



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ♥ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Family Time on a Budget

With the high cost of living in Hawai'i, it is no surprise that many of us have to live on a tight budget. As much as we want to spend time doing fun things together with our family, we may question if it's possible to do this on a budget. For example, going to the movies can be expensive. The cost of tickets and snacks at the concession stands all add up to more than what many of us can afford.

Having family time together doesn't have to cost a lot of money, but it does require us to prioritize how we spend our resources – money, time, and energy. Children do not need high priced toys or to go out to expensive places to enjoy their time with you. Many home activities can be turned into fun family learning activities. For example, preparing meals with our children at home can be just as much fun as going out to eat at a restaurant (and maybe a little less stressful and definitely less expensive). With a home cooked meal, you have the option to eat at home or have a picnic at the beach, park, or in the backyard. Cooking together creates a special time to bond with your child, while saving money.



This newsletter will provide you with some money-saving tips and inexpensive activities to help you stay on budget and have fun with your young child. Most importantly, wherever you are and whatever you do, make the time spent together with your child memorable and enjoyable.



In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

You already know that babies are expensive! From the hospital bill to the pediatrician's visits to the cost of diapers and clothes, everything costs money. To save on costs:

- ♥ Make your own baby food – breastfeed and make your own mix of mashed or pureed fruits and vegetables for older infants.
- ♥ Buy necessities such as diapers and baby wipes in bulk, on sale, or using coupons from newspapers or online sites. Consider joining a subscription service online, for a yearly fee these services will often deliver diapers, baby wipes and other necessities at prices lower than most stores.

In addition to using the tips above, you can save some money by buying or creating your own simple, inexpensive, "open-ended" toys (items that babies can interact with in different ways) rather than electronic toys. Look for things that will stimulate your baby's ability to visually track and focus on objects, encourage muscle development

by crawling or standing up, and promote interactive experiences for you and your baby. Here are some suggestions:

- ♥ **Use objects (black, white, or red in color) and movements within close range of baby's vision.** Attach large clothespins onto a length of rope or cord. Hang pictures, cloth balls, rattles, bows, or small plush toys from the pin, and tie the string securely across the crib or changing table. Move the toys gently and talk to him about each one. When his attention fades, take down the rope/cord and place it out of his reach. Don't leave your baby unattended with the line.
- ♥ **Make a baby obstacle course.** Once your baby has mastered crawling, he's ready to start learning to climb. Pile some cushions on the floor and show him how to crawl across them. Place a favorite toy on top of the cushion and call his name to encourage him to crawl forward.

Activity for Infants: *Sensory Board*

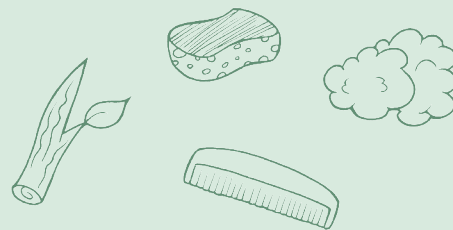
Materials:

- Cardboard
- Craft glue
- Various safe textured items from around the house (e.g., bubble wrap, straws, disposable baking cups, crumpled paper, a square of textured fabric)

What to Do:

1. Clean and sanitize the items for your sensory board.
2. Arrange the items on the piece of cardboard, making sure that the various textures are spread across the board and glue items to the board. Let the glue set for 24 hours. Check to be sure each item is firmly attached to the board.
3. Introduce the board to your infant. Encourage him to explore the items using his senses.
4. Talk to your infant about the items, using new vocabulary to describe each item (e.g., fluffy, soft, rough, bumpy).

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

As your child grows, your expenses change. You may find yourself having to buy new furniture such as a bed; but, food and clothing for your growing child probably make up the bulk of your purchases. To save on costs:

- ♥ Purchase children's clothing on the sale or clearance rack, at garage sales, or from resale stores. Be sure to wash the clothing before using them.
- ♥ Practice potty training when your child shows signs that he's ready – when he learns how to use the toilet, he will no longer need diapers.

You can also save money by creating activities to do with your toddler at home. Toddlers enjoy playing simple games with their parents and other



care providers. When choosing activities for your toddler, look for ones that encourage active play to develop his coordination, appeal to all of his senses, and develop thinking skills (e.g., pretend play and experimenting with cause and effect). Here are some suggestions:

- ♥ **Make a tent or playhouse for your child.** Drape a sheet over a card table or the backs of two chairs to make a simple tent. Pretend that the tent is a cave, an airplane, a train, or a house.
- ♥ **Use a flashlight to explore.** Shine a flashlight on different parts of the room: the wall, door, floor, under the covers, naming each object that you shine the light on. Encourage your child to shine the light on objects you name.



