your child can mark the H's with a crayon or marker.

If one letter is enough for now, you can play the game again at another time and your child can choose a different letter. If your child enjoys this game and wants to keep playing after finding lots of examples of the first letter, you can choose another letter together to hunt for. For example, **"Now we'll solve the mystery of the missing letter P. Can you look closely to find where the letter P's are hiding?"**

## TIPS

- Some children may enjoy flipping through a whole magazine or grocery store ad, while other children may need to focus on just one page at a time, such as one page of a picture book or a cereal box.
- This activity can also be done throughout the house. Have the child search the house for different letters found on pantry items, books, games, toys, etc.
- You and your child may notice that the same letter can look slightly different depending on the font and size. Talk about these comparisons and help your child understand that they are still same letter.
- For older children who are starting to read, this activity can be done using basic sight words (e.g., *the, with, for*) instead of individual letters.
- Use your judgment about how many examples of the letter to ask your child to find. Some challenge is good (for example, **"Do you think you can find five H's?"**), but if your child starts to become bored or tired of the game, ask your child if he would like to search for a different letter or end the game.



# Letter Lineup

## Learning Area(s)

Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

This activity helps children recognize the letters of the alphabet, become familiar with the sounds each letter makes, and identify where in the alphabet the letter falls.

## Materials

- a strip of paper/cardstock with the uppercase alphabet written on it
- letter magnets, uppercase plastic letter tiles, or uppercase letters cut out of index cards
- a bag that your child cannot see through

## LET'S PLAY

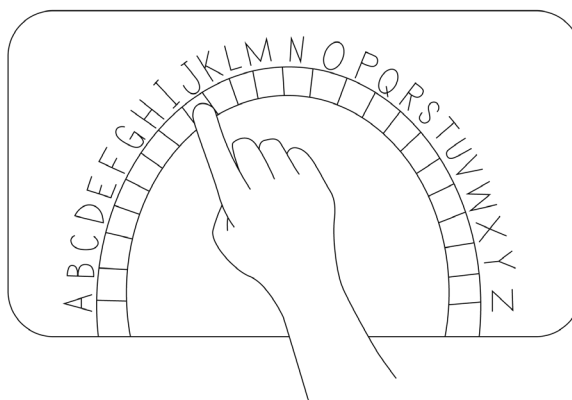
Beginning with uppercase alphabet letters, show your child the strip of paper with the alphabet written on it. Together, sing the alphabet song and point to each letter as you sing.

Give your child a bag of uppercase alphabet letters and say, **“Today, we are going to match the letters in this bag to the letters on the alphabet strip. I want you to close your eyes, reach in the bag, and see what letter you pull out. No peeking!”**

Name each letter and have the child place them on the letter strip, either on top of or above the matching letter.

As the child is working to match each letter, ask some questions such as:

- **“What is the first letter in your name?”**
- **“Can you point to that letter?”**
- **“What is another word that begins with the same sound as your name?”**
- **“What is your favorite letter of the alphabet?”**
- **“Can you point to that letter?”**
- **“What is a word that begins with that letter?”**



## TIPS

- You can start with including only letters in your child's name in the bag since these are the most meaningful letters to a child. Have your child match letters in the bag to a name card with the child's first name written on it in uppercase letters.
- Once children are familiar with uppercase letters, a lowercase letter strip and lowercase letter magnets/tiles can be used.
- If the entire alphabet on one strip is overwhelming for the child, it can be broken down into segments; for example, A-H, I-P, Q-Z.

# Listening Walk

## Learning Area(s)

Language and  
Communication

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, children will strengthen their listening skills by focusing on hearing different sounds during a walk outside.

## Materials

none

## LET'S PLAY

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Take a listening walk outside. Walk and listen closely to the sounds all around you. Pick a safe place to stand still and start by saying, **"Today we are going on a listening walk outside. We're going to practice listening very carefully. Close your eyes and you will hear some sounds. You will try to figure out what is making the sound. With your eyes closed, your ears can really focus."**

Your child will listen carefully and then guess what is making the sound. You can take a turn by closing your eyes and identifying a sound that you hear, too. It can be helpful to show the child that you are listening by pointing to your ear, and then smiling and nodding. You can also say, **"I hear something!"** and use your voice to copy the sound. For example, you may hear birds chirping, leaves rustling, squirrels running in the trees, traffic or car motors, a horn honking, lawn mower starting, water running, people talking, or a baby crying in the distance.

