

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

PACKET 6





THOUGHT of the WEEK



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

Finding Learning in Regular Moments

Back when life was “normal”, my husband and I had the ability to keep the brains of our three boy’s actively engaged and thinking. Public school was where they received formal education, but our nights and weekends were filled with social interactions, thoughtful discussions, and learning opportunities. We had soccer practice or trips to the park. We went on errands to the grocery store, home improvement store, or pet store. We visited the library, local museums, and nature centers. We went out to eat at restaurants or for fast-food with built-in play places. We met up with friends, grandparents, and cousins. All of these outings offered opportunities to engage our children and enhance their social, physical, and cognitive development. There was environmental print to read, people with whom we could interact, and exposure to real-world situations and scenarios they wouldn’t otherwise experience at home.

Then - all of the sudden - the world closed. None of these places are open anymore. Or, if they are, health and safety guidance recommends leaving children at home, spending the shortest amount of time necessary, and socially distancing from others when visiting. The learning opportunities we leaned on so heavily to enrich the lives of our three boys are gone.

Like everyone else, we have had to make a shift from not only enriching the education of our children, but to providing it. We are now supposed to navigate apps, help our children log in to Google Classroom or video conferences, and stay vigilant to see that all their work gets done. All the while, we are still trying to manage our regular work and parenting schedules. To say it’s chaotic is an understatement.

There are days we don’t get to it all. Yesterday, my 8-year-old, only logged into one app, and my 5- and 3-year-olds didn’t even do that much. Initially, I was disappointed in how little we were getting done academically. I felt like a failure. Why couldn’t we do this? Then, I remembered, as a parent, I now have three jobs: mom, teacher, and employee. So, I channeled that “failure” into finding learning in the mundane moments of quarantine. I gave myself permission to recognize learning in even the most routine tasks found within our own home. Chores became opportunities for math, science, and literacy:

- Laundry - sorting piles of whites and darks, matching socks, and putting clothes away in the correct drawers is math
- Meal Preparation – allowing my children to pour their own cereal and milk teaches concepts of volume, cutting fruit into pieces models fractions and part-whole relationships, stirring and mixing batter develops fine motor skills, and talking about the various ingredients is vocabulary development
- General Chores – sweeping the floor or feeding pets teaches hand-eye coordination, squeezing sponges while doing dishes is physics, and watering the plants or pulling weeds is life science

Feeling like you aren’t doing enough educationally with your children during this time is normal. Different school districts have different expectations. However, short snippets of learning time spread throughout the day help to keep children engaged and motivated. Remember, it’s okay if we don’t get to it all. Instead, give yourself credit for all of the learning that did happen during the day, even in the most unlike moment. I know that helps keep me, as a mom, engaged and motivated.

INFANTS



Art, Music and Movement: **Classical Jams**

Classical music may have positive impacts on brain development. You can play classical music like Mozart, Bach, Claude Debussy, Beethoven and see how your baby reacts to each. Different music sites like Spotify or even YouTube will host these classic compositions and are a great way to access classical playlists. There are many that are geared towards babies, as well, including the album Hush by Yo-Yo Ma and Bobby McFerrin!

Children experience:

- Variety of sounds
- Listening to music
- Engaging with hearing sense

When playing the different classical songs, place different toys that make sounds or rattles near your baby to see if they play with or move the objects in different ways depending on what music is playing. Keep a close eye on their physical and facial reactions to the songs and express recognition of their responses, if any. If your baby reacts enthusiastically to one classical song, try playing it again and see if they continue to react happily and with interest. You might notice them reacting by a change in facial expression, a curiosity in the direction they look, or they may move their bodies or toys as a response.



