



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

## Play during a Pandemic

This pandemic has undoubtedly changed the look of everyday life, as shown by business closures, gathering restrictions, and more rigorous health and hygiene practices. During this time, in which many families face uncertainties, children rely on trusting relationships, routines and play to normalize their day. According to the American Psychological Association, a wealth of research shows that play is a fundamental necessity for children to thrive physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. In fact, play is how children learn best. Play is even more important during the current COVID-19 crisis because play builds resilience, mitigates stress and anxiety, and strengthens family and caregiver bonds and relationships.

So, how do families and caregivers support children during this time? Here are some ideas:

- ♥ Introduce hygiene practices in a fun way
- ♥ Keep connected (virtually or from afar) with peers and extended family
- ♥ Consider outdoor activities, which according to the Mayo Clinic, reduce the spread of germs, as fresh air is constantly moving and dispersing droplets.

It is important to remember that there is no single “right” way to balance health and safety with children’s play and learning, rather “many right ways.” As with any family decision, it is important to look at the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State Department of Health, and then implement the strategies that work best for your family and your values, always keeping in mind quality learning experiences for your child.



This newsletter will discuss ways to support your child’s play as a way to get you thinking about how to balance safety, health, and children’s growth and development.

### 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.

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# Infants

Your infant needs you to maintain close supervision to ensure her safety. Continue to pick her up when she needs comfort and engage her in activities that stimulate her senses. A daily routine, which includes a consistent time for naps and meals, helps your infant feel safe.

During her alert times, you can introduce activities to engage her. Here are some ideas to consider:

- ♥ **Hygiene tip** – While your infant may be too young to learn hygiene practices, you can ensure her toys are safe for her to use, especially because she will put them in her mouth. Create individual bins (plastic shoe box size bins with a lid or resealable plastic bags) that includes toys that are used only by your infant and can be disinfected after she plays. Rattles, rings, noise making toys, and board books are toys that she may enjoy.
- ♥ **Connection with others** – Show baby pictures of family that you may not get to see during



this time. If you're able, print pictures of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins and assemble in a small photo album. As you look at the photos together, tell baby who each person is and what makes them special.

- ♥ **Outdoor activity idea** – Take baby on a stroller ride to places where she can see, touch, and smell flowering plants. Give her opportunities to use her sense of touch by feeling the rough bark of a tree, the soft grass or grains of sand, and exploring the many textures of large stones and rocks.

## Activity for Infants: *Using a Rattle*

What You Need:

A rattle

What to Do:

1. There are many ways to use a rattle to engage baby. Start by moving the rattle from one side to the other. Your baby is learning to visually track or coordinate her eyes together to watch a moving toy.
2. Allow baby to hold the rattle. As her fine motor skills develop, she will learn to hold and shake the rattle in the air. She'll soon progress to transferring the toy into her other hand.
3. You may see her bring the rattle to her mouth. She's exploring the toy's textured surfaces. If she's teething, this may help her soothe her gums.
4. During tummy time, place baby's favorite rattle just out of her reach. She might be more motivated to lift her head, learn to roll to get the rattle, or even squirm along the floor on her belly to start crawling.

Note: Plastic baby rattles are easy to clean and sanitize with a wipe. Fabric wrist rattles and other plush, soft toys with rattles can be washed in the laundry

*(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 is playing, especially if she's playing with others, you can start to teach her appropriate ways to minimize close contact by a physical space. You can create "safe" areas where she can play independently yet alongside another child. This can be a blanket/hula hoop that each child sits on/in while playing, with toys within each area.

Here are some additional ideas to consider:

- ♥ **Hygiene tip** – Teach your child the five steps for handwashing — wet, lather, scrub, rinse and dry — and the key times to wash hands, such as after using the bathroom or before eating. Make it fun by singing a handwashing song, or the Happy Birthday song, which is about 20 seconds.
- ♥ **Connection with others** – Use a video calling application such as FaceTime, WhatsApp, Skype, or Facebook Messenger to have your child see peers or extended family. For example, have grandpa read a book or have your child show and talk about the drawings she created earlier that day.



- ♥ **Outdoor activity idea** – Build an obstacle course with ropes, small cones, hula hoops laid out in a large area. Space the obstacles far apart for endurance and encourage use of a variety of locomotor skills such as jumping, hopping, galloping, and movements such as crawling, tip-toeing, log-rolling, etc. as your child moves between obstacles.

## Activity for Toddlers: *Mess-Free Finger Painting*

### What You Need:

Gallon size plastic resealable bag, tempera paint, heavy tape (duct tape and painter tape), white paper (optional), Q-tips

### What to Do:

1. Add a few squirts of paint into a gallon size bag. Make sure that you're using a good quality bag with thicker plastic and durable seals.
2. Reinforce the closure of the seals and the edges with heavy tape.
3. Using the painter tape, tape the bag to your table so that it won't damage the surface. If your table is a dark color, you can put a piece of white paper underneath the bag, so that the paint will show up better.
4. Encourage your child to use her fingers or the Q-tips to "paint" on the bag. Have her explore mixing colors, making shapes, or just enjoy feeling the paint.
5. Discard the bag when your child is finished.



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



## Preschoolers

Encourage your child to go outside to play, get some exercise, and enjoy the sunshine. While it's not encouraged to gather with others in large groups, if your child is with another child, take activities outdoors.

Here are some additional ideas to consider:

- ♥ **Hygiene Tip** – Give her the opportunity to explore what 6 feet looks like to represent physical distancing. Give her a 6-foot long length of rope, yarn, ribbon or tape to lay on a flat surface. Let her choose whatever measuring device she likes (shoe, favorite doll, truck or stuffed toy) to count how many of that item it takes to make 6 feet.
- ♥ **Connection with others** – Have a virtual field trip together (See Activities for Preschoolers below).
- ♥ **Outdoor activity idea** – Play games that encourage spacing individuals 6 feet apart, such as Simon Says (no face touching), Red



Light/Green Light, stretching and yoga moves, dancing in place, practicing locomotion skills in place (hopping, jumping, stationary jogging).

### Activity for Preschoolers: *Virtual Field Trip*

What You Need:

Laptop/tablet/smartphone with internet access

What to Do:

1. Arrange a virtual field trip day with your child by choosing a place that the child would be interested in. Many zoos, aquariums, national parks have live web cameras that stream their location. Some local sites include: Maui Ocean Center, Honolulu Aquarium Hawaiian Monk Seal Habitat, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, and Poipu Beach.
2. Once you chose a place, talk to the child about what she will see. For example, if viewing a beach, talk about the sand and water, or what she's done at a beach.
3. Access the live camera streams by doing an internet search of the place. A live web camera video feed will be displayed. Show it full screen so that the child can see it and view it for a few minutes.
4. Extend the field trip by doing a hands-on activity. For example, if you just viewed the beach cam, have a small tub of sand with buckets and shovels that she can use to make a sand castle. You can also have books available to read about the beach to make the experience even more special for the child.

*(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

- ♥ Learn to use her body with intention
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others
- ♥ Develop a close bond with you

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions

### Cognitive Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening, and understanding skills
- ♥ Develop her thinking and problem-solving skills



## 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!

### 3-Step Raspberry Cheesecake

Ingredients:

- 2-4 Graham crackers
- 1/4 cup Greek yogurt
- Raspberries

Directions:

1. Place graham crackers in a plastic resealable bag, and have your child crush the crackers into crumb size pieces. She can use a rolling pin or a can of soup to crush the crackers.
2. Together, spoon the cracker crumbs into a small bowl or cup. Then, top with a layer of Greek yogurt, and raspberries.
3. Freeze for 1 hour, so the yogurt can still be scooped, and is firm, but not “rock hard” frozen.



## Resources

### *Sesame Street in Communities: Here for Each Other Family Guide*

[https://www.sesamestreet.org/sites/default/files/media\\_folders/Images/SupportAfterEmergency\\_Printable\\_FamilyGuide.pdf](https://www.sesamestreet.org/sites/default/files/media_folders/Images/SupportAfterEmergency_Printable_FamilyGuide.pdf)

Here for Each Other provides tips, ideas, and activities that teach families effective and comforting ways to respond when an emergency occurs.

### *Physical Activities that Allow for Physical Distancing in the COVID Era*

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/knowledge-areas/k7/covid-19info/covid-resources>

Learn ideas for physical activities that can still be enjoyed by young children while striving to maintain physical distancing. These adult-led physical activities use inexpensive equipment and are fun for children ages 2–5.



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

***Who Has Wiggle-Waggle Toes?*** by Vicky Shiefman

This book focuses on identifying body parts and body awareness. It's a great book to get your keiki moving!

***Leo Loves Baby Time*** By Anna McQuinn

This book uses simple words and bright illustrations to feature activities familiar to little ones and encourage young readers to play along.

### Preschoolers

***The Hug*** by Eoin McLaughlin and Polly Dunbar

This book is perfect to read when you really want to hug someone, but can't. It explores the many different ways you can show someone you care.

***Nonni's Moon*** by Julia Inzerro

This book shows how a little creativity and inspiration can bridge the gap of loneliness and distance, and bring even far away loved ones closer.



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