

Dress-Up Play

You chose a hat with flowers.

Talk positively to your child about her choices during dress-up play.

Dress-up play offers your child a chance to choose for herself and develop her imagination.



Why this is important

Most children enjoy trying out various kinds of clothes and seeing themselves in new ways. In this game, your child can decide and choose for herself how to dress up. A child who feels good about herself because her decisions have been accepted will have a more positive attitude in her approach to other people.

What you do

- Give your child a box of simple dress-up clothes and accessories such as hats, gloves, shoes, etc. Make sure your child has a mirror nearby while playing.
- Encourage your child to choose a few items to wear. Talk about the items she chooses. *You are wearing Daddy's red hat! It looks nice with your blue shoes.*
- Keep your comments positive and encouraging as your child decides what to wear on her own.
- Remember that both boys and girls will enjoy this activity. Dress-up play provides your child the chance to experiment freely with various roles without embarrassment.
- Change the items in the box periodically to keep your child's interest, but remember that simple items, such as shoes, scarves, and hats, work well.

Another idea

Expand dress-up time to allow your child to wear her new outfit all day if she wants. Let her know that you value her choices.

Let's read together!

Hats
by Debbie Bailey

Me in a Mirror

Look at you!



Talk to your child about what she sees as she discovers herself in the mirror.

Watching herself in the mirror helps your child connect what she sees with what she feels her body doing.



Why this is important

Your child may enjoy examining herself in front of a mirror. Practicing smiles, making faces, brushing her teeth, or washing her face all help her connect what she sees in the mirror with what she feels her body doing. The more your child learns about herself and what she can do, the more comfortable she will feel in new situations.

What you do

- Give your child a safe, hand-held mirror. **Unless it is a toy made of unbreakable Plexiglas®, you need to stay right next to her to make sure the mirror doesn't break.**
- Encourage her to make faces. *Can you stick out your tongue?*
- Offer her a comb, toothbrush, or washcloth and let her play with them as she watches herself.
- Describe her actions as she sees them in the mirror. *You're washing your nose. The comb is getting caught in your hair!* Make sure you let her direct her own play.
- Use a wall mirror to allow your child to see her whole body. She may pose or dance in front of it. You can join her and talk about her image, but give her time to play on her own.

Another idea

Keep your child's interest in the mirror by offering hats, scarves, or jewelry for her to try on.

Let's read together!

Mirror Mirror What Will I Be?
by Christopher Inns

See It a New Way

*Oh, look at this
big rock.*



Give your child a plastic magnifying glass, show him how to use it, and talk with him about his discoveries.

Using a magnifying glass lets your child see ordinary objects in a new way and increases his curiosity about the world.





Why this is important

Giving your child a magnifying glass helps him discover a new way to look at the world around him. He will discover how the magnifier makes familiar objects look different. With many experiences, he will remember the object as it was and learn how it can look differently.

What you do

- Give your child a plastic magnifying glass and invite him to examine and explore with it.
- Make sure he has a few objects handy to explore. Talk about the differences he notices, using words like *big* and *different*. **Supervise closely when your child handles tiny objects. Watch carefully to make sure your child does not put any small objects in his mouth.**
- Answer his questions and respond with enthusiasm as he shares his discoveries with you. *Wow! There are so many tiny spots on the leaf!*
- Notice how he looks at an object, such as a flower, and then views it with the magnifier. He may take the glass away, look again, and then look one more time through the glass.

Another idea

Let him use the magnifying glass to look at the food on his plate before he eats, or take the magnifying glass with you when you go on a walk together or go to the grocery store. You can offer him another interesting view of the world by using sunglasses or plastic colored lenses.

Let's read together!

Baby Food
by Saxton Freymann

What's Your Name?

I see Edna Smith.



Use your child's name in songs, stories, and games to encourage her to say it.

Recognizing and remembering her name helps your child strengthen her self-image.



