



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood



Supporting All Children Using the
Connecticut Early Learning and
Development Standards:
A Guide for Families



Documents in this series include:

Supporting All Children Using the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards

- *A Guide to Domains and Strands*
- *Building Meaningful Curriculum*
- *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners*
- *Dual Language Learners*
- *A Guide for Families*

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Introduction



Families provide the foundation for their children's success through their relationship with their children. Families provide learning experiences that support their children's growth and development during both daily routines and special activities. All children benefit from learning environments in homes, communities and early care and education settings that provide them with rich and varied experiences.

Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) provide a common language about what children should know and be able to do from birth to age five. The CT ELDS highlight how children learn and development over time so that families, caregivers and other professionals can work together to better support children. They serve as a guide for considering the steps in children's development and to plan ways to support children in continued growth. This document provides information for families as they think about how they can support

their child's growth and development. It is designed so that individual components or the whole document can be used by families. A suggested use of this document is to discuss and share the individual components with families as these topics are introduced or when families expressed a related concern or interest. Below is a brief description of each of the components.

- **Supporting Children's Learning and Development During the Early Years**

This section includes general ways of supporting children as they learn and grow in the early years.

- **What are the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards?**

This section explains why early learning and development standards are important. It discusses how they can be used, with general information about each domain or area of learning and ways for families to support growth and development.

- **Resources**

This page provides a few state and national organizations that can help families learn more about child development or help them to access resources.

- **A Focus on CT ELDS Age Band Action Guides**

Information about children's growth and development during various age ranges, with examples of activities to support children's learning during daily routines and interactions.

Supporting Children’s Learning and Development During the Early Years



Children learn and develop through their strong relationships with their family. They also learn through their ongoing experiences. Rich learning experiences can happen anywhere — at home, on the bus, at the store or in the park. There are endless possibilities for experiences that children will learn from. It doesn’t take fancy toys, computer programs or classes for your child to learn. By interacting and talking with your child, they will learn as you go about your daily life. Below are some things to think about so you can continue to support your child’s learning and development throughout each day of their early years. If you take a little time to think about what your child is experiencing and learning throughout their day, you can expand on the ideas in these pages.

Loving relationships give young children a sense of comfort, safety, confidence and encouragement. They teach young children how to form friendships, communicate emotions and deal with challenges. Strong, positive relationships also help children develop trust, empathy, compassion and a sense of right and wrong.
(Zero to Three, 2010)

- **Build A Strong, Caring Relationship**

Young children learn through their relationships so building a strong relationship helps your child’s development. Part of a strong relationship is making sure children feel safe. Children feel safe when they are protected from harm. They also feel safe when adults help them learn to control their behavior, express emotions and comfort themselves. Another important part of building a strong relationship is talking and showing affection. When young children babble or talk, smile or reach out, return the gesture! Research has shown that the back and forth exchanges between young children and their caregivers are important for early brain development.

- **Use Daily Routines**

Smile, talk or play with your child during daily routines such as changing diapers, washing and eating. Other routines, such as cooking and cleaning, can be changed a little to actively involve your child. While they are helping they can learn and see new things. Involving your child can make it a learning experience and make it more fun for you!

- **Provide New Experiences**

New experiences give everyone with a chance to talk and think about new things. New experiences do not need to be big events. Walk down a new street, go down a different aisle at the grocery store or sort the laundry in a new way.”. Think about how you can keep your routines, but give your child new things to think and talk about.

- **Use Lots of Language**

Talk to your child about what they are doing and what you are doing. Talk about what you see and hear. This will keep them interested in the world around them. Build on their natural curiosity and talk about everything you see as you go about your day. This will build your relationship and help them learn.

- **Play**

Young children need to play. It helps them to be healthy and learn. When children play, they learn to solve problems, get along with other and develop motor skills. Play can happen during routines, special play time or in groups. Both young and old family members make great playmates. In fact, young children are more creative when adults play alongside them instead of just giving them toys or watching them. As children get older, they still need to play. Their play will begin to include other children, and will involve more pretend play and talking.

For ideas for specific routines or activities to promote children's development and learning across the early years, please see the CT ELDS Age Band Action Guides.

