

# FAMILY ACTIVITIES

## PACKET 8





# THOUGHT of the WEEK



From Holly Delgado, Early Childhood Specialist at HighScope Educational Research Foundation

## You Are Not Alone

Although school has been closed for 6 weeks in our district, it was only a few weeks ago that parents were required to shift from “enrichment” to “required distance learning”. For our family, that now means we are responsible for teaching at three different grade levels--3rd, Kindergarten, and Preschool. On a daily basis, we are wading through countless emails and Google Classroom posts, expected to navigate new websites and applications, and attempting to join video chats hosted on ever-changing platforms. Trying to organize the passwords alone has become a challenge of epic proportions, not to mention adjusting schedules to find the appropriate balance of independence and guided support for our children. None of this takes into account any other responsibilities that we might have, such as our jobs or supporting extended family.

The other day, my husband told me he is not only failing to adapt to his new role of teacher, but he is also failing at being the school cafeteria worker and custodian. I laughed because it's true. As parents, we feel like we are failing miserably at these new job requirements.

No one was prepared for this. Not parents. Not teachers. Not school districts. Not communities.

There is no blame to be given. Everyone is doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing. Teachers are going above and beyond to provide resources and support for children and families in this learning format. Children and families are going above and beyond as they continually adjust, adapt, and search for their new normal.

That week when my husband and I officially became distance teachers, I thought that it would be easier. We had big dreams that Monday thru Friday would involve waking up early, making a healthy breakfast, and following our new schedule that now involved three different grade levels of work in the areas of math, science, and language arts. We even believed we might end the day with more literacy - snuggling on the couch and reading books. HA! That dream evaporated by 10:00 A.M. on day one of quarantine schooling.

My husband and I both have degrees in teaching. We should know how to do this. Distance learning should be accessible to us. We are currently safe and healthy. We are fortunate to not have financial concerns at the moment. We have access to the internet and we have borrowed devices on which our children can work from our school system. We have so much going for us, and should be able to do this.

Yet, here we are - feeling as if we are failing. We are struggling. It is not easy.

I write this to let you know if you, too, are feeling overwhelmed, underprepared, and defeated, you are not alone. That said, although those feelings are real - YOU ARE NOT A FAILURE.

I am reminding myself every day that providing my child a safe space is more important than any educational assignment. Managing the emotional well-being of my children is my number one priority as a mom. I am counting the completion of any academic assignment a success. And, I continue to give myself leverage to count time spent jumping on our bed as physical education, picking dandelions as science, and sorting laundry as math.

The challenge presented to us by COVID-19 may be an immovable mountain. As parents, we will continue to climb it one step at a time. We will take on the steep inclines and vertical ascents that are facing us. We just might need to find alternate routes. We will persevere.

# INFANTS



## *Art, Music and Movement:* **No-mess painting!**

Take a piece of paper and slip it into the Ziploc bag. You may need to cut part of the paper off in order to fit in the bag. Next, grab your paint. Using a small spoon, scoop globs of each color from the paint containers. Open the bag wide, with the paper inside, and tap the spoon on the paper to apply the paint in globs to one side of the paper. Then seal your bag shut. You may want to duct tape the opening of the bag to reinforce the seal before giving it to your baby to play with. Place the bag on the floor in front of your baby and let them play with the bag, squishing and moving the paint around with their hands and feet! When they are finished playing with the paint bag and moving the paints all around, you can remove the paper from the bag to dry and save your baby's artwork as a keepsake!

### Children experience:

- Movement of paint
- Colorful, sensory experience
- A no-mess, fun art project

### Materials:

- Ziploc bag (2 gallon)
- Paper
- Non-toxic paint



## *Communication, Language, and Literacy:* **Silly puppet show!**

### Children experience:

- Association of the words "hello" and "goodbye"
- Object permanence
- Entertaining puppet show
- Fun and silly way of engaging with you

### Materials:

- Hand puppets, finger puppets, or stuffed animals as an alternative
- Large box or low table
- Blanket or sheet

For this activity, engage your child in a puppet "show" and some silly interactions with a puppet. First, set up a puppet show stage or station by draping a blanket over a box or low table. You can hide behind it by lying down on your side, and it's ok if your baby can still see you! The prop that you hide behind can be versatile, and can be anything that you can hide your arm and face behind as you are holding the puppet. Hold your puppet or stuffed animal and peek the puppet over the side. You can make your puppet wave and say "hello!" and then "goodbye!" and quickly pull the puppet out of sight again. Then make the puppet reappear and say "hello!" again. Try using a silly voice or incorporating other props. Move the puppet close to your baby and try tickling your baby's tummy to elicit some roaring laughs!

