



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Planning Daily Activities to Engage Young Children

If you've ever planned a party or event, then you know that there's a fair amount of work that goes into it...but the payoff is great! Good planning leads to a great party! In the same way, when you plan your day with a young child, it will go a lot smoother, and will lead to many positive outcomes such as:

- ♥ **School success.** Brain research tells us that planning rich experiences and activities for children during the early years (birth–5), helps children enter school ready to learn and succeed!
- ♥ **Supporting children's learning.** Planning helps us think about where the child is developmentally and plan activities that will best meet his developmental needs and better support his learning.
- ♥ **Focusing on priorities.** Planning helps us to stay on track, increase our interactions with the child, and limit distractions.

Planning can start by doing these two things:

1. **Plan your daily schedule.** By having a regular daily routine and basic schedule for meal time, story time, rest time, and indoor and outdoor play, children know what comes next in the day, which helps them feel safe and secure.
2. **Plan activities for your child to do.** The activities don't have to be elaborate to be an effective learning experience. Use resources you have in your home, outdoor area, or community. For example, wooden spoons and empty containers or pots make a great

drum; if you live near a beach, shells are perfect for counting, sorting and exploring.

In this newsletter, we will discuss the benefits of planning for children, and give you guidelines for planning rich experiences and activities for your child at each age level – infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.



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,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

An infant's day revolves around important routine activities such as eating, sleeping, playing and diaper changing. Planning how you interact with your infant during his routine activities will help to increase his brain development.

The table below lists examples of activities to plan for your infant while he is awake and alert, to help him gain a good foundation for school success.



Activity	How
Exploring nature	Go for walks and point out plants and animals in their natural environment. Allow him to touch and feel non-poisonous leaves, sticks, rocks, etc. Use words like, "soft," "hard," "rough," "smooth," "bumpy," "sticky."
Singing	Sing songs with repetitive words and phrases such as "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." You can also make up songs by using familiar tunes such as "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush" and change the words to reflect the things you are doing with baby. For example, "This is the way we change your diaper, change your diaper, change your diaper; This is the way we change your diaper at 10:00 in the morning."
Reading	Start reading aloud as soon as your baby is born! By reading together often, he learns that a book is an opportunity for pleasurable interactions with the adults in his life. Point to pictures and label it, e.g., "Look, there's a dog!"

Activity for Infants: *Tummy Time!*

What You Need:

- Soft blanket or mat
- Baby's favorite toy, a brightly colored stuffed animal, or rattle

What to Do:

1. Use the blanket or mat to create a soft, safe space and lay baby down on his tummy.
2. Shake a toy in front of baby's face and place it just out of his reach and encourage him to lift his head, crawl or move to get to it.
3. Initiate eye contact, and talk, coo, or sing to him while he is on his tummy.
4. For newborns, start with short sessions of 3–5 minutes, and increase the time as baby gets older.
5. Remember to follow his lead – take a break and try another time if he doesn't seem to enjoy it. Any amount of tummy time during the day (even for a few minutes) will benefit him.



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

Toddlers

With increased mobility and curiosity, toddlers are active explorers who learn by doing. Through play, your toddler is developing new skills, learning about how things work, and learning how to be a problem-solver.

When selecting activities for your child, a good rule of thumb is to follow his interest. Children learn best through activities that excite them. Next, be sure to interact with your child while he is engaged in the activities to increase his learning. See the table below for examples of activities to plan for your toddler.

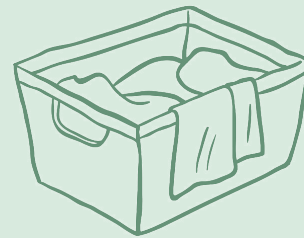


Activity	How
Active play	The American Academy of Pediatrics recommend a minimum of 60 minutes a day of active physical play for toddlers and preschoolers. ♥ Balls, tunnels to crawl through, and wagons to fill and pull. ♥ Dancing, and bean bag toss, such as tossing balled up socks into a laundry basket.
Playing with toys and materials	Select open-ended toys/materials that encourage exploration, problem solving and imagination. ♥ Puzzles, blocks, interlocking materials (e.g., Duplos®), paints, crayons, dress up clothing, trains and toy cars.
Sensory Activities	Select activities that allow your child to touch and use his senses, which is crucial for brain development. ♥ Water play, playing with bubbles, playing with sand, play dough, and finger paints.

Activity for Toddlers: *Box Car Fun!*

What You Need:

- A sturdy cardboard box big enough for your child to sit in, or a laundry basket
- A pillow



What to Do:

1. Place your toddler in the box or laundry basket and show him how to hold on to the sides.
2. Place a small pillow behind his back.
3. Gently push him around the room. Talk about where you're going. Make car sounds as you go.