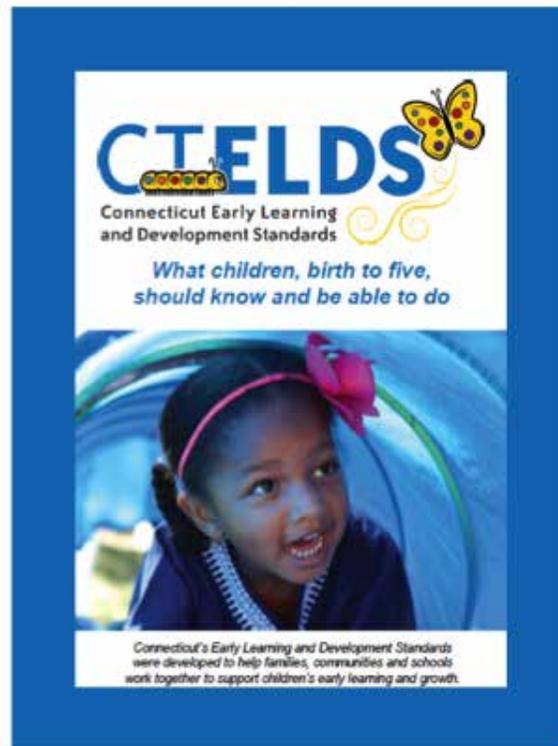


What are the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards?

The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) are used by many child care and preschool programs as they plan how they will support children's learning and development. The CT ELDS describe what children from birth to age five should know and be able to do. They are used to help adults think about how children grow and learn over time. The CT ELDS help all the adults in a child's life talk with each other using the same words and to think about experiences that will help him/her reach the next steps in development.

The CT ELDS include eight domains or areas of development. The next pages include a description of each domain and ways to promote your child's development and learning





For the full *Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards* document, go to www.ct.gov/oec/elds.



Cognition

This area includes:

- Showing curiosity
- Making sense of the world
- Staying with something
- Working hard-to-solve problems

Support your child's development by:

- Giving your child lots of chances to explore.
- Encouraging curiosity so they enjoy learning.
- Helping them figure out the answer to their own questions.
- Talking to them a lot, even if they don't understand everything you are saying yet.



Social and Emotional Development

This area includes:

- Building relationships
- Gaining an understanding of oneself
- Expressing feelings
- Learning how to play with other people

Support your child's development by:

- Giving your baby lots of love, positive attention and praise helps them learn social and emotional skills. Responding when your child cries helps them learn about communicating.
- As they get older, helping them learn words for their feelings.
- Helping them learn ways to calm and be in control of themselves (e.g., quiet time or using a soothing object). Find time for them to play with other children.



Physical Development & Health

This area includes:

- Learning to take care of oneself
- Figuring out how to do things with their body and hands
- Beginning habits that help them grow strong and healthy

Support your child's development by:

- Giving your child lots of chances to move on their own and play actively.
- Modeling healthy eating and sleeping habits and activity levels.
- Talking to your child about healthy and unhealthy foods.
- Involving them during bathing, dressing and mealtimes.



Language & Literacy

This area includes:

- Understanding what others are communicating
- Communicating thoughts, feelings, ideas
- Engaging in conversations

Support your child's development by:

- Talking, talking and talking some more to your baby or child.
- Describing what you are doing as you change their diaper, bathe them and feed them.
- Listening to them make sounds and respond to them. Describe what you see when you are at the grocery store, in the car or on the bus and when they are playing. Hearing lots of words from you will help them learn to use those words. Knowing lots of words will help them with reading later on.



Creative Arts

This area includes:

- Enjoying music, dance, drama and art
- Expressing oneself through the arts

Support your child's development by:

- Building on their creativity. As long as it's safe, let them try doing things in new and different ways.
- Playing music and dancing. You can sing, dance, clap the rhythm or move in new ways.
- Pretending, making pictures or building sculptures with anything you have at home.
- Talking about music, dance, drama, and art.



Mathematics

This area includes:

- Understanding numbers and how to use them
- Comparing
- Measuring
- Understanding shapes

Support your child's development by:

- Using daily routines to help your child learn math skills, such as counting and sorting.
- Using math words, such as *more*, *less*, *longer*, *taller*, etc. Ask "How many?" and help your child figure out the answer.