As your child becomes familiar with this game, continue to walk and take turns identifying sounds in the environment with your eyes open. If your child has difficulty focusing in on sounds, pause your walk again and have him close his eyes to really focus in on the sounds around him.

## TIPS

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You and your child can check out the book *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers at a local library.

# Meaningful Memories

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, your child will write about a personal experience or memory by dictating to you and then illustrating the memory.

## Materials

- paper
- pen
- crayons or markers

## LET'S PLAY

You can begin by asking your child to recall a recent experience or memory, for example, something that happened over the weekend, a family trip, or a community outing. If he is having trouble, you might suggest one: **“Remember when we went fishing at the lake and you caught two fish?”**

You can begin to draw the scene together (artistic talent does not matter) and ask your child to think about what words he would like you to write about the picture. Then invite your child to work with you to make a story about that memory. He can continue to suggest words or sentences about what is being drawn and recalled about the event. If needed, your child can be prompted with some questions such as:

- **“Do you remember who came with us?”**
- **“Where did we go?”**
- **“How did we get there?”**
- **“What happened first?”**
- **“What was your favorite part?”**
- **“What happened next?”**
- **“Then what did we do?”**

Record the sentences as he dictates them. Once complete, you can read back what was dictated.

## TIPS

- Don't worry if your child is not ready to try to write anything himself yet. Four- and five-year-olds are just learning about letters and writing, so it's okay if your child draws and you do all the writing.
- Plan to do this activity following a trip or local event you've attended together!
- You might want to print out some photos to go with your child's memory story and drawing. Or you might want to look at some photos of the activity together to refresh his memory before starting to write and draw.
- You can take regular opportunities to make memory pages like this one and put them together in a binder or scrapbook to preserve their childhood memories and adventures.
- Modeling meaningful writing yourself will encourage your child to want to write. So when you write a grocery list, a note to a family member, or an entry in a diary or journal, let your child see you doing these things and tell him about what you are doing.

# My Favorite Things

## Learning Area(s)

- Reading and Writing
- Social and Emotional

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Your child will identify some favorite things to put into a book. Your child can also verbalize what his favorite things are and increase his language and vocabulary skills.

## Materials

- two or three pieces of 8.5" x 11" paper, folded in half into book shape and stapled at spine
- scissors
- markers
- glue
- magazines/photographs

## LET'S PLAY

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Begin by talking to your child about some of his favorite things. You can share some of your favorites and encourage your child to do the same. Explain what favorite means by saying, "**Favorite is something that is special or the thing you like the best.**"

Next, using magazines, photos, printed clip-art, or pictures, your child (with your help as needed) can cut out pictures of his favorite things. These are then glued into the book. On the cover you can write "[Child's name]'s Favorite Things." Model writing for your child by writing the name of each item on its page in the book.

Finally, you and your child can look through the book together and he can talk about why each thing is his favorite.

## TIPS

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- Your child may enjoy seeing his photo on the book's cover or seeing family photos included in the book.
- For older children, you can write a sentence on each page. For example, "**My favorite food is...**" "**My favorite pet is...**" "**My favorite color is...**" "**I like...**" etc. Encourage your child to help write the labels beside the pictures of his favorite things.
- You can keep this homemade book with your child's other books and read it together on occasion or before bedtime. Children often like to reread the same book over and over.

# Mystery Bags

## Learning Area(s)

- Science
- Sensory and Art

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Children will use some of their senses to try to guess what item is inside some “mystery bags.”

## Materials

- brown paper bags (or other bags that your child cannot see through)
- items that your child can use her nose, ears, or hands to explore, such as orange slices, leaves, pinecones, a bar of soap, sand, bells, etc.

## LET'S PLAY

Prepare for this activity by placing one type of mystery item into each bag, out of sight of your child. Introduce the activity to your child by saying, “**Today I have some special things in some mystery bags. Do you know what the word *mystery* means? A *mystery* is something that you don’t know and you want to figure out!**”

Point to the bags as you explain, “**You are going to figure out what’s in the bags without looking. You can use your nose to smell, your hands to touch, and your ears to hear, but you can’t look! Do you think you can figure out what my secret items are without looking?**”

Show your child each bag one at a time. Without letting her peek inside, encourage her to smell the item, reach her hand in to touch the item, and shake the bag to see if the item makes any noises. After she has used these three senses, let her make a guess about what she thinks is inside the bag. If she is right, celebrate with her! If she doesn’t guess correctly, take the item out of the bag. Let her see it, touch it, smell it, and listen to it while you tell her what it is and describe what it looks like, feels like, smells like, and sounds like.

