

Ideas and Hints for Families Working with your Child at Home Concepts and Pre-Academic Skills

What do I see

- From my window? Hold your child so he/she can reach. For example, say: “I see a tree” then wait for your child to tell you or point to what he/she sees (give him/her the words when he/she points).
- From my door? Open the door of your house. Have your child look out and tell you what he/she sees.

Let’s Pretend

- Have your child pretend to be a bear, horse, camel, crab, bunny, frog, etc. Have him/her make the sounds and walk like the animal. Talk about what the animal looks like and where it lives.

Play “Following the Leader”:

- Take a walk with your child and have him/her follow your directions and movements: walk fast, walk slow, skip, walk backwards, march, etc. Take turns in being “The Leader” and follow his/her movements.

Read a Story:

- Ask Who, What, When, Where questions.
- Start with simple questions and wait for your child’s response.
- You can also point to the pictures while you read to build your child’s vocabulary.

Finding Circles in a Magazine:

- Look at a magazine and find all circle shapes in it. Have him/her point to them and trace them with his/her fingers.
- If it is too hard, help trace them by holding his/her hand softly around the shape. For example: If you see a car, show him/her one wheel, talk about the shape, help him/her trace it and ask him/her “Do you see another shape just like this one” while pointing to the wheel and tracing it at the same time.

Finding Squares Around the House:

- Have your child find 3 items in your house that have the shape of a square. First show him/her the shape by tracing it around the furniture with your finger. Have him/her trace it with his/her fingers and help him/her look for more.

Writing a letter:

- Write a letter to a relative. Make sure the child knows the relative, talk about the last time the child saw the relative, have your child tell you what to write and have him/her sign it. Go to the mail box with your child and mail the letter.

Reading a Story:

- Have your child read a story to you or to a family member or even to the dog or a stuffed toy. Let him/her choose the book he/she wants to read. Allow him/her to pretend while making up the story and showing you the pictures.

Find your Favorite Fast Food Restaurant:

- Take a car ride with your child to find McDonald's, Burger King, or Kentucky Fried Chicken. While driving talk about why it is his/her favorite place. Have him/her tell you what the place looks like. Once you arrive there, have him/her point the place out to you.
- Note, if you are not going to go into the restaurant be sure to prepare your child during the drive or before you leave home that you won't be going in or ordering.

Let's go to the Library:

- Visit the library with your child. First talk about the library. What do you find there, why do you go, what do you do when you are there.
- Talk to him/her in a quiet voice and explain that in this place, people come to read books and he/she needs to be quiet. Go to the children's book section and have him/her pick a book to look at.
- If it's not possible to take a trip to the library, pretend by setting up a small book shelf of books at home.

Listening for Environmental Sounds:

- Take your child outside. Have him/her close his/her eyes and ask him/her to tell you all the things he/she can hear. If you hear a sound all of a sudden say: "What was that?" Have him/her answer and then open his/her eyes to look what it was.

Play Simon Says:

- Have your child copy your movements. Begin by saying: "Simon says touch your nose". Start with easy directions and then make them more difficult as you see your child following them. "Simon says put your right hand on your left ear".

Finding a Toy:

- Hide a toy and make a map to have your child find it. Explain the map to your child and give him/her clues if he/she has a hard time finding the toy.
- To make it easy, play this game in his/her room. (Example, "It is under the bed" "It is behind the closet door" "It is beside the night table"). Get excited when he/she finds the toy and start the game again.

Singing the ABC song:

- Sing the ABC song with your child. Then, sing it again and leave out a letter and have him/her say it.

Start a Collection:

- Have your child start a collection of rocks, leaves, flowers, etc., something that he/she has interest in. Talk about shapes & sizes of the items collected. Have him/her keep them in ziplock bags or paper bags.

Playing the Matching Game:

- Put two sets of socks, shoes, small towels and toys on the floor (any 2 items would be okay; increase the amount of items as you see your child mastering this skill). First, have your child tell you what they are and then, have him/her match them.

Counting Game:

- Start playing this game with your child's favorite toys, then move into the house. Count the rooms, dishes, tables, windows, etc. If the child does not know the number that comes next, say it to him/her and keep going. It's a game; make it informal and fun.

