

Social-Emotional Readiness

It's important to talk about feelings to help your child develop self-awareness and empathy for others.

- Ask your child how they are and share how you are feeling.
- Ask your child to make faces – happy, sad, angry, surprised, silly, etc. Use different words to describe those feelings and then ask your child if they can tell you what your expression means when you make different faces.
- Talk about characters' emotions in the books you read or shows you watch. How are they feeling? Why do you think they feel that way?
- Practice hand washing at home, and proper sneezing and coughing behaviour.

Writing Readiness

Developing finger and hand muscles is important to help your child get ready to learn how to write. Have fun with activities that focus on fine motor skills.

- Play with play dough
- String beads
- Lacing cards
- Cut with children's scissors
- Draw/write with crayons/markers/pencils
- Finger paint
- Make up games with clothespins
- Scribble
- Draw vertical and horizontal lines and circles and other shapes
- Do "writing" activities: sign cards, write letters, label pictures, make a grocery list
- Play with blocks

Reading Readiness

An interest in books and reading will help your child get ready to learn how to read. Including stories, reading, and language in their everyday routine helps to foster this interest.

- Read yourself. Children copy what adults do.
- Have books and other materials visible in your home.
- Point out words, labels and signs around you: street signs, in stores, on packaging.
- Point to letters or words as you read together. Show your child that letters spell important words, such as their name.
- Sing songs. Singing helps children hear the distinct sounds that make up words
- Tap or clap out rhythms in songs: teaches children the rhythm of language
- Listen to your child and give them time to talk.
- Ask questions when you read together.
- Use different words for the same thing to increase vocabulary.
- Read, memorize, or listen to nursery rhymes.
- Hold your child and read with them every day.

Shapes

Recognizing shapes is the first step to recognizing and forming letters. Talk to your children about the shapes you see around you.

- Cut different shapes out of paper (circle, square, rectangle, triangle, diamond, heart, octagon). Punch holes around the edges of the paper and have your child lace a shoelace through the holes. Develops fine motor skill as well as reinforcing the angles and contours of various shapes.
- Cut out shapes large enough to have your child jump on them or draw them with sidewalk chalk outside. If doing this indoors, tape the paper shapes to the floor. Indoors or outside, call out a shape and have your child jump onto that shape.
- Use toothpicks and marshmallows to build shapes with straight edges: squares, triangles, rectangles, octagons, pentagons.
- Take a walk outside (or walk around the house). See if you can find different shapes.

Letters

- Make sandpaper or corrugated cardboard letters. If you make them about 3 inches tall your child can play with them and touch the contours to learn about letter forms.
- Make an alphabet book. Cut pictures from old magazines or have your child draw a picture for each letter of the alphabet. Add glitter or stamps or other decorations to make it a fun project.
- Spell out words and make the sounds of letters. Use magnetic letters or alphabet blocks or write out letters and cut them out. Practice letter recognition: start with the child's name. The letters in your child's name are usually the ones they learn first.
- Write letters in flour. Sprinkle a bit of flour onto a cookie sheet and have your child practice writing letters in the flour. Or, go outside and use a stick to write some letters in the dirt.
- Create an upper/lower case letter matching game. Write the upper case letters on a paper towel roll. Write the lower case letters on blank stickers. Have your child put the lower case letter sticker over the matching upper case letter written on the roll. Or, just write the letters on a sheet of paper (some lower case on one side, and the matching upper case letters on the other side) and have the child draw lines between the matching letters. Both of these activities are great for developing fine motor skills, too.
- PlayDough letters. Roll pieces into "snakes" and then shape them into letters. Or, take an object (the side of a block or spoon handle) and push it into the dough to "write" letters.

Numbers

Children become familiar with numbers and understand simple math concepts such as sequence (counting), measurement, and comparison (more/less, bigger/smaller) through these activities.

- Inside or outside, count the stairs, the number of driveways you pass, the balconies on your apartment building, the number of raisins you eat etc. Counting, comparing (more/less), playing with dice, measuring things - all these activities help to develop basic math skills.
- Stack LEGO pieces or other blocks. Count the number of bricks in the pile. Build another tower and compare it. Is it bigger/smaller? Did you use more/less

blocks? Use your hand or a toy as a non-standard measurement tool (or use a ruler!) to compare the sizes.

- Water fun! Outdoors with a bucket or inside at the sink. Take a measuring cup or spoon and a plastic glass or bottle. How many scoops will it take to fill the container? Count as you fill. Was your guess close?
- Outside, draw a hopscotch or a long line of squares. Roll some dice. How many squares to you have to hop until you reach that number?
- Count the number of seeds you find in a piece of watermelon or in an apple.

Colours

Colour is everywhere. Have some fun identifying and sorting things by colour.

- Play “I spy” with a colour. Inside or outside, see how many things you can find that are a specific colour. Talk about how there are different shades of each colour and see if you can list some other things that might be that colour.
- Sort the laundry into piles by colour.
- Take a handful of Fruit Loops or coloured pasta and sort them by colour, and then make a rainbow with them.

Opposites & Thinking Skills

Understanding the concept of opposites helps a child learn how to compare two different things and improves the child’s ability to describe things.

- Make an “Opposites Game.” Cut a piece of paper into strips. On each strip, write a different activity. For example: jump quickly, nod your head slowly, sit down, march left, clap loudly, put your hands behind you, etc.) Put the strips of paper into a bag. Pull out an activity, read it to your child and have them do the activity. Then, ask what the opposite action would be and have them do that, too.
- Sink or float. Using the bathtub, a bucket outside or the kitchen sink do an experiment to see what will sink and what will float. Have your child collect random items from around the house or outdoors (things that won’t be ruined if they get wet!) and ask them to guess about whether the object will sink or float. Try it and see what happens.
- Make a pattern. Use blocks, socks, pompoms, buttons (anything you have multiples of) and make a simple pattern. Start with two items in the pattern—for example, red, blue, red, blue—and then move to more complex patterns. What should come next? See if the child can complete the pattern.

Science & Engineering

Children are naturally curious and learn through play. Hands-on activities are the best way for them to explore, experiment, and learn.

- Try some simple experiments:
 1. Baking soda and vinegar. Spread some baking soda onto a cookie sheet and then drip some vinegar over the baking soda. What happens? Why? When an acid and a base mix they form a gas called carbon dioxide. Here, vinegar is the acid and baking soda is the base. This is a fun way to introduce a safe chemical reaction!
 2. Oil and water. Try mixing some oil and water together. Do they combine or stay separate? Why? Oil is less dense than water and will float on top of the water no matter how many times you try to mix them together.
- Plant something. As you plant talk about the different parts of a plant and why we need them. Take a walk outside and look at the wide variety of plants in the world around us.
- Make a leaf print. Paint the underside of a leaf and then press it onto a piece of paper. Can you see all the veins?
- Build something! Can you make a bridge with blocks or some popsicle sticks? How many empty boxes can you stack on top of one another? Take some paper and try folding it into an airplane shape. Does it fly? Have a contest and see which plane can fly the furthest.

Play

Children learn through play. They learn to express themselves, how to interact with other children, the meaning of words, and other literacy skills. Play requires a little space, some imagination, a few props and some encouragement. Props include things like paper grocery bags, empty boxes, old clothes, empty food containers and toilet rolls.

- Puppets: Make sock puppets and create a stage using a sheet between some chairs and act out a favourite story.
- Make Believe: Encourage your child to make up a story asking them to pretend to be someone else or in a different time or place.
- Dramatic play: Pretend your kitchen is a grocery store; pretend you are at a restaurant; play house; play dress up.