Activity for Toddlers: *Make Your Own Cloud Dough*

Materials:

- 2 cups All Purpose Flour
- ¼ cup vegetable oil

What to Do:

1. Measure out the flour into a large bowl.
2. Add oil and mix until combined.
3. Pour dough onto a tray or a plastic bin and let your toddler explore. Notice that the “cloud” dough has a fun texture and will hold its shape when molded.
4. Talk with your child about the dough. Let him suggest tools or toys that can be added to extend the activity (e.g., cookie cutters, measuring cups, small toys or figurines, etc.)



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Preschoolers

You may notice that your preschooler seems to have boundless energy and is eager to get into different activities. He relies on you for new experiences, outings, and creative activities. Providing these necessary learning experiences for him could get costly, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some free or inexpensive places or activities that he might enjoy:

- ♥ Story time at the library
- ♥ Outdoor activities such as hikes, going to the beach, running at the park, or playing in the sprinklers at home.

In addition to using the above money saving tips, you can save money by providing your preschooler with opportunities and materials for creative activities at home. Have a variety of materials available for your child to use; such as paper, crayons, stamps, play dough, and stickers. Other ways to engage your child with things in your home include:

- ♥ **Create your own toys.** Stretch a sheet of plastic or foil across the top of a bowl and fix it in place with a rubber band. Put some grains

of rice or sugar on top of the plastic or foil. Tap the surface gently with a chopstick. Watch the rice jump up and down as the surface vibrates.

- ♥ **Perform science experiments.** Fill a plastic bottle or jar with water and add a few drops of detergent and a little food coloring. Cover the bottle tightly and have your child give the bottle a vigorous shake. Let him watch the bubbles that his shaking makes.



Activities for Preschoolers: Sidewalk Chalk Paint

Materials:

- 1 cup cornstarch
- 1 cup water
- Food coloring, various colors
- A muffin pan
- Old paint brushes, tooth brushes, or makeup brushes

What to Do:

1. Mix the cornstarch and water in a bowl. Mix well to remove all lumps.
2. Pour the cornstarch water mixture evenly into 4 - 6 of the muffin wells.
3. Add a few drops of food coloring to a single muffin well to color your paint.
4. Repeat using additional colors for the other muffin wells.
5. Once outside let your child's imagination and creativity run wild as he paints the sidewalks!



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen large muscles such as neck, arms, and legs
- ♥ Learn to use his senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to cooperate with others
- ♥ Feel important and good about himself

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening, and understanding skills, and attention span
- ♥ Build verbal skills and vocabulary

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Recognize math concepts like numbers, sizes, shapes, sequences, volume, measurement, and time
- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show him how to safely handle the items and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing any food.

Pizza Roll Ups

Adapted from <http://thewoodenspoondiarries.blogspot.com/>

Ingredients:

- 1 can refrigerated crescent rolls
- Turkey pepperoni
- Frozen chopped broccoli
- 4 pieces string cheese, cut in half
- ¼ tsp garlic or onion powder
- Pizza sauce

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°
2. Together with your child, unroll crescent rolls and lay out the 8 triangles on a cookie sheet. Talk about the shapes of each of the crescent rolls.
3. Have your child top each roll with a variety of toppings: pepperoni, a scoop of broccoli, and a string cheese half. Make this step a game by encouraging him to count each item, having him copy you, or asking him what comes next.
4. Carefully, roll up the ingredients into the crescent.
5. Sprinkle rolls with garlic or onion powder.
6. Bake for 12 – 15 minutes or until golden. Make predictions about how the ingredients will change and how it will taste.
7. Serve warm with pizza sauce for dipping.



Community Resources

Born Learning

<http://www.bornlearning.org/learning-on-the-go>
Provides specific “doable” action steps for parents and caregivers to provide early learning opportunities. It assures parents that it’s easy and fun to turn everyday moments into early learning moments and shows them how to do that.

Make Your Own Baby Food

<http://umaine.edu/publications/4309e/>
Provides instructions on how to make your own baby food and gives recipes to follow.



Suggested Books

Recommended by **Hawaii State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

David Smells by David Shannon

Join the toddler as he discovers his five senses! From petting a dog to banging a drum, to peekaboo, follow David as he inevitably gets into trouble.

From Head to Toe by Eric Carle

Children will love moving along with the animals in this fun and colorful board book. Children will love to move along with the animals and exclaim “I can do it!” as they follow along.

Preschoolers

Interrupting Chicken by David Ezra Stein

Despite repeated vows to stop interrupting, a little red chicken can’t resist jumping in to cut her Papa’s bedtime stories short with plot giveaways.

Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale by Mo Willems

Children and parents will recognize themselves in this comical tale of a toddler’s lost stuffed bunny.



Learning to Grow is a project of the Center on the Family at the University of Hawai‘i, College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources, with funding from the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services. www.learningtogrowhawaii.org