Sorting Game:

- Have your child sort items from the kitchen. First, talk about what things you have in the kitchen (food, cooking utensils: pots & pans; eating utensils: plates, forks, spoons; stove, sink, refrigerator). Take out forks, spoons and plates; have him/her sort them (put all the forks together, all the spoons together and all the plates together) and then have him/her sort by size (small, medium, large).

Taking a Bath:

- Before bath time, talk to your child about what are the things he/she needs to take a bath. Start by asking him/her to tell you two things, and then ask for three. Some of the items are: towel, soap, toy, water, and bathtub. If the child cannot tell you, while giving him/her a bath list the items by saying: "To take a bath we are using water-touch the water, soap-show him/her the soap, etc. While in the bathtub, talk about filling and pouring with cups and bowls and count how many cups of water it takes to fill a bowl.

Making a Peanut Butter Sandwich:

- Draw a picture of each step with your child. Collect all the items needed for the making of the sandwich and have them in front of the picture. Point to each step when you and your child are making the sandwich. Have him/her do it on his/her own. Help only when you're asked. If you see your child frustrated, ask him/her what he/she needs and show him/her.

Taking a Nature Walk:

- Take a walk with your child. Pick up rocks and leaves. Talk about sizes, shapes. Count them. Also, notice the trees, birds, flowers.

Making Sounds:

- While going somewhere, talk to your child about the different sounds in the environment. Imitate with your child the noises of the cars, trucks, animals, planes.

Following Directions:

- While at home, ask your child to follow a simple direction (i.e. “Put this toy in your room”). If he follows it, make it more difficult (“Pick up the shoes from the kitchen and put them in your room”).

Today is: “Color Day”

- Talk to your child about colors in the house. Start in his/her room; name the colors of his favorite toy, the color of the walls in his/her bedroom, the color in your bedroom, the color of the furniture around the house.

Making a Tent:

- Using blankets and sheets, ask your child to help you make a tent. Talk about spatial relations: under, over, out, in, behind, on top of, beside, etc.

Having Fun Making Castles:

- Make castles with sand and water. Talk about pouring and dumping the water and sand. Talk about filling and emptying the buckets of water and sand.
- Name the objects your child is using: “What are you going to do with the shovel?” “I see you are filling the bucket with sand”.

“Mud Party”:

- Take your child to the park with a bucket of water, shovels and pails. Have him/her pour the water on the dirt; ask him/her to tell you what happened.
- Talk about how mud is made; allow him/her to play in it.
- Talk about pouring, filling, dumping and making different shapes with the mud.

Dancing Time:

- Dance with your child and have him/her follow the rhythm and movement directions that you say (clap, jump, walk, skip, turn around).

Making Cookies:

- Make pictures of each step in the recipe with your child. Follow the recipe step by step. Allow your child to actively participate. Have him/her help you pour and stir the ingredients.

Singing Along:

- Sing a song with your child and leave out some words for them to fill in. Start: “The itsy bitsy ----(wait for your child to fill in; if he/she doesn’t then you fill in and keep singing) spider.

Playing the Memory Game:

- Put 4 items on the table. Have your child look at these items. Cover your child’s eyes, and take one item away. Have your child open his/her eyes and ask him/her which one is missing.

Write a Story:

- Write a simple story with your child. Have your child tell you what he/she wants to write about. Make a small book. Use pictures from a magazine or newspapers.

Playing the “I Spy” Game:

- Look around and say “I spy.” Name an object or item and have your child find where it is.
- Start the game in a small area with an object the child knows and that it is easy to find (Say: “I spy a ball” “I spy a red shoe”).

Making a “Feely Bag”:

- Take a pillow case and put in different objects. Have your child guess what they are without looking.
- Start with big objects and move on to smaller and harder objects for your child. If your child is having a hard time guessing, give him/her cues and then if he/she still can’t tell you, show him/her the item.

Pouring a Drink Game:

- Let your child pour his/her own drink/juice; have him/her pour juice/drink in two other cups.
- If he/she is having a difficult time, have him/her practice in the bathtub with water while he/she is taking a bath.
- Have your child look at the cups and have him/her tell you which one has more or less.

Having Snack:

- Give your child some gold fish or teddy graham crackers for snack. Have him/her count how many crackers he/she has.
- Serve some crackers for yourself and talk about who has more and less. Have your child count the crackers he/she has and allow him/her to ask you for more (Give him/her the words if he needs help, “ Do you want more?”)