

Everyday Learning

Any time is learning time when your youngster adds math to chores, practices reading in the car, or discovers science at the playground. Whether you're at home or out and about, you can turn daily activities into learning opportunities.

Try these ideas for building your child's skills in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies.



Around the house

■ Your youngster can practice writing by helping you make a chore schedule. Divide a sheet of paper into seven columns, and have him write a day of the week at the top of each column. Then, ask him to write each job (dust, vacuum, trash, recycling) on a separate sticky note. Let him place the notes in the columns that work best (do bigger jobs on week-ends, take out trash on trash day).

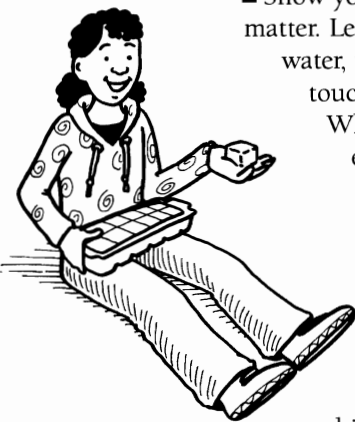
■ Show your child the different states of matter. Let her fill an ice cube tray with water, put it in the freezer, and then touch the ice after it's frozen.

When you boil water for pasta, explain that the water is liquid, and the cloud of evaporated water she sees above is called steam.

■ Use your daily mail for a math lesson. As you open mail, have your youngster sort it into piles (magazines, bills, letters, catalogs, flyers).

Then, play your own version of "The Price Is Right." Using a store flyer from the mail, separately cut out pictures and prices of 10 clothing or household items, and ask your child to match them up. He'll learn how much everyday items cost. *Note:* Older children could add the prices up to figure the total.

■ Give your youngster practical reasons to read. When you do laundry, put her in charge of reading the care instructions on clothing labels. When you're making oatmeal for breakfast or macaroni and cheese for lunch, have her read the cooking directions to you. Write phone messages or other notes on a message board for your child to read.



On the go

■ Carry along a calendar so your child can keep track of dates. At the library, if he can borrow books for two weeks, let him figure out when they are due back. Have him mark the date on his calendar. He can also write down what day your dry cleaning will be ready or the dates of his gymnastics classes.

■ Your youngster can practice reading by playing the alphabet game in the car. Have her list the alphabet on a piece of paper and look at signs to find words that begin with every letter. *Examples:* A = antiques, B = books, C = cab. She can write the words down as she finds them. How many spaces can she fill in?

■ A trip to the grocery store can improve your youngster's math skills. When you choose a fruit or vegetable, let him hold the bag to guess the weight. He can put it on the scale to check and use the results to predict more accurately the next time. Then, have him use rounding skills to estimate the cost. If carrots weigh 2 pounds and cost \$.89 per pound, what is the total cost? ($2 \times .90 = \$1.80$) As you're shopping, have your child round prices of items to the dollar when he puts them in the cart ($\$1.89 = \2.00 ; $\$3.25 = \3.00). He can give you his total estimate when you get to the checkout.



continued

■ Postcards are a fun way to keep writing skills sharp. The next time you're at a park, farm, or toy store, have your child write a postcard. On one side of an index card, she can draw a picture of the place. On the other, she can write a sentence or two about the spot she chose. Help her add a friend's or relative's address and mail her postcard when you go to the post office.



Fun and games

■ After your youngster watches his favorite TV show, have him make up a script for a new scene. Help him get started with questions like "What will the boy do next?" or "Where will the family move?" When his script is finished, act it out together.

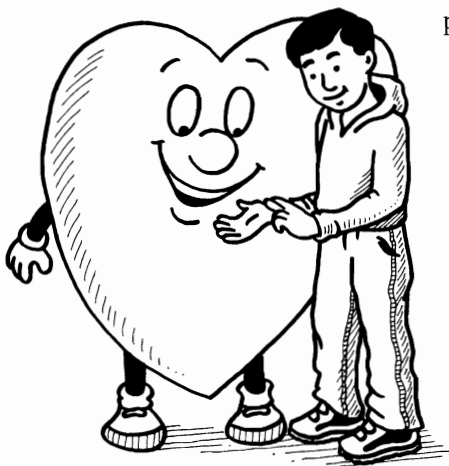
Outdoor play

■ Take a walk in your neighborhood to work on counting. Have your youngster carry along a notebook to record his own "census." He can list categories of things to count, such as girls, boys, mailboxes, and flags. How many of each can he find?

■ Encourage your child to make up an imaginary animal and tell how she would take care of it (feed it, play with it, give it a clean house to live in, provide water). To learn about what animals need and how they behave, sit outside and watch them. Your child might notice a dog playing with a stick, a squirrel gathering acorns, or a spider spinning a web.

■ Your youngster can use his heart for a quick science lesson. At the playground, show him how to take his pulse. Turn his right hand palm up. Have him press the first two fingers of his left hand against his right wrist, just beneath his thumb. He can count beats for 15 seconds and multiply by 4 to get his resting heart rate. Right after he plays on the equipment, have him check his pulse again.

What happens? *Answer:* His pulse will be faster.



■ Hands-on writing activities can improve your child's vocabulary and spelling. Encourage her to write in the sand or dirt with her finger or a twig. Or she can spell her name using small pebbles to construct the letters.

■ Relax after dinner with the newspaper—it's full of learning activities. Give your child the sports section and a red pen, and ask her to circle all the verbs (defeated, scored, upset). You can also cut the comic strips apart and let her practice sequencing skills by putting them back together in the right order. Or try this geography lesson:

have her go through the news section and make a list of the cities she finds. Then, help her locate each one on a map or globe.



■ Explore textures with this activity. Hand each player a sheet of paper and a pencil or a crayon (remove the wrapper). Show your youngster how to put the paper over an object and rub the pencil or crayon across it. Then, walk around the house and make rubbings of textured objects like coins, Velcro, a tile floor, or a vent.

■ Work together to build a city out of toy blocks—and give your child practice with writing, math, and map skills. Suggest that he include roads, houses, and businesses such as a post office, bank, and gas station. He can write out street and building signs to tape to the blocks. Then, have him count the buildings in his city or the number of blocks he used. Suggest that he add toy people and move them around his town. Would they go right or left to get from the library to the grocery store?

Home & School CONNECTION