Science

This area includes:

- Understanding how we answer questions about the world and solve problems
- Exploring the world around us
- Beginning to learn about living things, the earth, space and energy

Support your child's development by:

- Giving your child time to explore inside and outside.
- Using words that name living things and parts of earth and space.
- Building on your child's curiosity by asking questions and talking with them about how to find answers.



Social Studies

This area includes:

- Understanding people, culture and community
- Knowing about family and then the community and world

Support your child's development by:

- Helping them learn about themselves and your family and your culture.
- Telling your child stories about the day they were born, sharing family history, stories or music from your culture.
- Talking about the places you go in your community and playing pretend using different roles in your community.

Resources Related to Child Development

There are many resources available to help families as they support their children's growth and development and as they encounter the joys and challenges of parenting. Below are a few organizations that offer valuable information about child development for families.

- **Zero to Three** (<http://www.zerotothree.org>) is a national nonprofit organization that provides information about early development, including free parent brochures and guides related to children between birth to age three.
- The **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** (<http://families.naeyc.org/>) is a national organization that supports professionals and promotes quality early learning for children from birth to age eight. They have resources for families related to supporting children's growth and development, looking for quality child care or preschool and many other topics.
- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** is a component of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. They offer many resources, including developmental milestones (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/>) for ages 2 months through 5 years of age.
- The **Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC)** is a state agency that was established in 2013 to coordinate and improve the various early childhood programs and components in the state. Resources available through the OEC include programs administered by the Division of Family Support (<http://www.ct.gov/oec/cwp/view.asp?a=4546&q=536424>) and the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (<http://www.ct.gov/oec/site/default.asp>)
- **United Way 2-1-1 Connecticut** is a free health and human service information and referral helpline. Calls are answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 2-1-1 is your one-stop connection to the local services you need, including utility assistance, food, housing, child care, after school programs, elder care, crisis intervention and much more to assist you to find the help you need. Dial 2-1-1 or search online at www.211ct.org. If you are outside of Connecticut or have a problem using the 2-1-1-number, dial 1-800-203-1234.

Do you have questions or concerns about your child's development?



Many families have questions about how their child is developing. The Child Development Infoline can provide information and connect families with screening tools, such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ). The ASQ is used to quickly check for children's strengths and find areas where more information might be needed.

Visit the Child Development Infoline at <http://cdi.211ct.org> or call 1-800-505-7000 to learn more about resources and services for young children in CT.



A FOCUS ON ...

 Birth - 6 months



In the first few months of life, babies begin to feel comfortable, safe and secure in the world. A family forms a trusting bond with their baby over time when they respond to their baby's signals and provide love and comfort. Most babies begin to eat and sleep more regularly at around 3 months of age and families begin to develop routines. Around this time, babies also begin to respond to familiar people by cooing, smiling. They might also begin to avoid things they do not like. As babies get older, they may show that they prefer certain foods, toys, textures and sleeping routines.

Things you might notice your child do at this age:

- Coo and make gurgling sounds
- Smile and kick in excitement
- Pay attention to faces
- Begin to recognize familiar people
- Bring hands to mouth and suck on hand or fingers
- Hold head steady while being held or when laying down
- Smile or move in response to music and stories

Ideas for helping your child learn throughout the day:



Talk to your baby:

Copy the sounds your baby makes and wait for them to respond. Encourage your baby to copy you and have a back-and-forth exchange. Talk about everything you see during your daily routine.



Go to the grocery store or laundromat:

Any place you go can be a learning experience. As you go to the store or laundromat, point out new sights and sounds. Interact with your baby as they ride in the carriage or watch the clothes spinning. As they get older, let them touch and feel things. You can say things such as, "This peach feels fuzzy," or "Your blanket is warm from the dryer").



Sing and dance with your baby:

Listen to different kinds of music with your baby. Sing along and look at your baby, so they are a part of the experience. Hold them and dance gently, watching for their reaction. Move in different ways to see what your baby likes best. Sing a favorite song that has been passed down through your family. Don't be afraid to make up your own words.



