

# Playing to Learn: Tips to develop your young child's learning skills at home

Young children learn best when they are having fun with someone who cares about them in a comfortable place like home. Show your child learning is fun by building learning games into your daily routine.

## Here are some tips:

- **Read** to your child every day, even if you only have 10 minutes. While reading together, ask your child questions. What just happened? Why might that character do that? Act out parts of the story together.
- Introduce your child to **new words** during everyday activities like dressing, eating, and going for a walk. Choose words that relate to or describe what you are doing together.
- Help your child **recognize letters and the sounds that letters make**. Point out letters throughout the day: on cereal boxes, magazines, and street signs.
- Pick something your child loves talking about and create **word games**. Ask them to name all the animals they can think of that start with each letter of the alphabet.
- **Count** objects that you see around you. Explain words like how many, more, and fewer. Try this outside: “Are there more rocks or sticks in this square?”
- Bake cookies together and show your child how to **measure** the ingredients.
- Weigh your child's favorite toy or measure it with a ruler and then **compare** it to other objects in your house. Use and explain words like short, tall, long, wide, heavy, and light.
- Point out **shapes** like circles, squares, rectangles and triangles around your home and neighborhood. See if your child can point out shapes while you are putting away dishes.
- Play a fun game like “**I Spy**” to practice different skills. For example, “I spy three things in this room that have the shape of a circle.”
- Use a fun activity like baking or setting up a board game to help your child learn to **plan ahead and follow directions**. Let them help gather the materials. Along the way, remind them of the recipe or game rules.
- Encourage your child to **group objects** like toys by color, shape, or size. Use and explain words like same, similar, and different.
- **Create storage areas** to organize your child's things (toys, shoes, books). If possible, find small boxes for your child to decorate using pictures and words. Provide materials like buttons, string, glue, and glitter so this can be a fun and tactile experience.
- Teach your child to **help with chores**. Make everyday tasks fun by singing or making them into a race.
- **Encourage your child do things for themselves** whenever possible. As long as they are safe, let them work on a task for a while. Wait until they ask for help before you step in.
- **Show them how it's done**. If your child is not ready to do some of these activities, show them how by doing it yourself. Encourage small steps to complete an activity.

How you build learning into fun daily activities will depend on your family's traditions and on what your child likes to do. You might also ask your child's teacher for suggestions of skills to work on. Experiment with different types of activities (seeing, touching, listening) to find out how your child learns best. If your child sees that you are having fun, they are more likely to have fun too! Praise your child's effort, progress, and success. Encourage curiosity and show them how satisfying learning can be.