## TIPS

- Make sure items in the bags do not have sharp edges and are safe to touch.
- Once your child has some practice with this game, she may want a turn to find something to put in a bag and have you use your senses to guess what it is! Be sure to give your child some guidelines for choosing appropriate objects to put into the bags.
- For older children, use the word *senses* and explain to them what this word means. We have five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Our *senses* help our brain learn about the world around us.

# Name Hopscotch

## Learning Area(s)

- Reading and Writing
- Physical Development

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, your child will become more familiar with the letters and spelling of his name and practice gross motor skills by jumping on each letter of his name and then on his whole name.

## Materials

- if outdoors: chalk and sidewalk or driveway blacktop
- if indoors: construction paper and marker

## LET'S PLAY

Draw a set of squares or rectangles (like a simplified hopscotch grid as shown in the example at right) to spell out the letters of your child's name on the sidewalk (or on paper taped to the floor, if indoors). The last box should have the child's whole name in it. Say the letters aloud as you write each one. Demonstrate how to play this game: starting at the bottom, jump to the first letter, then the second, etc., all the way to the box with your child's name in it, saying each letter as you land on it, and then finally, her name ("L-E-A-H. Leah!"). Once you model how to jump and what to say, encourage your child to practice jumping and saying the letter names.

LEAH
H
A
E
L

## TIPS

- You can vary this activity by encouraging your child to try different ways of moving from letter to letter, such as hopping on one foot, walking quickly, walking slowly, spinning, taking baby steps, etc. Have your child continue to say each letter as she lands on it.
- You can also let your child choose a different word she would like to spell. Wipe away the chalk letters with a wet sponge or make a new grid to spell out that word.

# Nature Names

## Learning Area(s)

- Reading and Writing
- Physical Development

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Children and parents will go on a nature walk to collect items such as sticks, grass, flowers, leaves, etc. to use in forming the child's name.

## Materials

- plain white paper, construction paper, cardstock, or cardboard
- marker
- items to form the name with: sticks, leaves, flowers, grass, etc.
- glue

## LET'S PLAY

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As a family, go on a nature walk around your neighborhood or at a nearby park. As you walk, help your child collect some items to use to form his name, such as sticks, leaves, grass, flowers, etc. Talk about each item when he finds it and why he chose it.

When you get back home, help your child write his name in large letters on a piece of paper. Then allow him to glue the nature items on top of the lines and curves of the letters of his name. As he works, help your child name the letters in his name. Talk about each letter in his name and whether it has straight lines, curved lines, or both. When he finishes forming his name, point to each letter and name it together. Explain to him that when these letters are put together, it spells his name.

## TIPS

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- For younger children, parents can write the child's name in marker and then help the child glue items on top of it.
- When searching for nature items, be careful to watch what your child is collecting, and only pick up plants you are familiar with.
- Children love to see their artwork and their names displayed! Hang your child's nature name on his bedroom door or over his bed to show off his creative project.

# Pattern Play

## Learning Area(s)

Math

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Your child will learn about patterns by following and creating simple patterns with toys and other objects.

## Materials

Objects that can be used to create patterns. Examples include:

- two different colored building blocks
- three types of toy vehicles
- two or three kinds of cereal or snack items
- kitchen utensils
- objects found in nature

## LET'S PLAY

Explain to your child that a “pattern” is when something happens over and over or repeats itself, and that you will be making patterns using toys and other things found around the house. Start by creating a pattern for your child to follow. For example, create a pattern using toy cars in two different colors: red toy car, yellow car, red car, yellow car. Show him how to say the names of the items and their colors, and discuss how they make a pattern (e.g., red, yellow, red, yellow). Then help him figure out what color comes next.