Silly Face Play:

Change your facial expression and see if your baby will imitate you. Make a surprised face, pucker your lips or shake your head. Watch your child's response. If they make a silly face you can imitate them as well.



Show Affection:

Show your baby affection with your voice, touch and facial expression. Do this during daily routines, so that these become times to be close and loving. Showing affection when your baby is in a new situation will help them learn they have a safe foundation.

How these activities support your baby's development:

Cognition

Simple activities, such as turning a washing machine or radio on and off help your child learn about cause-and-effect. Talking with them about what is happening around them helps them to be curious and to observe and explore.

Social and Emotional Development

Talking, singing and showing affection to your baby helps to build a strong and trusting relationship. Comforting them when they are upset helps them to learn that they can calm down. They also learn that you are there to help them. They learn about interacting with others through your interaction with them.

Early Language, Communication and Literacy

When you play games and copy each other, children learn about the back and forth that is used in conversations. Talking about the things you see every day helps them to connect words to objects. They might even begin to show you that they understand a few words. Singing and listening to music makes them notice different sounds, which will later help them with literacy skills.

A FOCUS ON ...

6-12 months



During this time, babies explore and get excited when they make things happen. Relationships with family members continue to grow and babies may be getting to know and feel comfortable with others as well. Children at this age begin to have more control of their body and movements. They will want to play with new objects and try new actions. They will try to figure out what they can make happen with their body and voice. They may smile to get someone to smile back or might hold up their arms to show they want to be picked up.

Things you might notice your child do at this age:

- Seek out familiar people and objects
- Show when they are happy, sad or mad with facial expressions
- Use gestures or sounds to show what they want
- Begin to use a couple of simple words or signs for people or familiar objects

Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



Bubble time:

While you are washing dishes, make bubbles for your baby. Try to pop the bubbles together and say “pop!”. Use words, such as “bubble” or “big”.



On the go with your child:

Going on errands with a baby isn't always easy, but you can make the most of it by talking to your child about what you are doing. Keep him calm by giving him a favorite blanket, stuffed animal or a new object to hold while you finish errands.



Mealtime and the outdoors:

Take your baby on a picnic. Let him help pack the lunch and find a place to eat outside. You can sit on a blanket or a bench. Point out things you see – trees, cars, birds, bugs, flowers. If it's safe, let your baby enjoy crawling in the grass.



Cooking dinner:

While cooking, give your baby a pan or pot lid to play with. She may see herself in the lid. She may bang it and pat it. If she loses interest, give her something new to explore and tell her the name of the items.

How these activities support your baby's development:

Cognition

When you give your child new objects, they are able to explore and try new things. When you have a new experience with them, they see new sights, hear new sounds and learn about the world around them.

Social and Emotional Development

Interacting with your child while you are on the go helps them feel safe, secure and connected. Engaging them in what is happening around them helps them get used to new environments and to be interested with the world around them.

Physical and Health Development

Popping bubbles, playing with pots and pans and exploring during a picnic all give children a chance to develop their muscles and begin to control their movements.

Early Language, Communication and Literacy

Using new words when you are at home or on the go will help your child learn to understand and use more words. Using words with clear sounds, such as “pop,” helps them learn to pay attention to the different sounds in words.

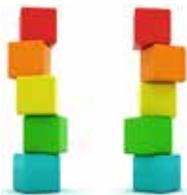


One-year-olds explore their world in new ways and are excited to do new things. They watch their loved ones very carefully and copy a lot of what they see. This is one of the most important ways toddlers learn how to do new things.

Things you might notice your child do at this age:

- Walk on their own or walk holding on to something (or someone)
- Turn pages in a book
- Point to objects they want
- Pretend to do things they see you do, such as eating, cooking or talking on the phone
- Eat with utensils and drink from a cup

Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



Playing games:

One-year-olds love to play simple games. One simple game is stacking blocks and knocking them over. Work together to build a tower. Talk about what you are doing. You can count the blocks, talk about the colors or shapes and say “timber” or “crash” when the blocks fall. When they are done with the activity, have them help put the blocks away.