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Babble back!**

Children experience:

- A “conversation” with an adult
- Hearing their sounds echoed back to them
- Responses from their caretaker
- Relationship building
- Feeling seen and heard

As your baby starts to make sounds, including cooing and babbling, you can show them you are listening by looking directly at them and waiting until they are finished making sounds, then repeat the sounds back to them. This is a great way to engage in a back and forth or an early years conversation with you baby. It can not only help language and communication development to engage in this interaction, but it will also help the baby to feel loved and connected with you and is healthy for social emotional development, as well. See what happens when you babble back to your baby, and how they react to that versus how they react to when you speak to them. As always,

parents or guardians are the number one “material” for a baby and these close interactions have the strongest impact on a healthy development for your baby at this time.

INFANTS



Early Math and Discovery: **Balls in a basket**

For this activity, place a wall of pillows or rolled up blankets around your baby so that the balls don't roll too far away! This activity is geared toward babies that are sitting up or crawling. Place about 10 balls (could be tennis balls, ball-pit balls, or something else this size or slightly larger as they will put them in their mouth) in a basket near your baby and cover the basket with a cloth or small blanket. You could say something like "What's in there? What's in the basket?" and pretend to peek into the basket by lifting the edge of the cloth.

Children experience:

- One to one correspondence
- Collecting objects one at a time
- Hearing numbers

Watch closely at how your baby reacts to this! They may pull the cloth off of the basket, and pull out the balls one by one or maybe they will dump the whole basket. As the balls roll away from them, see what they do, if they collect them one by one and put them back in the basket. Hold up one ball that they are not holding onto and say "One! One ball." You can try extending this up to three, showing them each time how many you are holding. The most important part of the activity, though, is watching what your baby explores with the balls, and seeing if they are interested in putting them back in the basket and dumping them out again!

This activity is also great for walking infants, especially if the basket has a handle. Pretend to hide the balls while your baby can clearly see you and watch them walk to the place you've placed the ball and collect it into their basket!



Myself and Others: **Tummy to tummy time**

Children experience:

- Intimate connection time with you
- Closeness with you
- Sensory experience of touch
- Important tummy time

Lay on your back on the floor and hold your baby on your tummy, with them lying on their tummy, so your tummies are touching. Spend time playing with and talking to your baby in this position and being silly. This activity has many different avenues for evolving, and no matter what, it is special between you and your baby, and is an intimate way to interact with them while laying foundations for social and emotional development.

The closeness of this simple activity will encourage your baby to feel safe and secure, which is the most necessary and important focus of this early stage of development. The closeness and connection that comes from these moments helps pave the way for healthier relationships and confronting emotions for your child later on in their childhood.

INFANTS



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: **Fun with blowing bubbles!**

For non-mobile babies, your baby can be laying on the floor, first on their back and then move them to their tummy. You can blow bubbles around your baby, a few at a time, to encourage healthy muscle development in their necks and backs as they turn to look at the bubbles floating around or reach out to try and grab them!

For mobile babies that are closer to 12 months old, if they are interested, you can also let them try to blow bubbles and hold the bubble wand to move it around. Help them blow the bubbles as they hold the wand for you, too. Watch as they crawl or walk to chase bubbles that are floating away, or try to clap them in their hands by reaching overhead!

Children experience:

- The magic and joy of bubbles!
- Movement and strength development

Materials:

- Bubbles (learn about how to make tear-free bubbles for babies here: www.candokiddo.com/news/babysafebubbles!)
- Bubble wand

TODDLERS



Art, Music and Movement: **Stretching Our Bodies**

Bring your child to a space with lots of room to move, and let them know that they are going to be doing some moving, stretching, and naming parts of their body. You can start by saying “We’re going to stretch our arms way up!” Model by lifting your arms up above your head. Continue stretching your legs and arms. As you stretch and move, encourage them to copy you as you model pointing to and naming parts of your body, such as your eyes, belly, ears, and hands. After modeling a few examples, ask child for their ideas on how to stretch or move. He or she may respond using words or gestures or by simply moving their bodies.