Why this is important

A young child may quickly learn to recognize her name, but she may have few opportunities to speak her name. Giving your child practice saying and using her full name and encouraging her to look carefully at her written name develops her sense of identity.

What you do

- Begin by speaking your child's name clearly so that she can learn it and recognize it when others speak it.
- Introduce your child to others using her full name. Occasionally use her full name when speaking to her: *Thank you, Shawna Johnson.*
- Make up rhymes or simple songs using her name. *Maria, Maria, I love you. Maria, Maria, touch your shoe.*
- Make up games that require your child to say her name. She can knock on the door as you ask, *Who is it?*

Ready to move on?

Sit together and look at family photos. Name each person you see. You can include written labels for each person as a way to help her learn to recognize her written name and the names of others.

Let's read together!

A Bit More Bert
by Allan Ahlberg

Sharing Nursery Rhymes



Teach your child some of the nursery rhymes you learned when you were young.

Sharing songs from your childhood can help your child learn more about her family's culture.

*One shoe off and
one shoe on...*



Why this is important

Reciting rhymes with your child provides an excellent opportunity to teach her about the rhythm in language. Using the language and traditional rhymes of your childhood and your family's culture helps your child feel included in a group. Songs and stories are things that many people share in common.

What you do

- Sing your favorite nursery rhymes from your childhood to your child. Make sure to include the favorite nursery rhymes of your family's culture.
- Invite your child to repeat short, simple rhymes. At first she may yell out just a few words that sound alike, but as time goes on she will learn to say more of the words.
- Chant the rhyme to add rhythm. Clap to the beat as you say the words.

Another idea

Invite your child to act out a favorite nursery rhyme. Join in the acting, but let her be the leader.

Let's read together!

*Hickory, Dickory, Dock: And Other
Favorite Nursery Rhymes*
by Sanja Rescek

Show One and Two

Yes, that plate has two.

With your child create and talk about groups made up of one, two, or many items.

Your child will gradually begin to understand that one, two, and other numbers mean a particular amount.





Why this is important

Helping your child say and use number words strengthens his understanding of the number concepts of *one* and *two*. Grouping objects helps your child see relationships and make comparisons. With practice he may learn that *one* is different from *many*. As he grows he will begin to make more complicated judgments, such as the difference between *a few* and *many*.

What you do

- Look for occasions when you can talk about *one* and *more than one* with your child.
- Invite your child to play a game with you. Group objects such as small blocks or crackers in bowls or stack them on the table.
- Talk to your child about the groups. *See, this bowl has one cracker. This bowl has many.*
- Ask your child to show you the bowl with one cracker. Respond enthusiastically when he chooses correctly. *You chose the bowl with one!*
- Change the game to finding two, after he feels comfortable finding one object.
- Look for objects around the house that come in pairs such as socks, shoes, and gloves. Count the objects together.

Another idea

You can play another game using Cheerios® on a clean table. Separate the Cheerios® into a few piles of one or two. Ask your child to push the groups with two over to one side of the table and the single Cheerios® to the other side of the table. You can add piles of three or more when he is ready for a challenge.

Let's read together!

Toddler Two
by Anastasia Suen

Color Sorting

You're putting all of the red ones together.



Use two plates and several blocks of two different colors to give your child a chance to sort colors.

Your child will begin to recognize and say color words and sort the blocks by color.



Why this is important

Knowing color names will enable your child to express herself better. As she practices naming and sorting colors, her understanding and vocabulary will improve. Touching the colored block as she names the color will make it easier to remember the name.

What you do

- Gather together a collection of blocks in two colors. Give her a plate for each color and invite her to sort them. *Can you put the red blocks on this plate and the blue blocks on that plate?*
- Talk about her actions. *I see you put a red block over here. Are you going to find another red block to put with it?*
- Offer help if she does not understand the instructions. *This is a red block. Which plate should we put this red block on?* Help her sort a few blocks until she can do it on her own.
- Add another color to the game when she can successfully sort two colors.