Alternatively, a pattern can be created using different types of toy vehicles. Each vehicle can be driven or flown into pretend “parking spots” to create a pattern, such as car, truck, plane, car, truck, plane. Start with simple patterns before introducing more complex patterns. After demonstrating a couple of patterns and helping your child to continue the pattern by adding on to it, invite your child to make his own pattern for YOU to identify and follow. As he creates a pattern, it is helpful to ask him questions such as: “**What comes next?**” or “**How do you know that yellow comes after red?**” This helps him practice explaining what he knows.

## TIPS

- Patterns follow a repeatable progression and repeat at least two times:
  - » ABAB (example: red, yellow; red, yellow)
  - » ABCABC (example: car, truck, plane; car, truck, plane)
  - » AABB (example: crayon, crayon, marker, marker; crayon, crayon, marker, marker)
  - » AAB (example: cheese cracker, cheese cracker, pretzel; cheese cracker, cheese cracker, pretzel)
- Patterns can also be made using sounds or movements, such as clapping, stomping, jumping, skipping.
- It is helpful to notice naturally occurring patterns at home, such as stripes on a shirt (red, blue; red, blue) or silverware on the kitchen table (knife, fork, spoon; knife, fork, spoon). Notice patterns everywhere!



# Post Office

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

24-36 months old;  
3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

Introduce your child to letter writing and early literacy concepts by playing Post Office. Your child will compose or dictate mail, talk about who will receive it, and put it in a homemade mailbox.

## Materials

- small cardboard box
- scissors or utility knife
- crayons
- paper
- stickers
- envelopes

## LET'S PLAY

Before starting, create a mailbox by cutting a large slot (larger and wider than any piece of mail) into a cardboard box with scissors or a utility knife.

Explain to your child that he is going to play Post Office, and make and send mail to someone he chooses. Talk with your child before and during the activity about vocabulary words and ideas related to the post office and mail delivery, such as what a post office is and how mail is put into envelopes, addressed, stamped, and put into a mailbox for mail carriers to deliver to homes, schools, and other places. If you and your child have visited a mailbox or the post office, help him remember and talk about this experience.

Help your child identify someone he would like to send mail to, perhaps a family member or friend. Next, encourage your child to create mail, which can be written, drawn, or otherwise put on paper. Younger children can be encouraged to try drawing and pretend writing on the paper. Older children can be encouraged to try to write their name, or any letters or words they know, on their paper. If your child is not yet able to write complete words, he can do his own part first, and then he can dictate additional words for you to write on the paper. In this way, your child is learning that we send mail to communicate with each other through written words and sometimes pictures.

Show your child how to fold the paper and fit it into an envelope. Then show him how to put a sticker in the upper right-hand corner of the envelope like a postage stamp. Help your child label his envelope to include to/from information, such as "To Mommy, from Felix" or "To Wyatt's Daddy." Encourage your child to take his envelopes and put them into the mailbox slot. Later, he can pretend to be the mail carrier by delivering the mail.

## TIPS

- Remember that with so much electronic communication these days, children may not be very familiar with printed mail. This is a great opportunity to encourage your child to participate in mail-related activities, such as putting a stamp on an envelope and inserting envelopes into a mailbox. Your child might enjoy playing with some "junk mail" or extra greeting cards that you give them.
- You might want to prepare your child for this activity by first reading a book about the post office or about writing a letter, or by taking a walk to a local post office or mailbox so that he understands what the real items look like. You could also print out a picture of a real mailbox and attach it to your cardboard mailbox to make the connection clear.
- Try to use gender-neutral language such as *mail carrier* rather than *mailman*, so that children know that men and women can both do this job.
- Some children may just enjoy the art aspects of this activity, such as scribbling on paper and sticking stickers onto paper or envelopes. That is okay. Even if your child does not understand the whole concept of mail, you can introduce these words and ideas to him.
- You can create several mailboxes for different family members and the child can try to match names on the envelopes to names on the mailboxes. If your child can't match the names, place the mailbox by each person's bed so that your child can make a connection between the written name and the person.

# Say, Tell, Do

## Learning Area(s)

Language and  
Communication

## Age Group(s)

3, 4, and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, your child will use his growing language skills to say what an item is, tell what it does, and show how to use it. He will learn new vocabulary words as you help him label unfamiliar items and their functions.