# INFANTS



## *Early Math and Discovery:* **Sensory bottles**

Sensory bottles are relatively easy to make at home, a great way to repurpose plastic bottles, and create a captivating experience for your infant. For this activity, you will need plastic bottles. Here are some ideas for what you can fill your plastic bottles with in order to create a variety of sensory bottles:

- Water with coloring (you can use spirulina, water color, or food coloring), glitter and confetti
- Beads, with or without water
- Small blocks
- Legos
- Buttons
- Sand
- Pebbles
- Gems
- Small rubber bands and water
- Macaroni noodles (you can use the dried food for cooking later, once the bottle is no longer in use)
- Rice
- Dried beans
- Recycled squeeze tops (these are fun to reuse for so many activities!)
- Water beads
- Oil and water with coloring (Baby oil or vegetable oil will work for this)
- Nuts and bolts
- Dandelions and water

### Children experience:

- Discovery of movement and momentum
- Early exploration of gravity
- Variety of sounds made from shakers
- Feeling different weights of objects
- Different colors and visual stimulants
- Calming sensory experience

The possibilities are truly endless! Explore what you have around your home. After you have filled up your bottle(s), tightly seal the lid to ensure your infant or their siblings will not be able to open the bottle. You may want to reinforce the seal with duct tape. Sensory bottles are wonderful to have on hand for children of all ages! They are excellent tools for babies and young children to regulate their emotions and can help them to feel calm. Watching glitter and water move around in a swirling bottle of colors will fill your baby with wonder. Consider filling them with different colors to explore light and color, too!



## *Myself and Others:* **Decisions, decisions!**

This is a wonderful activity that will allow you to watch your baby's decision-making skills in action. To prepare this activity, gather a variety of toys (quantity can be as many as you want, but consider 5-10 at minimum). The toys gathered should vary in texture, color, and shape to pose different considerations for your baby to choose from. Examples of the types of toys that could be used include a wooden spoon, two different stuffed animals, a small ball, a bumpy ball, a rattle or shaker, and a couple of different colored

# INFANTS

## Children experience:

- A rotation of objects to choose from
- Early cognitive development
- Deciding between what to drop from what they are holding, and what to take from what you offer them
- Development of self-interest and preferred choices
- Mouthing a rotating variety of objects

stacking cups. There are many different things you can choose from, but try to pick toys that your baby will be able to hold using only one hand.

As your baby sits, or lays on their back, start by giving them the first two toys to hold. Watch for 30 seconds to a minute to see which of the two toys your baby favors. Do they drop one and focus on the other? Specifically, what do they favor putting in their mouth the most? Mouthing objects is a key part of development for infants as they first start to learn about the world around them and build those motor muscles. In the meantime, try to keep the other toys out of sight or reach by hiding them under a pillow or blanket between you and your child. When you are ready, pull out the next toy and offer it to your baby. Watch as they decide which object they will drop in order to make a hand available for

the new object. Also take note if they choose to reject the newly introduced toy and keep playing with the toys they already have. This is a great way to help develop your baby's early decision making skills and preferences!



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits:* **Pull from the hole!**

For this activity, you will need a basket with holes in it, like a colander or strainer, and some ribbons or pipe cleaners. To prepare this activity, first take your basket and flip it upside down. Then, take your ribbons or pipe cleaners and weave them into the basket holes on both ends of the ribbon, creating a little loop or handle that is popping up, and easy for your baby to grab. After weaving 10-20 ribbons or pipe cleaners through the holes of the basket, place it (upside down) in front of your baby as they sit up - perhaps with the support of some pillows. Watch as your baby works to pull out each ribbon or pipe cleaner from the basket. You can start by showing them an example, or just watch what they do, whether they problem-solve to pull the ribbons out, or explore some other aspect of these objects!