Bedtime routine:

Your child is never too young to learn a daily bedtime routine. A daily bedtime routine can help things go smoothly and lets your child know what to expect. Help them brush their teeth. You can count out the time to mark how long to brush. As they get older, they can help with brushing, washing and dressing. Sharing bedtime stories can build relationships, help children to calm down and help them learn new words.



Active time:

Children at this age are usually ready to move. Provide safe places for them to be active and use their big muscles by climbing, crawling and walking. If they get a chance to move around, it can be easier for them to be still at other times, such as when you are riding in the car, eating dinner or shopping.



Exploring nature:

Walks offer a chance to observe living things. Walk through the woods, a park, a museum or store, looking at plants and animals. If there is a pond, talk about the fish in the water. Point out animals or bugs and talk about what they are doing. For extra fun, you can imitate the animals' sounds or actions.

How these activities support your toddler's development:

Cognition

Games such as knocking a tower over help children learn how their actions make something happen. Changing the action and seeing what happens helps them learn even more! Building a tower can be frustrating if it won't stay up, but working on this with someone else can help them learn to keep trying even when things are hard.

Social and Emotional Development

Routines help young children know what to expect, which lets them feel safe and builds secure, trusting relationships.

Physical Development & Health

Moving around helps children develop large muscles. Having strong muscles helps them use smaller muscles in their hands later. Toddlers also begin to learn about caring for themselves through your family routines. Eating and cleaning habits are learned by watching and doing.

Mathematics

Counting blocks helps your toddler begin to learn number names and begin to understand that numbers tell us "how many?". Counting out the time to brush teeth also helps young children learn number names and introduces them to the idea that we measure time.

Science

Toddlers start to understand living things by looking, listening and sometimes touching. Safely exploring natural things helps them stay curious. Talking about the ways things are the same and different (e.g., colors, sizes, etc.) helps them learn to be good observers.

A FOCUS ON ...

18-24 months



Children at this age are eager to share their ideas and wants. They like to make choices and are beginning to learn what “mine” means. Toddlers experience more emotions, such as anger, frustration, and excitement. They learn new words every day and repeat a lot of what they hear.

Things you might notice your child doing at this age:

- Try to do things for themselves
- Pretend play (talk on the play phone and pretend cook)
- Use several words and start putting two words together
- Say “mine”

Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



Grocery shopping:

When grocery shopping with your toddler, talk about foods that they like to eat. Talk about the color and shape. Help them find favorite foods in the store. For example, when you are in the fruit section you could say, “What is that yummy fruit that is long and yellow?” Allow them time to answer, and then say, “Yes, it is a banana!” Help them look for and find the bananas. When you find the item let them put it into the carriage.



Driving in the car:

When driving in a car or riding the bus, sing songs, choose songs that your child can sing along to or try songs with animal sounds. Turn songs into games by asking questions (e.g., “What animal should we sing about next?”). Add hand motions to make the game even more fun!



Playing catch:

Find a ball that is easy to hold. Throw the ball from a short distance. If needed, move closer. Comment on what both of you are doing (e.g., “You caught it,” or “I missed it!”). Try to get them to talk too. Expand on what they have to say. For example, if they say, “Ball,” say, “Yes, we are playing with a ball.” Try playing catch with soft, squishy balls or balls that have something inside to make a noise.



Folding laundry:

Put clean laundry onto a bed or floor to fold. As you are folding the laundry, ask your child the name of items. Ask them who the clothing belongs to. They might also like to try on someone else’s clothes to see if they fit. This will help build language. Toddlers may also be able to fold simple items, such as washcloths or towels.



Meal time:

Encourage your child to ask for more food by signing or saying “more”. As they get older, help them learn to put words together to tell you “more_____”. If you can, give them a choice of what they want to eat, asking them to answer, “Do you want a banana or an apple?” When they have finished eating, let them help you clean up by putting their dishes in the sink.

How these activities support your toddler’s development:

■ Social and Emotional Development

When children have opportunities to do some things themselves and to make simple choices when appropriate, they begin to develop a sense of themselves and to feel confident.

■ Physical Development and Health

Throwing and catching balls builds muscles and helps children learn to coordinate movements. Folding laundry allows children to use large muscles when they move a laundry basket or smaller muscles when they fold a washcloth.