Another idea

Look for other items around your house for your child to sort. When cleaning up toys, ask her to find all the green toys first, then the yellow, etc. Or, let her sort cans in the kitchen by matching up the colors. When folding laundry, your child can help by searching for socks with matching colors. Encourage her to name each color she finds.

Let's read together!

Caps for Sale
by Esphyr Slobodkina

Building Blocks



Show interest when your child plays with blocks by talking about his actions.

With blocks, your child can direct his own play and learn about balance by building with various shapes.

*You made three things.
Can you tell me about them?*





Why this is important

Your child can make decisions and direct his own actions while playing with blocks, and you can observe how he plays on his own. He may not know where to place the blocks at first to balance them, but he will learn quickly if he is allowed to practice. Your child's self-reliance will increase as he learns that he can accomplish what he tries to do.

What you do

- Give your child a box of blocks of various sizes and shapes. Step back and let him explore and experiment on his own. He may form long, flat lines on the floor before stacking the blocks.
- Limit the number of blocks you give your child at first. Discourage him from using the blocks to throw or hit by showing him how he can use them for building.
- Talk about his creations. *You made something with four blocks. Let's count them, one, two, three, four.*
- Invite him to talk about what he builds if he wants to, but let him play quietly if he chooses.
- Provide comfort and understanding if his work collapses before he finishes. *You are really frustrated that your tower fell down.* Encourage him to try again.

Another idea

Use a collection of cans or small cardboard boxes in addition to building blocks. Your child will have more decisions to make about balance as he builds.

Let's read together!

This Is the House That Jack Built
by Simms Taback

Others Have Needs, Too



I need a can opener.

Teach your child how to express her needs by expressing yours.

This helps her understand that others have needs, too.



Why this is important

As your child becomes more aware of her needs, you can help her learn to express them by modeling words that she can someday use. When she begins to understand the needs of others and responds appropriately, your child moves toward having the important ability to listen to others and empathize.

What you do

- Let your child hear you express your needs. Talk in simple terms about what you need, and give her a reasonable way to help. *I need a can opener. Could you get a can opener from the drawer, please?*
- Show appreciation when your child helps you meet a need. *Thank you for helping me when I needed to find my shoes.*
- Help her learn to think about what others need by explaining a situation and asking her about the need. *Here's my bowl of soup. What do I need to eat it with?*
- Ask your child questions about different needs. *It's raining outside. What do I need to keep me dry?*

Another idea

Think of other situations in which your child could help such as riding in the car, visiting a friend, or packing a lunch. *I'm packing a fruit salad in your brother's lunch. What does he need to eat it with?*

Let's read together!

What Do You Need?
by Emanuela Bussolati

Making Os and Xs

*You're making
a big circle.*



Give your child easy, direct experiences in making circles and crossed lines.

Inviting your child to build new shapes with you helps her learn and remember letter-like shapes and forms.



Why this is important

As your child makes shapes she will begin to see that lines must be closed and curved to be a circle. She will learn to use words that talk about the differences between the straight lines of an X and the curved line of an O. Practice in distinguishing shapes and symbols prepares her for reading and math later on.

What you do

- Create a circle on the floor with blocks. Invite your child to sit in the middle. Use the word *circle* and help her make her own circles with blocks or other materials.
- Help your child trace the rim of a cup with her finger. Talk about the shape as she traces. *This is a circle. A circle is round like a pizza.*
- Draw big and little circles together using crayons. Your child benefits from the practice even though her circles may be very crooked.
- Take a straight rope and bring the ends together so that it makes a circle.
- Show her how to cross two sticks and to draw a straight line over another straight line to form an X.

Another idea

Point to and talk about Xs when you see them in a newspaper or sign. *See the big X on the sign? That's a red X.*

Let's read together!

Stick Kid
by Peter Holwitz