



Parents often ask me what they can do at home to help boost their child's skills. I think many of you underestimate what you are already doing! I put together this packet of simple educational activities that I hope you find useful. Most of them do not require anything more than you probably already have on hand at home.

I'm a firm believer in the philosophy of
"keeping it simple".

I hope you find these ideas helpful, and enjoyable as well!

Mrs. Tolman

Fine Motor Activities

(hand-strengthening, fine motor planning, visual perception)

These activities also incorporate pre-academic skills

Playdough :

- *Hide objects in the dough (i.e. coins, small figures)
 - *Pull, roll, squeeze, flatten, and twist it
 - *Roll dough into pea size shapes using the fingers of one hand
 - *Use a garlic press to squeeze dough through to make “crazy hair” or “spaghetti”
 - *Practice letter and number shapes by having children roll dough into snake shapes and form the letters/numbers around an outline.
- Bake a cake-have a pretend party! Put specified number of candles into the playdough.

(Not only does this help develop hand strength but also helps develop 1:1 correspondence and counting skills.)

The best way to help your child develop cutting skills is to let them use either regular children’s scissors or playdough scissors to cut playdough. It’s not as difficult as paper, and they are less apt to get frustrated and give up!

*Play matching games by labeling clothespins with letters, numbers, colors, etc. Have children match by pinching open clothespins and attaching to same item drawn on thick cardboard or paper plate.

*Play with windup toys. (Some of the Happy Meal toys are great for fine motor development)

*Let child use a hole puncher and follow a straight line or simple shape drawn on paper. Have child practice counting as they punch out the holes.

*Use tweezers to pick up and/or sort small items as cheerios, goldfish, shells, peas, seeds, etc. Incorporate counting into this activity as well.

*Sequence beads by making patterns with different shaped and colored beads (or string macaroni)

*Practice making lines, shapes, letters by placing paper over a bumpy surface (Left over window screen works great). Have your child use a crayon to write with. This multi-sensory technique provides your child with both visual as well as tactile input. If they're applying enough pressure, they should be able to feel the bumps on their paper after they've completed the form. To reinforce what they are writing, have them trace over the bumps with their fingers.

*Some children have difficulty forming letters and shapes due to visual perception weaknesses. A fun way to work on visual perception is playing this game with popsicle sticks. Start this activity by arranging two popsicle sticks into a simple form. (i.e. an "L" shape) As your child is more successful, add more popsicle sticks and increase the complexity of the form you are having them duplicate.

*Cooking activities help foster sequencing skills as well as develop fine motor skills. Let children practice opening jars and stirring up the mixture. Squeezing out sponges is also beneficial for hand strength.

*Fingerpaint with shaving cream (use food coloring to make different shades)

*You can also hide items in the shaving cream and have child find them. (You can hide magnetic letters and numbers to provide practice with identification of them. You can practice counting by having the child count as they find each item hidden) Use paintbrushes in the shaving cream to practice letters, shapes, and numbers. You can also use rubber spatulas, spoons, or matchbox cars.

*Cutting paper and/or magazine pictures and use glue sticks to make collages.

*Fold paper to make hats, boats, planes, etc.

- *Encourage play with toys such as Legos, Lite Brite, Bristle Blocks, Tanagrams, puzzles, playdough, homemade silly putty
- *Read “I Spy” and/or “Where’s Waldo?” books together
- * “Find the Hidden Picture” books or magazines
- *Practice buttoning on old shirts
- *Let child rip out pages of an old phone book or magazine. Roll into ball and let them “shoot” it into a basket.
- *Let them pop the bubbles of bubble wrap packaging. Encourage your child to squeeze the bubbles with thumb and index finger.
- *Squeeze trigger portion of a spray bottle and water sprayers by letting your child help water plants.
- *Use turkey baster or eye droppers to transfer water from one container to the next. Make it more exciting by using several different cups of water with different food colors in each one. Your child will have fun mixing the colors to make new ones!
- *Make a sensory box by filling large container with dried rice and beans. Let children squeeze the mixture. Have them use tweezers to find the beans. Hide small toys or items in the rice and have children try and find them.
- *Make a “Feely Box” by wrapping up a box in wrapping paper. Put several items in the box and ask child to reach in and identify objects by touch. Or ask your child to take out a specific item that you name or describe, without looking.
- *Have your child do mazes. If your child struggles with mazes, pre-draw the path using a yellow marker. Have them trace your line with a red marker.
- *Make simple dots-to-dots. Use letters or numbers to have your child sequence the steps to complete the drawing. Or use stickers to make a shape such as a triangle. Have your child draw lines connecting all the stickers.

