



Play, Learn, and Read at Home

Developmental Activities for Kid's Birth to Five.

Story this month: The Mitten by Jan Brett

Reading Strategy: The mitten is a Ukrainian folk tale. As you read through the book, point out some of the details on the pages: clothing, thatched roof with the crossed sticks on top, the birds' nest near the chimney, and the colorfully decorated fireplace.

	0-12 Months	1-3 Years	3-5 Years
Problem-Solving Skills	<p>Set out cardboard tubes and balls or cars that can fit through the tubes. (Make sure items are not choking hazards!) After the toddler has had time to explore, lay a tube on the floor and roll a car or ball through it so that it disappears. Now pick up one end of the tube so the item rolls out the other end and reappears. Encourage the toddler to explore making the items disappear and reappear.</p>	<p>A great activities for toddlers is matching. Separate mittens (socks will work too) and have your toddler try to match them back together again. You can extend this activity after they're matched and see if your child can sequence the pairs by size of the mitten.</p> 	<p>Open ended questions are a great way for children to learn problem solving. Before reading the book, have a conversation with your child about what they might see. Look at the front cover and say, "Tell me what you see in the picture. What kinds of animals are there and what are they doing? Which season is it"? After reading the book ask why the animals went in the mitten.</p>
Language/Communication Skills	<p>Help your baby experience actions reinforced with words. For instance, say, "I'm picking you up," as you lift him up, and "Now down you go," as you put him on the floor. Speak slowly and let your voice emphasize the words. "Your socks are on and now they're off", "Let's close the door; let's open the door." Linking words with motor experiences helps children make connections.</p>	<p>Sing with your child: (Tune: The Farmer in the Dell)</p> <p>The mitten on the ground, The mitten on the ground, Heigh-ho! It's cold outside, The mitten on the ground. The (mole) snuggles in, The (mole) snuggles in, Heigh-ho! It's cold outside, The (mole) snuggles in. <i>(After the last animal, all pretend to sneeze and fall out of the mitten.)</i> Author Unknown</p>	<p>Use a mitten and hide toys inside. Give your child clues about the toy/toys inside. Encourage your child to listen to the clues to guess what is inside the mitten.</p> 
Small/Fine Motor Skills	<p>Get your baby situated in his high chair or other area where you can safely make a mess, and enjoy some sensory exploration. Let him play with flour and cornmeal. Talk to him about how soft the flour is, and how coarse the corn meal feels. Then, add some water to the mix. Let the flour get all goopy and messy. Then, add a drop of food coloring to see what happens next! Of course you'll need to run a bath afterward, but that's another place for some indoor fun.</p>	<p>Playdough is a great way for young children to strengthen their fine motor skills and it's also a fun sensory activity. Young children love the way playdough feels when they use it. Use playdough with your child to retell the story. Allow your child to make the playdough pieces in any form they want.</p> 	<p>Make some fake snow for children to play with inside. Encourage them to put some of their toys in to move around, or give them little measuring spoons and bowls in the 'snow' to practice scooping and pouring. The recipe for fake snow is:</p> <p>3 cups baking soda 1/2 cup hair conditioner (snow will be whatever color conditioner you use).</p> 

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Large/Gross Motor Skills	Most babies learn to crawl between 7-10 months of age. Your baby may choose a different kind of action to get around, such as scooting on their bottom, rolling, or slithering on their stomach. It doesn't matter how they move, the important thing is that they get moving. Encourage your baby to move around and reach for and move to various items.	Read the story with your child(ren) and act it out. Use a sheet as the mitten. Your child(ren) can crawl under the sheet as the story is read. Make sure your child's head is showing while they're in the 'mitten'. 	The outdoors is the very best place for preschoolers to practice and master emerging physical skills. It is in the outdoors that children can fully and freely experience motor skills like running, leaping, and jumping. Go outside with your child and build a snowman or go sledding and enjoy the snow. 
Self-Help Skills	Teaching children early on about dressing and undressing themselves will give them independence. Start with your baby by encouraging them to help pull socks on and off, pull up pants after diapering and help put their arms through sleeves. As children get older, encourage them to dress themselves but help with challenging steps such as zipping and buttoning.	Encourage children to help with clean-up early on. Give toddlers responsibility for placing napkins or utensils on the table. Encourage children to begin clearing their own plates when they are old enough to carry them without dropping them. When children are involved in regular chores starting before the age of 4, they tend to be more independent in early adulthood than children without the experience of helping out.	Preschool age children can understand how to treat toys and materials responsibly when they are taught consistently. Explain to your child that taking care of toys and their materials will keep them from getting broken or lost. Teaching them at a young age and sticking with it will make it easier for clean up time as they get older. 
Social-Emotional Skills	The first things infants learn as they get older is to trust their caregivers for their needs to be met. When your baby cries, respond to them, talk to them, snuggle with them and let them know they are not alone and that they are loved.	Natural consequences help children understand the cause and effect involved in a rule, request or limit. For example, the natural consequence of throwing a toy truck is having it put away for a little while. But natural consequences can be positive too! Remind your child, "If you cooperate with getting your jackets on, then we'll have more time at the park." Strategies like this help children learn the rules and to make good choices over time.	Play charades with your preschooler using different emotions. Write different feeling words on separate papers, fold them up and put them in a bowl. Take turns picking one and acting out the feeling. Some emotions you can use are: happy, excited, mad, sad, confused, worried, shy, embarrassed, proud, and impatient. While you play the game, discuss the meaning of each word so your child understands the different feelings.

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