■ Language and Literacy

Using new words and talking about familiar objects helps increase your toddler’s vocabulary. By modeling the use of two familiar words together, children begin to learn about sentences.

■ Creative Arts

Singing during daily routines gives your child a chance to make music. Encouraging them to move to the music helps them begin to recognize rhythm.

A FOCUS ON ...

24-36 months



Older toddlers use their growing language skills to tell others what they are thinking and feeling. They also begin to build friendships with other children. They gain new physical skills, such as walking, running and climbing. These skills help them explore the world in more active ways.

Things you might notice your child doing at this age:

- Complete puzzles with three or four pieces
- Use 2-4 word sentences
- Use words to tell you what they want
- Put on simple clothing with help
- Help put toys and household items away

Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



Snack time:

Choose a snack that your child can help get ready. Help them get plates or utensils. Count out a certain number of food items together, help them open containers, pour from small pitchers, spread and scoop.



Follow the leader:

“Follow the leader” is a fun activity that can be played inside or outside. When you are the leader, do different actions that are easy for your child to copy. Try some things that are just a little hard for them too. You can walk on your tiptoes, walk backwards, and walk fast or slow or use big steps. Allow your child to take a turn being the leader.



Listening games:

Play a listening game with your toddler. Listen for different sounds that you hear everyday (sirens, birds, wind, children playing, etc.). Try going to new places to hear new sounds (go outside, to a mall, etc.). Tell them a sound you hear and then ask your child to tell you a sound they hear. Talk about what makes the sounds you hear.



Drawing with crayons or painting with water:

Children can draw using crayons on paper or they can use paint brushes and water on a sidewalk or outdoor wall. Show them different ways to make marks (dots or dabs, lines, swirls, etc.).



How these activities support your child's development

■ Cognition

Helping with household jobs help children learn to solve problems. When you encourage them they can learn to keep trying when things are a little hard for them.

■ Social and Emotional Development

Children learn how to stick with things when they try things that are just a little hard for them. Playing “follow the leader” gives them a chance to practice controlling their actions and behavior.

■ Physical and Health Development

When they help with snack, children learning to handle small things, such as eating utensils and snack containers. During “follow the leader” they have a chance to try out many new gross or fine motor skills. Drawing with crayons helps with small muscles in the hand, while painting with big brushes on the sidewalk helps build bigger muscles in the arms and trunk.

■ Language and Literacy

Throughout all of the activities above, talking about what they see and hear helps children learn vocabulary. Expanding on what they say helps them learn about putting words together to make sentences.

■ Mathematics

Counting during daily routines helps children build early math skills, such as knowing number names and the order in which they are said.

■ Science

When children listen and think about what makes certain sounds, they are wondering about things. Talking about sounds in nature helps them think about living things.

A FOCUS ON ...

3-4 years



Children at this age are often on the move. They want to explore everything around them and ask a lot of questions. They are curious about everything around them. The number of questions can seem like a lot at times, but remember they are just trying to learn about their world. Give them as much information as you can, even though some of their questions may be hard to answer.

Things you might notice your child doing at this age:

- Name some basic colors or use other words to describe objects (big, small, etc.)
- Understand the idea of same and different
- Say his or her name and age
- Answer simple questions
- Walk up and down stairs, alternating feet with one foot per step
- Kick, throw and catch a ball

Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



Cooking:

Cooking with your child is a great time for bonding. You can really cook together or just pretend. Play along when your child offers you pretend food—ask what it is and talk about how it tastes. In the kitchen, your child can help with small tasks, such as setting or clearing the table. When you are cooking dinner, let your child help count or measure the ingredients, pour, mash, mix and spread different foods.



Going to the grocery store:

Make grocery shopping a fun experience for your child by giving him a shopping list of his own. Have him make simple drawings of food to use as a list. Give him a crayon to cross off items as he finds them in the store.



Exploring nature:

Carefully look at things that you find in nature. Describe and explore the textures and colors of things, such as rocks, sticks and leaves. If you have pets, talk with your child about how you care for them and what they need to live and grow. Plants can also be a way to teach children about how things grow, but they take some time to grow. Help your child plant seeds that will sprout quickly, such as beans and peas. Talk about the difference between non-living objects (rocks and dirt) and living objects (plants and animals).