## Materials

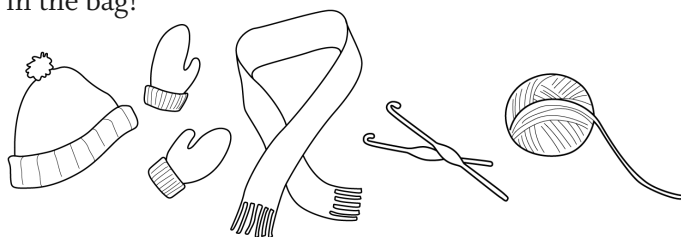
bag with objects that have something in common (e.g., items from the kitchen, school supplies, set of tools, items used for gardening)

## LET'S PLAY

Explain to your child that you're going to play a game in which you pull an object from the bag, say what it is, explain what it does, and then show how to use it. You can go first picking out an item, for example, a can opener. You can say, **"This is a can opener. You use it to open a can by pressing the sharp part into the can and then twisting this part to cut all around the rim."** Demonstrate how to open a can using the can opener.

Your child goes next, selecting an item from the bag (for example, a spoon). Emphasize the element of suspense and surprise in this game as your child reaches in the bag, for example, say, **"I wonder what you're going to grab from the bag! No peeking! Let's see what it is!"** Prompt him to tell you about the object: **"What is that?"** Your child might say, "A spoon." Then ask, **"What does it do?"** He might say, "It is used to stir, serve, or eat food." And you can say, **"Let's use it!"** Encourage your child to stir, serve, and/or eat the contents of the can that you previously opened.

Keep going until you and your child have pulled out all of the items in the bag!



## TIPS

- This is a great way to learn what your child already knows about common household items and what he does not know yet. If the child selects an item and does not know its name or function, encourage him to make some guesses about what it does. You can give hints or tell him the name of the item to help him figure it out.
- If you need to label or explain an item to your child, invite him to repeat the name of the item and imitate you after you show him how it is used. This way he will be more likely to remember the new item's name and function.
- Once your child gets the hang of this game, he might like to introduce YOU to his favorite toys or characters that YOU might not know. For example, perhaps he wants you to try to identify his various Matchbox® cars, favorite sports heroes, or themed play figures. Let him quiz you on their names and characteristics and explain them to you. Even though this information may not feel important to you, it is prompting your child to use language skills to share information with you and practice conversation skills. You are also showing respect for your child's interests, which conveys your love and interest in him.

# Shadows and Light

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Science

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

This activity will introduce your child to shadows and how they are made.

## Materials

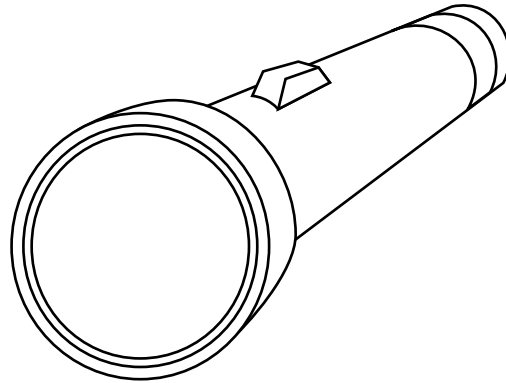
- flexible lamp or flashlight
- craft sticks
- glue or tape
- cut-outs of shapes (circle, star, heart, etc.)
- blank wall

## LET'S PLAY

Glue or tape each shape to a craft stick.

Place the light or flashlight behind your child and point it toward the blank wall. Turn off the lights and tell him that he will be making shadows. Say to your child, **“Look at how I have created a shadow by placing my hand in front of the light. You can try it, too!”**

Using the cut-out shapes glued to the craft sticks, place one in front of the light. Have the child explore making shadows using the shapes. You can move the light closer to or farther away from the cut-out shapes. Discuss why shadows change during the day. Discuss how shadows get bigger or smaller.



## TIPS

- To extend this activity, put a piece of paper under his object's shadow and trace it on his paper, or attach a large piece of paper to the wall behind your child's shadow, and trace his silhouette.
- Together, go outside and use the sun and look at your child's shadows on the ground. Your child can move to different places to make his shadow bigger or smaller. You can go outside at different times of the day to observe how the shadow has changed.
- Add some playful narration or pretend play when experimenting with making shadows bigger and smaller on the wall. For example, as you move the light closer to or farther away from the cut-out shapes, you can describe the shadows by saying, **“The moon looks big and full in the night sky and the stars look so small!”** or **“This is my heart full of love... I love you this much** (make the heart shadow small)... **no, I love you this much** (make the heart shadow grow larger)... **I mean, I love you this much!”** (make the heart shadow very large).