*Tracing Activities: If your child is struggling with forming letters and/or shapes, start simple by having them trace lines, zigzags, circles. Encourage them to start at the top and work down. (This is how most letters are formed.)

*You can purchase wipe-off tracing books at stores like Walmart. Another fun way to practice drawing and writing is by using small, portable white boards.

Reading Readiness, Language Development, and Math Activities

(See Playdough activities from Fine Motor section as well!)

*Point out letters/numbers in the environment (on cereal boxes, menus, highway signs, etc.)

*Play “I Spy” with letters, numbers you see in the store, car, etc.

*Go on shape, color, number, letter hunts around your house or at the store. You can have your child mark off items off a list made beforehand as he/she finds the items.

*Using piles of miscellaneous items (i.e. seashells, buttons, candy, rocks, cereals) sort by shape, color, size.

*Use different items as listed above to make patterns
(I.e. shell, rock, shell, rock)

*Help match socks when doing laundry

*Practice writing letters, numbers, shapes in the sand at the beach or on a cookie sheet covered with sugar, oats, salt, pudding etc.

*Make a pattern with claps and have your child imitate. Try and clap the different sound you hear in a word and see if your child can guess the correct

number. For example, ask your child “How many claps are in the word happy?” (There are 2 ☺)

*Practice counting to 20 ensuring your child demonstrates one-to-one correspondence by touching each item as it is counted. Reinforce counting from left to right. Give your child a pile of snacks (i.e. Goldfish, M&M’s) and have them count how many they have.

*Setting the table at mealtimes helps develop one-to-one correspondence. Have your child set the table with one cup and plate per person.

*Count toys as they are picked up and put away.

*Play visual memory games such as “What’s Missing?” Put several items on a tray and have child name each item. Cover tray and then remove one item. Have child guess what’s missing.

*Play games like Simon Says. Try and incorporate 2-step directions. (i.e. “Simon Says tap your head then sit down”)

*After reading a story ask simple content questions. Have your child retell story.

*Make your own books about family trips or special events. Place the pictures in sequential order and glue onto paper. You can either have your child dictate what is happening in the pictures as you write it down, or you can be the “author”. Bind into book form. This is a fun way to get your child interested in reading (especially when they’re the “stars”) and it’s also a nice way to record special family events for you to enjoy several years from now!

*Keep a journal of vacation activities. Have your child draw it in each day and let them tell you about the picture as you record their response on the picture. If drawing is difficult for child, do it together ☺

*Go to the library to get some new books. Simple advice, but sometimes you just need to get some new books in the rotation to keep parents from getting bored as well!

*Rhymes are so important at this age! Read nursery rhymes and sing songs!! Make up songs about activities you are doing together, and read rhyming stories. Have your child come up with other words that rhyme with the particular words in the story.

*Take turns making up rhyming pairs using items you see while you're driving or shopping. (i.e. "street, meat" "car, star")

Self-help Skills and Independence

Encourage your child to be as independent as possible! It may take a little longer to get out the door-but they need to learn these self-help skills!

*Practice zipping, snapping, and buttoning clothing. Use old clothes, and make a game out of it. Have races to see if your child can "beat" you!

*Practice tying shoes, even if it's only for the first step by crossing the laces!

*Practice dressing independently. Dress your child in clothes s(he) can manipulate independently.

*Give your child the responsibility of taking care of his/her personal belongings (Putting away toys, hanging up clothes and backpack, clearing table after mealtimes) These are great habits to develop early!! You truly can't teach an old dog new tricks ☺

*Opening bags of snack independently (One strategy is to have a child-friendly pair of scissors handy that would enable them to cut open their bags by themselves) Give your child the verbal cue "pinch and pull" to help remind them of the way they need to grasp the bag to open it successfully.