Bedtime routines:

Your child may be able to do more for themselves than they could before, but bedtime routines are still a great time for learning. Sing songs that include new words or rhythms. Read books and talk about the pictures. Ask questions about the order in which you do things at night.

How these activities support your child's development:

Cognition

When you make a shopping list and mark off items, children learn to plan and complete tasks in a fun way. By involving your child and observing what is around you as you go about your everyday life, you encourage curiosity and interest in the world.

Social and Emotional Development

Engaging your child in what you are doing helps continue building that strong, trusting relationship. When you talk to them about what is happening they learn to communicate with adults. When you teach them new skills they learn that you are a good source of information.

Language and Literacy

“Writing” a list with pictures helps children understand the reason for words and writing. The act of writing will also help them develop the motor skills for writing as they get older.

Mathematics

Helping your child to measure and count helps them to understand “how much?” They learn the order in which we say numbers and begin to understand that one number goes with one object when counting.

Science

When they explore nature, children learn to use different senses to learn about the things around them. They also learn how to ask questions. Learning about the differences between living and non-living things helps them think about some basic ideas of science.

Social Studies

By learning about the foods you eat and how they are prepared, your child begins to learn about their culture.

A FOCUS ON ...

4-5 years



Children at this age are often lively, energetic and social. Children at this age begin to feel good about their basic skills, such as speaking, running, drawing and making things. They want to use these skills over and over and explore new ways to do things. They are often interested in what everyone around them is doing, from the mail carrier to neighbors to random new faces on the playground.



Things you might notice your child doing at this age:

- Speak clearly using more complex sentences.
- Try different ways to solve a problem.
- Begin to compare objects, thinking and talking about how things are the same or different.
- Count ten or more objects.
- Wait a little longer for their turn or to get things that they want (although this will still be very hard at times!).
- Follow two- to three-part directions. For example, “Put your book away, brush your teeth and then get in bed.”

Ideas for helping your child learn during the day:



Draw pictures and maps:

Encourage your child to carefully look at and draw a picture of your house, family or friends. Talk about what they see and help them make decisions about what they are drawing (e.g., “What color are my eyes?,” “What crayon are you going to use to draw my hair?”). Help your child make a simple map of their room or the neighborhood. Ask them to think about what to include on the map. Have them think about where things are in relation to other things on the map. For example, “First, we walk past the park, then we get to the grocery store,” or “Your book shelf is next to your bed.”).



Sing and dance:

Make up songs and play or sing them for the family. You can sing and make up the words or use musical instruments. Count the beat. Start and stop the music or the dance, so your child learns to control their actions. You can use simple household objects to make a drum or shaker and use these to make music together. Make up dances and use everyday objects for props to put on a show (e.g., scarves, hats, sticks or spoons).



Play card games:

Spread cards on the floor and make a game of finding matches. Talk about what makes the pairs of cards the “same” or “different”. Invite other children or family members to join the game to help your child learn to work and play with others. If you use cards with low numbers, you can create a math game (e.g., “I have the number 2 and you have the number 3.” “How many are there when we put them together?”)



Play dates:

Make sure your child has a chance to play with peers. It can be a formal setting, such as a preschool or play group, or you can rely on family or friends. Try to plan times to interact with some of the same children over time and to meet new children so they have both new and continuing relationships.

How these activities support your child’s development:

Cognition

Comparing how items are the same and different helps children think about the qualities of different things. This is a first step in sorting and categorizing. Starting and stopping when singing and dancing helps them to develop self-regulation and control.

Mathematics

Counting the beat while making music exposes children to numbers. Measuring while making maps helps them understand why measurement is important, and they can begin to see how it works. Card games provide an opportunity for simple math activities. Incorporate numbers, shapes and the location of objects during everything you do!

Creative Arts

Your child is learning to express themselves through music and dance. By making music and dance, they learn how musical instruments work, develop rhythm and learn to move in different ways.

Social Studies

While making a community map or drawing their family, your child is learning to understand the larger community and beginning to get a sense of where things are in relation to one another.