# Silly Sentence Clap

## Learning Area(s)

Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

Child will use listening skills to identify when words in a sentence have the same beginning sound.

## Materials

none

## LET'S PLAY

Sit with your child at the table or on the couch and say, “I am going to say a silly sentence that has lots of words that begin with the same beginning sound. When I say a word that has the same beginning sound, you clap your hands.” If your child is hesitant, demonstrate the activity before asking him to have a turn.

Slowly say a silly sentence that has several words with the same beginning sound, and explain the rules to your child. For example, “Cars can climb through clouds... Clap as you say each word that begins with a /ck/ sound. Do not clap when you say the word through since it does not start with a /ck/ sound.” Next, repeat the silly sentence and ask your child to clap when he hears the words that begin with /ck/ sound.

Use the silly sentences below to practice more beginning sounds, or you can create your own. Say each sentence once, then repeat it slowly to help your child listen for words that begin with the same sound:

- Colby cooked cupcakes.
- Kids kiss little kittens.
- Babies bounce balls, balloons, and bananas.
- The dirty dog decided to deliver donuts.
- The furry fox fell into the fountain.
- Happy hens hop to the house.
- Little Lucy licked lemon lollipops.
- My mommy makes meatloaf with mud.
- Pick up the penny and put it in the purple pot.
- Rabbits race with rhinos to the river.
- Tiny trucks try to tumble.

## TIPS

- It may be helpful at first to overemphasize the beginning sound so that your child clearly hears it.
- If your child has a name that begins with a consonant, use that letter first when creating silly sentences (e.g., “Jayla jumps on jelly beans.”)

# Story Retelling with Puppets

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

Increase your child's understanding and language skills by using visual aids while retelling a story. In this activity, puppets and props are created to help the child retell a story.

## Materials

- popsicle sticks
- plastic or paper disposable cups
- pictures of characters and significant items from the story
- tape or glue
- scissors or knife to make slit in bottom of cup

## LET'S PLAY

Choose a children's story that is age appropriate and has a clear storyline and plot (beginning, middle, and end of the story).

Before beginning this activity, you should also have pictures of the characters (hand-drawn or clip art), along with other important items from the story; for example, if you are retelling Goldilocks, you can include drawings of a bowl of porridge, a bed, and a chair. In addition to these pictures or props you will use to retell the story, choose several vocabulary words from the story to focus on, for example *chair*, *porridge*, *bed*, *small*, *medium*, and *large*.

Begin by reading the story aloud to your child.

Then explain, **"We are going to retell this story using props and puppets. First, let's make our puppets and then you can tell me the story!"**

Ask your child to identify each character and each prop, and glue it to a popsicle stick. The popsicle sticks can then be inserted into a slit on the bottom of an upside down paper cup to be used as the prop holder). As your child tells the story, he can pull each puppet out of the holder and use it as he retells the story.

## TIPS

- You can act out the story with your child, or your child can do it himself.
- Encourage your child to use different voices for different characters.
- If your child isn't sure what comes next in the story, you can help him with questions or details, or you can look back at the book together.
- You may want to create the puppets/props and do the story retell at a different time, depending upon your child's attention span.

# Take It Away

## Learning Area(s)

- Math
- Physical Development

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

Using items from around the house, your child will count and practice using number cards to match the number of household items.

## Materials

- 10 counting items (counting bears, beans, matchbox cars, blocks, etc.)
- 10 number cards (index cards or paper labeled with numbers 1 to 10) or a deck of playing cards with face cards removed

## LET'S PLAY

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Pick up a number card and show the card to your child. Together, count out the number of items and place them on the table.

For example, show her the number 5 card and count out five toy cars. You can say, **“Let’s count five cars as we park them here in a parking lot.”** Remove one car by driving it away and ask, **“Now how many cars are there?”** Count together to see if she was correct. You can place the number 4 card next to the remaining cars to show that there are four cars left. Review the *take away* process by saying, **“We started with 5 cars. We took 1 away. Now we have 4 left.”** Continue to remove objects, one at a time, and place the appropriate number cards next to the objects.