## Children experience:

- Colorful ribbon loops peeking out of a basket
- Pulling ribbons (or pipe cleaners) from the holes of a basket
- Working those finger, wrist, and arm muscles for healthy physical development

This is a great way to develop problem solving skills and also this activity is geared towards developing fine motor skills, and gives them an opportunity to practice their pincer grasp.



# TODDLERS



## Art, Music and Movement: **Make your own fire truck**

The product of this activity can be a “fire truck” of any size! If you have a large box that your toddler can play in once the project is complete, this can be a fun extra perk to this activity. However, a smaller box will also yield fun results that can last for days or weeks of play! To prepare for this activity, lay out newspaper or a drop cloth on the floor of the project area to catch dripping paint. Place the box in the middle of the paint-proof area. Prepare three small containers filled with red, black and white paint and place them on a stable surface in the paint-proof area. It doesn’t matter how neat the result of this project looks; the important part is that this project will give your toddler a sense of ownership over their creation. If desired, you can also tape a picture of a firetruck to a wall nearby as a reference for your toddler to look at during the process.

Stay nearby your toddler, keeping an eye as they paint the box to turn it into a fire truck! If you have excess cardboard available, you can also cut out 4 circles for wheels and have your child paint them black and glue or tape them on later after the paint dries. Once the paint has dried, and the fire truck is complete, a new activity of being a firefighter can begin!

*A note: representation is important from the earliest stages of development. As you are engaging with your young toddler in this activity, try to reference “firefighters” instead of the language of “firemen” to model that a person in this career field can be any gender.*

### Children experience:

- Painting and using the color red
- Creating their own fire truck

### Materials:

- Cardboard box
- Non-toxic paint: red, black, and white
- A medium to large sized paint brush
- Cup of water and towel for rinsing the brush
- A picture of a fire truck for reference, hung on a nearby window or wall



## Communication, Language, and Literacy: **“What’s that?”**

### Children experience:

- Learning words of objects
- Repetition of words
- Words repeated back to them
- A conversational style of learning
- Recognition of what they are saying

The simple question of “what’s that?” can be turned into an activity, no matter where you are! Try going for a socially distant walk with your toddler, and as you are walking with them, point to objects you encounter together and ask them, “what is that?” and see what they say or what they begin to sound out. They may already be speaking, or they may be at an earlier stage of development where they are beginning to know the names of things, but still developing the motor muscles in their mouth in order to form the word. They may respond “hush” or “huh” instead of saying house, and you can say “that’s right, that’s a house!” to repeat the object back to them. Do this with other things in nature, too, like “bird,” “tree,” “squirrel,” etc! This will help to develop their early comprehension and speech skills. This is a very important age to be talking to your toddler as it will help them to develop lifelong communication skills. This activity is great because it can be built into your daily routine.

# TODDLERS



## Early Math and Discovery: **Pinch and sort**

Use a clean, reused egg carton as a toy for this activity with your child! Place the egg carton on a table where your toddler can sit and play. Materials that can be used for this sorting activity include:

- Puff balls
- Round gems
- Small stones
- Buttons
- Large beads
- Water beads
- And more!

### Children experience:

- Sorting objects
- One to one correspondence
- Multiples of different objects

As always, use what is available to you. Fill up 3-4 sections of the egg carton with the different materials. Place bowls or cups around the egg carton for versatile sorting options, and place child-proof chopsticks, plastic tweezers, or small kitchen tongs near this table activity. This will encourage your child to use this medium for pinching and picking up materials using another object. If you do not have any of these manipulative utensils on hand, that is ok, your toddler can use their fingers! After the activity is set up, watch how your toddler engages with it! Narrate out loud what they are doing, for example, saying “oh I notice you’re putting all of the red buttons into this cup!” or “I notice you’re mixing all of the objects together!” and also count the objects as they pick them up one by one to place them in a cup or as they move them: “I see you’re holding one bead!” Sorting is a wonderful way to introduce early learning for foundational math skills.



## Myself and Others: **Trace a face**

### Children experience:

- Interaction with images of themselves or others
- Movement of fine motor muscles
- Drawing and tracing

There are two suggestions on how to share this activity with your toddler!

