

Reading Activities

Sorting and Stacking--Teach classification skills with dinnerware. Ask your child to match and stack dishes of similar sizes and shapes. Also have your child sort flatware--forks with forks, spoons with spoons. This is like recognizing the shapes of letters and numbers.

Telephonitis --Give your child practice in reading numbers left to right by dialing a telephone. Make a list of telephone numbers your child can read--for relatives, friends, the weather bureau--and have your child make a call or two.

Let 'Em Eat Shapes--Cut bread into different shapes--rectangles, triangles, squares, circles. Make at least two of each shape. Ask your youngster to choose a pair of similar shapes, then to put jam on the first piece, and to place the second piece on top to make a sandwich. This is a snack plus a game to match shapes.

Dress Me--Increase your child's vocabulary. Teach the name of each item of clothing your child wears--shirt, blouse, sweater, sock, shoe--when your child is dressing or undressing. Also teach the body parts--head, arm, knee, foot. Then print the words on paper and ask your child to attach these papers to the clothes in the closet or drawers. Make a pattern of your child lying on a large sheet of paper. Tack it up. Ask your child to attach the words for the body parts to the right locations.

Hidden Letters--Build reading observation skills with this activity. Ask your child to look for letters of the alphabet on boxes and cans of food and household supplies. For example, find five A's or three C's, or any number of letters or combinations on cereal boxes, soup cans, bars of soap. Start with easy-to-find letters and build up to harder-to-find ones. Then have your children write the letters on paper or point out the letters on the boxes and cans.

Writing Activities

Disappearing Letters--Promote creativity and build muscle control with a pail of water and a brush. On a warm day, take your children outside to the driveway or sidewalk and encourage them to write anything they wish. Talk about what they've written.

Comic Strip Writing--Use comic strips to help with writing. Cut apart the segments of a comic strip and ask your child to arrange them in order. Then ask your child to fill in the words of the characters (orally or in writing).

And That's the End of the Story--Improve listening skills and imagination. Read a story aloud to your child and stop before the end. Ask the child how the story will turn out. Then finish the story and discuss the ending with the child. Did it turn out the way you thought?

Math Activities

Laundry Math--Sharpen skills by doing a necessary household job. Ask your youngster to sort laundry--before or after washing. How many socks? How many sheets? And you may find a lost sock as well.

Napkin Fractions--Make fractions fun. Fold paper towels or napkins into large and small fractions. Start with halves and move to eighths and sixteenths. Use magic markers to label the fractions.

Weigh Me--Teach estimating skills. Ask your children to guess the weight of several household objects--a wastebasket, a coat, a full glass of water. Then show children how to use a scale to weigh the objects. Next, have them estimate their own weight, as well as that of other family members, and use the scale to check their guesses. Some brave parents get on the scale, too.

Science Activities

Ice Is Nice--Improve observation and questioning skills by freezing and melting ice. Add water to an ice cube tray and set it in the freezer. Ask your child how long it will take to freeze. For variety, use different levels of water in different sections of the tray. Set ice cubes on a table. Ask your child how long they will take to melt. Why do they melt? Place the ice cubes in different areas of the room. Do they melt faster in some places than in others? Why?

Float and Sink--Encourage hypothesizing (guessing). Use several objects--soap, a dry sock, a bottle of shampoo, a wet sponge, an empty bottle. Ask your child which objects will float when dropped into water in a sink or bathtub. Then drop the objects in the water, one by one, to see what happens.

What Does It Take to Grow?--Teach cause-and-effect relationships. Use two similar, healthy plants. Ask your child to water one plant and ignore the other for a week or two, keeping both plants in the same place.

At the end of that time, ask your child to water the drooping plant. Then talk about what happened and why. Plants usually perk up with water just as children perk up with good words and smiles from parents.

Children are eager learners: they are interested in everything around them. These easy-to-do activities encourage children's active learning and those wonderful words of growing confidence, "I can do it."

Think of these as starter activities to get your ideas going. There are opportunities everywhere for teaching and learning.

Take a little time to do a lot of good!

For more information on other publications to help your children learn call:
1-800-USA-LEARN
U.S. Department of Education

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