Next, encourage your child to take a turn picking a number card and counting out the correct number of objects. She can practice taking one item away or even adding one item to the set and matching it to the correct number card.

## TIPS

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- Begin with number cards 1-5, and, as your child progresses, she can work up to 6-10.
- Animating the items can make this activity even more fun. For example, animate the cars by making them screech, honk, sputter, and talk: **“I have to leave now. See you later!”**

# What Do I See?

## Learning Area(s)

Language and  
Communication

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

In this guessing game, you will think of an object you can see in the room and give your child clues to figure out which object you are thinking of.

## Materials

objects located around your home (toothpaste, hairbrush, cell phone, etc.)

## LET'S PLAY

Introduce the game by saying to your child, **“Let’s play a game. I will go first so you can see how to play. In this restroom I see a mirror, makeup, toothbrush, and toothpaste (point to each item as you name it). I am going to describe one of these things. See if you can figure out which one it is.”**

**“I see something to clean my teeth with.”** Give the child an opportunity to guess what it is. If the child is hesitant to provide an answer, continue to provide clues. After the child has guessed correctly, describe a different item for your child to guess.

After several rounds, turn the game over to your child by allowing her to give clues. You can say, **“Describe it and give me clues, but don’t tell me the name of the object.”** If she struggles to give clues, ask her open-ended questions like, **“What is the object used for?”**

Continue the game as long as your child is engaged.

## TIPS

- Play this game in an area where your child can focus on a few items at a time, such as the restroom, kitchen, backyard, etc.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for your child to understand how to play the game before she takes the role of providing the clues.
- When your child provides an incorrect answer, respond by saying something like: **“Let’s try it one more time. I’ll say the clues again.”** Repeat the clues and let the child guess again. If the child still cannot guess the item being described, give her two choices (one correct choice and one incorrect choice). For example, **“I see something I use to clean my teeth. Is it a toothbrush or a hairbrush?”**



# Who Has More?

## Learning Area(s)

Math

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

In this activity, you will help your child practice counting skills, compare amounts by using objects, and understand the concepts of *more* and *less*.

## Materials

5-10 items of your choice (snack items, small blocks, cubes, buttons, etc.)

## LET'S PLAY

Give your child three snack items (for example, crackers) and put one snack item in front of yourself. Ask her, “**How many crackers do I have?**” Gently correct your child if she says the incorrect answer. “**How many crackers do you have?**” Gently correct your child if she says the incorrect answer. Then ask, “**Who has more crackers?**”

If your child doesn't understand the word *more*, she may not answer you. If that happens, say, “**You have more crackers!**” Count the crackers for her: “**You have 1, 2, 3 crackers. I only have 1.**” Play a few more times with different variations of sets (1, 2, or 3 crackers in a set).

After she has mastered the concept of *more*, play the same game and ask who has *less*. Your child can eat each set of snacks after deciding who has more and who has less!

## TIPS

- A good time to help children learn how to compare quantities is during snacks or meals.
- As your child begins to understand the concept *more* with small amounts, ask her to make comparisons with larger amounts like 4, 5, etc.
- Switching between the concepts of *more* and *less* can be challenging for children. Stick with one concept at a time until they master both and are able to switch easily.



# Words, Words, Words

## Learning Area(s)

- Language and Communication
- Reading and Writing

## Age Group(s)

4 and 5 years old

## Objective

In this pre-reading activity, the child will brainstorm a list of words that start with a specific letter sound.

## Materials

- crayon or markers
- paper

## LET'S PLAY

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Begin by explaining the activity to the child by saying, “**Let’s think about some words that begin with the same letter as your name. Your name is Ben, begins with the letter B, and the /b/ sound.**”

Continue: “**I am thinking of the word *banana*.**” You can write the word banana down on a piece of paper. Ask your child to draw a picture next to the word, for example: “**Can you try to draw a picture of a banana next to the word?**”

Now say: “**Now it’s your turn to think of a word that begins with the letter B and starts with the /b/ sound.**”

Again, write the word the child says and have your child draw a picture of it.

## TIPS

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- Focus on one letter at a time until the child is comfortable moving on to another letter. Allow your child to pick his or her favorite letters.
- If this seems difficult at first, you and your child can take turns coming up with words.