Children experience:

- Moving parts of the body
- Listening and responding
- Nonverbal communication
- Gross motor skills

After children have experienced moving in different ways, model crossing the midline (i.e., crossing your arms, touching your fingers to opposite toes). Practice with crossing the midline supports children in using both sides of their body together, an important skill for improving coordination and, eventually, for learning to read as well as developing other cognitive and motor skills.

If your child can name several body parts, try naming body parts children may be unfamiliar with. This is a great opportunity for the child to learn new words!



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Five Little Ducks**

Children experience:

- Enjoying language
- Listening to music
- Sounds

Let children know that they will be singing a song that involves some movement. Introduce a few simple movements: hands opening and closing for “quacking” or standing and rocking from one foot to the other for “waddling.” Remember to keep movements simple so that children are able to copy and easily modify them to match their developmental levels.

Starting with just a few movements will make it easier for children to remember and copy the actions. Accept children’s level of involvement and how they choose to move their bodies.

Save lyrics for after you have practiced the actions a couple of times then begin singing “Five Little Ducks” at a slow to medium pace and model the actions to match the tempo. If you’re not familiar with the song, you can play it here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZw9veQ76fo.

Observe children’s reactions and copy their facial expressions and body movements as they respond to your voice. Sing the song over and over as children show interest and respond by maintaining eye contact, moving about, or clapping their hands. Remember that children may participate by “singing” along or babbling but they might also come and go from the singing experience.

TODDLERS



Early Math and Discovery: **Animal Boxes**

Provide your child with 4–6 animals and 1–2 boxes. Let them know that there are animals in their boxes and that they can use them in any way they would like.

Your child may take the animals out of the box and put them back in; look at the animals, manipulate them, or make the sounds for the animals they are familiar with. You should describe children's actions (using phrases such as taking out or putting in), and copy the noises children make for the animals. It's also helpful to provide names and noises for the animals children seem unfamiliar with.

Pay attention to see if the child pretends with the animals by making them move, making noises for animals, or describing what the animals are doing using 3–4 words or a short phrase. Pretend along with children, moving animals in the same way the children move theirs; use movement words such as *hopping, sliding, rolling, galloping, and bouncing*.

As your child begins to lose interest in the activity, gather up the materials that are no longer being used and let them know what will be happening next. Allow him or her to take one or two animals to the next part of the day.

Children experience:

- Exploring objects
- Imitating and pretending
- Sounds
- Pretend play



Myself and Others: **Wheels on the Bus**

Children experience:

- Moving parts of the body
- Steady beat
- Enjoying language
- Listening and responding to music

Invite children to an open space in a room where they are comfortable playing. Let them know that they will be singing a song that involves some movement. Introduce simple actions that children can easily copy, keeping it simple. Actions for “The Wheels on the Bus” song could include bouncing up and down (like the people on the bus), rotating fists around each other in front of your body (like wheels), or moving arms side to side (like windshield wipers).

Practice the actions one verse at a time; once children are comfortable with the actions, add the lyrics and sing the verse. After you have sung a few verses, ask your child for their ideas. They might suggest additional lyrics (e.g., changing “people” to “puppies”) or even a new verse. Incorporating his or her ideas helps to keep the song familiar and within their knowledge base. Consider singing some verses repeatedly rather than singing too many different verses. Keep the number of verses to four or five so that children are better able to recall the words and actions.

Acknowledge your child's attempts to copy your movements and honor their requests for more singing as repeating the song builds children's familiarity with the words and actions.

When you're ready, let the child know when you are singing the last verse, or consider continuing the song as you make the transition to the next part of the day.