Variation: Have your child put some of his stuffed animals or toys in the box car and push or pull it around. Ask him where he and his friends are going. Remember that a cardboard box can be turned into anything – a boat, an airplane, a stove, etc....just let your child use his imagination!

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

Preschoolers

As children enter the preschool years, their curiosity and inquisitiveness about the world increases. Preschoolers thrive when they experience new materials, roles, ideas and activities – especially in pretend play. Your child may demonstrate increasing independence in exploring his surroundings, and a desire to do

more things for himself. Now that he has learned basic skills such as talking, running, drawing and building things, he is ready to gain brand new skills.

The table below lists examples of activities to plan for your preschooler to help him gain a good foundation for school success.

Activity	How
Imaginative play	Provide your child with props and play along with him. ♥ A table, some plastic dishes and a menu are great props to play “restaurant”. For example ask, “Does your restaurant serve pepperoni and cheese pizzas? How much is it?”
Discovery	When you notice your child is interested in something, allow him to find out more about it by reading books, recording his observations, and having opportunities for hands-on exploration. ♥ For example, a child who shows interest in bugs might enjoy an insect hunt, reading books about insects, and recording observations such as watching a caterpillar turn into a butterfly.
Movement games and activities	Provide many opportunities for your child to participate in movement activities. ♥ Dancing to the beat of music (e.g., fast, slow, stop when the music stops, etc), and learning and recalling the motions to a song. ♥ Plan more challenging physical activities for your preschooler, such as climbing structures, obstacles courses and games that encourage complex motions (skipping, balancing).

Activity for Preschoolers: *Rainbow Cloud*

What You Need:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| Large paper bags | Paints or markers |
| Newspaper | Glue |
| 6 strips of colored streamers or tissue paper, cut into 24” strips | Stapler |



What to Do:

1. Cut two large matching cloud shapes out of the paper bags. Staple them together, stapling about 2” apart along all the edges, but leave a 10” opening on the bottom for stuffing.
2. As your child does the following steps, talk about the order of the steps by using words like “first,” “second,” “next,” “last,” etc.
 - ♥ Have your child paint or draw on both sides of the stapled cloud.
 - ♥ Show him how to tear the newspaper and crumple it into balls.
 - ♥ Have him stuff the cloud shape with the crumpled paper balls until it’s full.
 - ♥ Help your child staple the bottom of the cloud shut.
 - ♥ Have your child glue the streamers one at a time onto the bottom of the cloud. Talk about the colors as he glues them.

(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
- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles, e.g., facial muscles, fingers, hands and toes

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact 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, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop his thinking and problem solving skills
- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination



Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Praise his efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

Bookworm Apple Bark

Adapted from *Fruits & Veggies More Matters* <https://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/bookworm-apple-bark>

Ingredients:

- 1 Granny Smith Apple
- 1 Tablespoon peanut butter (or any type of spread)
- 2-½ Tablespoons golden or black raisins
- 1-½ Tablespoons dried sweetened cranberries

Directions:

1. Cut apple into four quarters, and remove the core.
2. Together, spread peanut butter onto the apple quarters.
3. Mix together the raisins and cranberries and sprinkle this on top of the peanut butter.
4. Enjoy! This makes a good breakfast or snack treat.



Resources

Zero to Three Parenting Resources

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/164-play-activities-for-birth-to-12-months>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/167-play-activities-for-12-to-24-months>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/169-play-activities-for-24-to-36-months>

Whether you're looking for games to build your infant or toddler's language skills, or games to keep the young ones busy, here are some great play ideas from *Zero to Three*.

HELDS (*Hawai'i Early Learning and Development Standards*)

<http://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/HELDS-continuum-2014.04.01.pdf>

A resource developed in Hawai'i that outlines the expectations of knowledge and behavior at each age level (birth through kindergarten entry).

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Playing by Helen Oxenbury

A delightful board book that shows a baby playing with objects that young children often play with – blocks, wagon, pot, box, teddy, and ball.

Island Toes by Christin Lozano

Take your child on a visual tour around the island, exploring the many different activities that toes participate in, such as playing in the sand, snorkeling, and dancing hula. This book, with its colorful illustrations and rhythmic text, is sure to be a winner with young children.

Preschoolers

Not a Stick by Antoinette Portis

A pig imagines his stick is a sword, a horse, and more. This book will inspire your child to imagine and pretend.

Birds in Hawai'i by Jane Gillespie

This book is filled with beautiful birds that children see throughout Hawai'i nei. From the Red-tailed Tropicbirds found around the sea cliffs to the Hawaiian Honeycreepers of the rain forests, these beautiful birds make the islands a more colorful and joyful place.



Learning to Grow is a project of the University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College, with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Visit our website at www.learningtogrowhawaii.org or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii