



Play, Learn, and Read at Home

Developmental Activities for kid's birth to five

Story for the month: Snowball Soup by Mercer Mayer

Focus Skills for parents: **C.A.R. Strategy:** Comment about a picture in the book (The dog has his head in the pot), ask a question and then wait (What is the dog looking for?), and repeat what the child said and add a little more (Child says, “Snow,” and you say “He wants snow.”)

	0-12 Months	1-3 Years	3-5 Years
Problem-Solving Skills	Like the snowballs in the soup, your infant will enjoy taking objects out of containers around 9-11 months of age. With your child sitting on the floor, offer them a bowl or box full of small toys they can hold in their hand such as small balls or blocks. If they are not interested, show them how to take the balls out of the bowl. After they have emptied the bowl, show them how to put the objects back in! They may also enjoy dumping the bowl of toys so be ready to help them put the toys back.	The snowman was given a spoon to eat his snowball soup! Around 24-34 months, your child will be able to identify objects with their use such as, “What do you use a spoon for?” See if your child can answer some of these questions, “What do you use a shovel for? What goes on your feet? What do you do when you are hungry? What do you see with?” Continue to challenge your child with different questions as long as they are interested in playing!	Little Critter and his sister count the snowballs as they roll them to make their snowman: one, two, and three. Use other opportunities to teach math skills throughout everyday routines and activities you share with your child. You can count the steps as you go down the stairs, ask how many plates need to go on the table at dinner, count the number of chocolate chips they eat for a treat, and/or count cars or dolls as they put them away when cleaning up! Point to each item as you count together!
Language/Communication Skills	If taught, most infants will be able to point to a named body part such as eye, nose, or mouth by 12 months. As you read the story, point to the different body parts as Little Critter and his sister put together their snowman. “Here is the snowman’s nose. Here is your nose. Here is mommy’s nose!” Continue to play back and forth with different body parts of the snowman. If your infant reaches for your nose, respond with excitement and reinforcement and say something like, “Yes, nose!”	Like Little Critter, your toddler’s sense of self is maturing. She’ll use “me” to refer to herself, and she’s likely to tell you what she likes and doesn’t, what she thinks, and what she feels. Also, your toddler is starting to get the hang of pronouns, such as “I,” “me,” and “you.” Between ages 2 and 3, her working vocabulary will grow to 200 words or more. She’ll string nouns and verbs together to form complete but simple sentences, such as “I eat now.”	After reading the book, ask your preschooler to name the members of Little Critters family (Little Sister, dog, mom). Talk about “What is a family” and ask your preschooler to name members of their family. You can make a book with pictures of each family member. Have your preschooler interview family members to learn more information such as when they were born, what is their favorite food, and favorite things to do! Use pictures from magazines to complete your book!
Small/Fine Motor Skills	Between 6-9 months of age, your infant will become interested in imitating different motor movements. Use a large pot from the kitchen and sit together on the floor. Begin banging on the pot with both hands. See if your baby imitates you and bangs on the pot. If he does, say “bang, bang, bang.” Take turns while he is interested. Once he has mastered this skill, give him a spoon and see if he will imitate you when you bang with a spoon.	Little Critter and Little Sister turn the door knob to go outside. Your toddler will be able to turn door handles with practice around 21-24 months. You can also use a plastic jar and lid that will fit in their hand to build your toddlers fine motor skills if you are not ready for them to master the door knob yet! Older children can be challenged by giving them 3-4 different sized plastic jars and lids. Let them find the correct ones that fit!	Your preschool age child is learning about size differences. Little Critters snowman is made out of different sized snowballs. Label three different see through containers (small, medium, large). Give your child different sized cotton balls and a pair of tweezers or tongs and have your child sort the “snowballs” into the correct containers! Using the tweezers will help build muscles in your child’s fingers that will help them hold a pencil when they are school-aged!

	0-12 Months	1-3 Years	3-5 Years
Large/Gross Motor Skills	<p>Little Sister enjoys rolling down the hill in the snow! Your infant will begin to roll from her belly to back around 2-5 months and from her back to her belly around 5-8 months. One way to help her gain strength to roll over is a lot of tummy time throughout the day. Another way is to allow your baby to play on her side. You can use toys, mirrors, books, or the most exciting toy, your face to engage her in the side lying position. If she needs help staying on her side, use a rolled up receiving blanket wedged behind her back!</p>	<p>Make an inside obstacle course with your child using crepe paper streamers! Follow your toddler through the maze of going under and over different obstacles! When you are finished, you can make snowballs out of the paper and have an indoor colored snowball fight!</p> 	<p>Make a very large snowman out of paper and tape it to the floor. Let your child draw a face on the snowman and add 3 buttons on the snowman's chest. With your child, make a couple of bean bags by filling a small sock with rice, dried beans, or noodles. You can tie off the sock or use a rubber band to seal it. Take turns tossing the bean bags to land on different parts of your snowman! You can also number each part of the snowman. Such as the bottom circle is 1 point, the middle is 2 points, and the top is 3 points since it is the smallest. Count up the points to see who wins the game!</p>
Self-Help Skills	<p>Drinking from an open cup is a skill your baby can begin to work on between 6 and 9 months. Pour a very small amount of formula or water into the cup and hold it up to your baby offering them a small sip. You can help them by supporting their chin with your hand. By 12-18 months, your child should be able to drink independently holding a cup.</p> 	<p>Little Critter gave the snowman a spoon! An infant as young as 9-12 months will begin to show interest in using a spoon. By 12-15 months, they are bringing the spoon to their mouth although the food may not stay on. By 2 years of age, they are fairly successful getting food into their mouth using a spoon. Give your child a spoon from a young age to explore. Don't make the spoon a battle. Give one to your child while you feed them so you each have one.</p>	<p>Hands-on cooking activities help children develop pride and confidence in their skills and abilities. The act of following a recipe can encourage self-direction and independence, while also teaching children to follow directions and use thinking skills to problem solve. Plan and fix a lunch together with your preschooler. Allow your child to be as involved as possible by gathering and washing the foods, mixing, cutting soft foods with a plastic knife, setting the table and cleaning up!</p>
Social-Emotional Skills	<p>In this story, there are many different facial expressions and emotions! Around 6-7 months, your baby will begin to "read" and respond to your facial expressions. When you are happy and smiling, your baby should smile back at you with excitement. However, if you are stressed or frustrated, your baby may respond by crying, sneezing, or looking away. Be mindful of how you are feeling when interacting with your baby to make sure your interactions are positive and helping them feel safe and secure!</p>	<p>One way to help your child learn to label their emotions is to model for them and talk about how you are feeling. For example, if you drop and break something you could say, "O man that is so frustrating. I need to take a deep breath and clean up my mess." Or, "That makes me so mad, I need to take a time out to calm down." Talking out loud about your feelings as you experience them will teach your child what to do with their emotions!</p> 	<p>Little Critter said sorry to Little Sister after he threw the snowball at her. Teach your preschooler why it is important to say they're sorry by saying something like, "We say sorry when we do something that hurts or bothers someone." Since kids this age aren't yet able to mentally put themselves in another's place, help encourage empathy by pointing out how the other child feels ("Little Critter is crying. How do you think she feels? How'd you feel if someone threw a snowball in your face?"). Then, ask your child what they could do different next time. This will help teach your preschooler what they can do in the future!</p>

The Play, Learn and Read at Home activities are brought to you by the Montcalm County Great Start Collaborative Great Parents Great Start program. Children move thru predictable stages of development. The activities provided above are meant to be a guide. For more information on your child's development visit: www.GreatStartMontcalm.org