1. If you have access to a printer, print out headshots of each member of your family. Tape the pictures of the headshots to a table. Provide a colorful variety of non-toxic magic markers for your toddler to draw on the faces with! This is a fun way to get acquainted with contour lines and for your child to interact with images of themselves and their family members.
2. If you do not have access to a printer, but have access to pictures that can be traced on, whether from a printed out collection, newspaper, or magazine, you can also cut these out and tape them to a table. Then take a long piece of translucent paper like parchment paper, and place it over the pictures as a top layer. Tape the parchment paper to the table, as well. Then you can provide pencils for your toddler to trace the faces over the paper! It is ok if your child does more scribbling than tracing - they are still learning even when scribbling!

# TODDLERS



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits:* **Scrubbing shells**

To prepare a space for this bubbly activity, you may want to consider a hard floor that will not be damaged by water splashing, and also may want to put a towel down. Place a large plastic container (like a storage container) with an inch or two of soapy water in the base. Please note, if you do not have a large plastic storage container, you can also use tupperware or tin bowls. You can create soapy water by squeezing a few dabs from a bottle of soap into the water and stirring it with your hand. Place the seashells (or other objects listed above) in the water, along with the sponge pieces. To “water-proof” your infant, you can take their clothes off if they are happier that way.

Feel free to get creative and add other components to this activity! Some children may like to play with a hand-soap pump in addition. If you have an empty one on hand, you could fill it with some water and put it in the container for them to use in conjunction with their sponges. You can also add other buoyant objects like toy boats or rubber ducks, if you would like! This is a versatile activity and a great way to get some help cleaning toys!

### Children experience:

- With shells - play with natural materials
- Bubbly water play
- A calming sensory experience
- Squeaky clean toys
- Motor development as they squeeze sponges and move them around

### Materials:

- Sponges (can use one clean sponge cut into 2-3 pieces)
- Soap (tear-free soap if possible)
- Sea shells (alternatively, you can use empty containers, baby-jar lids, small cups, or anything around your home that you think your child might be interested in scrubbing)



# PRESCHOOL



## *Art, Music and Movement:* **Sing it Like...**

Sing a familiar song with your child (such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or another song they enjoy singing). After you sing it together two or three times through, say, “I wonder how this song would sound if we sang it like a baby would?” Listen to and discuss your child’s ideas (e.g., It would sound like waa, waa, waa; A baby can’t sing the words but maybe it could hum; Really, really high). Then say, “Let’s sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” as a baby might.”

Sing it two or three times, using your child’s suggestions.

Now encourage your child to sing the song in the voice/character of someone or something else (e.g., Can you sing it like a kitty cat? A race car driver? A shark?). Make suggestions based on your child’s interests you have observed during other activities.

Describe and encourage your child to describe voice quality, using terms such as pitch (higher, lower), tempo (fast, slow), loudness (loud, soft/quiet), length of note (long, short, staccato), and so on.

You can also have your child choose another familiar song (from memory or the classroom song book) and take turns suggesting how to sing it.

Use the last song and person/thing chosen by the children to transition to the next activity (e.g., Let’s all sing “Hickory, Dickory, Dock” like a tractor on our way to [the next activity]).

### Children experience:

- Music and singing
- Playing with sounds
- Pretend play



## *Communication, Language, and Literacy:* **Drawing the Story**

### Children experience:

- Engaging with storytelling
- Drawing imagined situations
- Drawing inferences and making conclusions
- Connecting art with story

Read or retell a familiar story with your child, drawing attention to the pictures in the book. As you progress through the narrative, ask your child to remember what happens next during the story, that is, what they remember from having heard the story before.

At the end of the story, ask your child what they think might happen next to the main character (e.g., Will [name of main character] take another adventure? What will [name of main character] do next?).

Make sure that you acknowledge your child’s response, even if it doesn’t exactly track with the logic of the story. They may be including insights and memories from other stories and characters they are familiar with.

After your child has finished sharing, give them a sheet of paper and drawing implements like crayons or a pencil. Ask your child

# PRESCHOOL

to draw a picture about the story or a picture about what might happen next if the story were to continue. As your child works on their drawing, you can engage with them. A few things you can try are:

- Say, "Tell me about your picture."
- Ask, "What part did you like in the story?"
- Say, "I wonder what [name of character] does after [last event] (e.g., I wonder what Goldilocks does after she runs away from the bears' house).
- Ask your child what they would do if they were in the predicament of the story.

For another fun version of this activity, try it with other book(s) and use three-dimensional art materials (e.g., play dough, modeling clay).