TODDLERS



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: **Obstacle Course**

It's time to set up a fun indoor obstacle course! Based on your children's development and your access to materials, choose 3–4 of the following ideas to create a simple course for children to go through:

Climb over: Pillows, couch cushions, beanbags, large carpeted blocks, large foam blocks, double-sided ramp, a tire

Crawl under: Table, chairs, climber, your legs

Crawl through: Tunnel; tent made from a blanket or scarf; large cardboard box (from furniture or appliance) open on both ends; upright Hula-Hoop

Step over: Low blocks, slab of wood (2 feet x 4 feet), rope on the ground, pool noodle

Step into or onto: Shapes, textured mats, Hula-Hoops on the ground, wooden stepping stones, bubble wrap

Go around: Fixed object, other adult, or cone

Move through the obstacle course by running, crawling, and climbing; try out more complicated tasks, such as jumping rather than stepping over objects, or climbing over rather than crawling under objects; remind other children of what they need to do to complete a task; use 3–4 words to describe their actions or the task they are working on.

Acknowledge children's actions, ideas, and verbal expressions (for example, the adult might say, "You're saying 'jump, jump, jump' as you move from hoop to hoop").

You may also want to build a fun fort to enjoy with your child. Adapting your home environment can help inspire your child's imagination.

Children experience:

- Moving the whole body
- Gross motor skills

PRESCHOOL



Art, Music and Movement: **Scarves and Streamers**

Get ready to dance the day away with this simple, yet creative, activity that will get your children moving and grooving in their own special way. For this activity you will need a few scarves (if you don't have any scarves, any piece of clothing or material will work).

To start, let your child choose the scarf they would like to move with as you take a different one. Tell children that you will be playing some music and they will be moving to the music. Play the music and let children move any way they would like. Copy their movements.

As the activity progresses, describe how you see children moving; for example, you might say, "You are twisting around and around," or "I'm going to raise my arms like yours all the way up!" or "Your movements are slow and gentle."

You can change the music and play faster songs if children begin to lose interest. If you were playing fast music, change the music selection to something more quiet and slow. This will help send a signal to children that it is time to calm down. Have children slowly dance their scarf over to you. End by having children sit down and describe how they like to move their body.

Children experience:

- Moving to music
- Building gross-motor skills



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Word Detective**

Children experience:

- Reading
- Writing

For this activity you and your child will be detectives, trying to uncover the mystery of words. How many words are there in your neighborhood? How many words have the letter "T" in them? Set out with your child to collect clues and discover a whole new world of words.

Tell your child that there are many mysteries around the world that detectives are trying to figure out. Add that you both will be detectives today, trying to answer some important questions about letters and words. Share that all detectives have a notebook in which they write down their clues or information they collect. Give the child a notebook that has "Detective (your child's name)" written on it.

You can do this activity while you are walking around your neighborhood, a local park, or even driving in the car. Change the questions to meet the needs of your location.

Tell the child that there are many questions that need to be answered. Have the child pick one or maybe two from the list below to try and figure out:

- How many words can you find in our neighborhood?
- How many cars have a letter R in the license plate?
- Can you find any words in the neighborhood that have the same letter that starts your first name?

PRESCHOOL

- How many letters are in our street's name?
- How many different words can you find?
- How many places do you find letters? (dog tags, license plates, house plaques, street signs, yard signs)
- What is the longest word in our neighborhood

If you are driving while doing this activity, end it as you get to your location or home. If you are walking, make sure to end it and make it back home before your child becomes too tired to walk. Let your child decide where to keep his or her detective book until it is needed for the next mystery.

For younger children, give children an empty toilet paper tube and let them walk around the neighborhood "spying" on letters. You can also give children a piece of paper or notepad, but let them draw pictures if they can't record letters or words. Once they draw a picture, then you can help label the picture.

For older children, when you get home, have children write the answers to the detective questions in full sentences. Help them to capitalize and put punctuation at the end of the sentences. As an extension, let them think of questions they want answers to. Follow their lead, and help them gather clues to answer their questions.

This activity is a playful approach to learning letters, but it also helps children to see the important role that letters and words play in their environment.