When you've finished with the activity, ask your child to move like a character from the story to the next part of the daily routine.



## *Math, Science, and Technology:* **Now They're Here, Now They're Not**

To set up this activity, shine a light on the wall to prepare for some shadow play. A flashlight, phone camera, or lamp with the shade taken off will all work. Start engaging your child by saying something like, "Do you remember when we went for a walk the other day and sometimes our shadows were there and sometimes they disappeared? Why do you think that happened?" Talk with your child about their ideas.

Now wave your hand between the light source and the wall, and ask your child to describe what they see. Then remove your hand and talk with your child about what they see now. Discuss whether/where they saw a shadow, when/how it disappeared, what it looked like (e.g., in what ways did it look like you or not), and so on. Now encourage your child to give it a try and make a shadow on the wall. Have them try moving in different ways, like closer to or away from the wall. As your child makes shadows, describe the shadows that you see (e.g., fuzzy, dancing, tall, small; shadows with flapping arms).

Ask for your child's ideas on what they think is happening (i.e., what does or does not make a shadow appear and disappear). Introduce the props from the house area and say they might like to try making different kinds of shadow. You can also try shadow play outside on partly sunny days. Talk with your child about when they do or do not see shadows, depending on the amount and position of the sun.

To transition to the next part of the day, ask your child to bring their shadow with them to the next activity!

### Children experience:

- Making observations
- Explaining natural phenomena
- Experimenting

# PRESCHOOL



## *Myself and Others:* **Toys in a Bag!**

### Children experience:

- Reflecting on their play
- Engaging with their feelings
- Listening to the feelings of others

For this activity you can include everyone in your home! This is a great way to transition from the day time into the evening. Ask your child to bring you one item that they played with during the day. Encourage siblings of any age to do the same, and any adults should do it too!

Collect all of the items and place them in a bag (pillow cases work great too!), and sit in a circle. Give everyone in the circle a turn to feel for items in the bag. Have each participant try to identify an item, using only their hands, and guess which person chose to put it in

the bag.

When the person who used the item is correctly guessed, ask him or her to share a few details about what they did with the item. This way everyone can share something about their day. Try to model asking good followup questions, and encourage your child to do that too!



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits:* **Movement Patterns**

Stand with your child (this can be done indoors or outside). Now, begin with a two-part movement (e.g., clap, pat head), and repeat it. Encourage children to copy your movements. After several repetitions, say the pattern aloud, emphasizing the first movement of each repetition (e.g., clap, pat head; clap, pat head; clap, pat head).

Say something like, "We just made a pattern by making the same two movements over and over again. Let's see what other patterns we can make." Ask your child to suggest two movements (e.g., jump and bend). Say and do the movement pattern with them. Use the word "pattern" and related language. Say something like, "We're making a pattern because we keep repeating the same two movements. It's a pattern because it repeats over and over again."

Say each pattern aloud, using your voice to emphasize the first movement of each repetition (e.g., jump, bend; jump, bend; jump, bend).

To extend this activity, use movement patterns at transition times (e.g., to help your child settle down when they first move to a new part of their day). You can also give your child scarves, paper plates, or other objects to hold and incorporate into their movements (e.g., suggest they alternate waving scarves high and low or holding plates in front and to the sides of their bodies).

### Children experience:

- Creating and imitating patterns
- Moving in coordinated movements



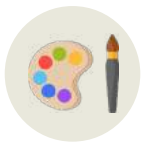
# MORE RESOURCES



## Get your Voice audition ready with Laurie Berkner

On her Youtube channel, Laurie Berkner has lots of fun songs that will have both you and your child dancing and laughing:

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ9o9F8HYJV85XjciUS86\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ9o9F8HYJV85XjciUS86_Q)



## Inspire Your Young Picasso

Hands on as we Grow has some great art activities that use common materials found at home. We all can use a creative outlet!

<https://handsonaswegrow.com/30-creative-toddler-craft-art-projects/>



## Books...from Space!

Your child loves storytime, but have they ever had a story read to them in zero gravity? NASA astronauts ready amazing stories from an amazing place here:

<https://storytimefromspace.com/>



## A Scientific Method

The Bezos Family Foundation developed Vroom to provide scientific prompts to inspire your child's development:

[www.vroom.org/](http://www.vroom.org/)