Math, Science, and Technology: **Bubble Blow**

This activity can take place anywhere in the house or outside. You will need one small bottle of bubble solution. If you don't have a bubble solution on hand, you can make it easily, following these instructions: www.thesprucecrafts.com/make-your-own-bubble-blowing-mixture-1244214. If you don't have bubble wands, you can use wire to make them ad hoc.

When you begin, tell your child you are going to play a game together. Introduce the word "prediction" to the children and explain that it means to guess something will happen. Say "I am going to make a prediction. I am going to predict that I will blow only three bubbles." Try to blow only three bubbles in one breath and see what happens. Have children count the bubbles as they come out of the wand. Switch roles and have children make a prediction and then let them blow.

Keep going and see how many times your predictions happen correctly! As children are blowing bubbles, you can offer encouragement by saying "use self-control" or "make your body blow less or more air." Comment on the shape of bubbles to introduce the word "circle".

Bubbles tend to drip, so be sure to wipe the floor if you are blowing bubbles indoor.

Children experience:

- Counting
- Experimenting, predicting, and drawing conclusions
- New words
- Shapes

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Myself and Others: **Where's My Lid?**

Children experience:

- Matching
- Counting
- Shapes
- Problem solving

Some of the best educational items can be found for free right inside your own kitchen cupboards! For this activity, you'll need a few food containers and the matching lids. Once you have your containers and lids, watch those math skills pour right out of your child!

You'll also need two large baskets or any large container you have (something simple like a brown paper bag or plastic grocery bag will work); one container should hold the lids and the other will hold the bottles/other containers

Tell children you have a bunch of containers that got separated from their lids – they're all jumbled up! Show children the two baskets (one with the containers and one with lids) and ask them to help you figure out which top/lid goes on which container. Pick out a container and start searching through the lids, asking children if they think the one you chose will fit. Encourage children to pick out one or more containers and begin searching for a match.

As children are trying to match containers and lids, listen to their comments and extend their observations and vocabulary. For example, you might say, "I see your bottle has a small hole at the top. Which lid do you think will fit on that little round opening?" Or you might comment, "Your container is blue, so you're looking for a top with the same color."

Have your child help you put the containers away in a cabinet, and thank them for being so helpful!



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: **Wax Paper Skating**

Introduce the words "skating" and "sliding" and ask for examples of times when people might skate or slide. Then distribute sheets of wax paper to your child. Allow time for them to explore the wax paper and make observations about it.

Now model for your child how to put the wax paper under their feet and carefully start moving around the room. As the child uses wax paper to slide and skate on the carpet or wood floor, join them in the activity and encourage them to describe their actions. Introduce new vocabulary as necessary, like skate, slide, glide, and slip.

This is also a great opportunity to problem solve with children as they move into the same space as someone else or need to navigate around objects located in the classroom. You can also observe how the sliding works on different surfaces.

After you have attempted several ways of skating, introduce some music and tell your child to pick their favorite way to slide or skate to the music. Observe how the child moves and acts and comment on their actions.

Children experience:

- Gross motor skills
- Body awareness



MORE RESOURCES



This Activity is for the Birds!

Celebrate *Urban Birds* can help you and your child become expert nature observers. Visit their helpful site here:
<https://celebrateurbanbirds.org/cub/instructions>



Get Moving with GoNoodle

GoNoodle offers free and fun indoor movement activities and videos, so you and your child can get active at home:
www.gonoodle.com/good-energy-at-home-kids-games-and-videos/



Time to Explore!

The Exploratorium in San Francisco has a long list of creative activities and crafts that anyone can try at home:
www.exploratorium.edu/explore-wherever-you-are



Learning can be Tasty

Find food-centric activities that will delight even the pickiest eaters at the Food Literacy Center:
www.foodliteracycenter.org/curriculum



Get STREAMing

The San Diego Children's Discovery Museum is offered daily STREAM (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts and math) activities to engage your creative and analytical mind:
www.sdcdm.org/blog