

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR KIDS (MAY 2008)

From 2 years

1) Animal of the day is ...

- Choose an animal together (it'd be easier if we start with animals which are 'easier' to make during arts and crafts, eg. Sheep, ie. Using toilet roll + glue + cotton wool + cotton swabs for its legs)
- Talk about the features of the animal (look up for images in books or 'google' it)
- 'Make the animal', ie. Arts and crafts (like the above), or draw the animal, or for younger kids, we draw the animal and they colour it in (or for sheep's case: stick cotton wool on it)
- Hang the poster on the wall / fridge, or display their craft on the family table.

2) Newspaper Collage – Body Parts

- Use a large piece of paper, using a colourful crayon divide it into 4 sections
- Write an agreed body part on each section, eg. Ears, mouths, eyes, noses
- Child looks through magazines / newspaper in search of the relevant body part names.
- When found, parent cuts the picture and the child pastes it to the correct section

3) Wooden bricks / LEGO

- Introduce colours as kids stack and play
- sort the bricks into plastic containers, according to their colours
- create shapes with them (a bus in the eye of a child may not really look like a real bus to us, but does it matter? ☺)

4) Playdough numbers and letters

- Roll the dough into long, long sausages
- Child makes numbers / letters using the rolled dough
- Or parent makes number / letter shape, and the child guesses
- When shape is done, child traces the shape with her finger so she's more familiar with the shape
- She can outline the dough shape using a crayon / coloured pencil on a piece of paper, colour it in, and display it on the 'arts n crafts wall'

5) My name in dots

- Use a pencil to write out your child's name in large letters on a piece of paper
- Go over the letters with a crayon, now use firm dots instead of a continuous line
- Give your child a crayon and ask her to draw over the dots, so that she writes her own name. Encourage her to start from the right place by putting an extra big dot at the appropriate point of the letter
- Once she's confident with this, she might be able to write her own name without the help of dots
- With the same approach, we can introduce letters of the alphabets, shapes and others to the child.

6) Sort out the cutlery (not the knives of course)

- let the kids help and sort each of the cutlery according to their groups, and place them where they're supposed to be on the cutlery tray

7) Get them involved in meal preparation

eg. Washing the rice grains, stirring and mixing, scooping the cut-out meat into a bowl / plate using a big spoon, let them make small meatballs out of raw minced meat (already mixed with your other ingredients / spices, If you wish)

Note: Even if the meatballs are not in a nice 'ball shape', we should let it be. This way the kids also learn to see how we parents value what their creation (ie. Avoiding the 'what I do is never perfect in my parents' eyes' concept in our kids)

8) Supermarket Trips

- Involve the child in putting in the fruits into the plastic bag
- Explain the name of the vegetable/fruit that you're about to buy
- For older kids, tell them what you need to buy (easy to reach items and non-breakable), then they're to get it for you.

9) Pasta Necklace

- Use raw pasta shapes with 'holes' that make it easier to thread
- Divide pasta into 2 groups, prepare 2 colours (eg. Water colour), dip the pasta and let them dry
- Once dry, child inserts a string of wool into the pasta, playing with its colour combination (eg. following a pattern)
- Another option: Stick coloured pasta onto a piece of card and make shapes / animals

10) Stamp stamp

- Slice a large potato in half lengthways
- Carve a simple shape into that half, eg. A star, creating a potato stamp
- Let the child dip the stamp into some paint (eg. Water colour), then print it on to some plain paper, repeating until the paper is decorated
- Once dry, your child can use it to wrap a present or display the paper as a work of art

11) Blob blob

- Let your child blob a little ink or paint from a brush on to a piece of paper (wearing an apron to protect his clothes is recommended)
- Fold the piece of paper in half, then open it out to see what interesting shape the blob has made
- Let it dry, then ask your child to add his own drawings to the blob to create a completely new picture. For example, he might want to add legs to make a spider, a head and legs to make a person, or wings to create a butterfly
- Another version is to let your child dip his finger into paint and create finger prints on the paper. When dry, then you draw on the blob to make a new picture.

12) Picture Quiz

- Tear out a few large pictures from some old magazine
- Take one picture and look closely at it with your child for a minute or so. Study the details together
- Then turn it over
- Take turns to remember specific details about the picture
eg. 'There's a girl and a boy in the picture', your child then may add 'The boy was wearing a hat', and so on.
- When neither of you can remember any more, turn the picture back over to check how well you both did

13) What is it?

(using clues to guess what you're thinking of)

- Imagine something that your child is familiar with, eg. A particular animal, a vehicle, a toy, etc
- Tell your child you want him to guess what you're thinking of and how you're going to give him some clues.
eg. For a bus you can start by saying 'It's a very large vehicle'
- Keep giving increasingly specific clues, eg. It carries a lot of people, it takes us to your school, until your child guesses it correctly

14) Soft toy treasure hunt

- Choose 3 soft toys (medium-sized).
- Tell your child that you'll be hiding them at different places and that she's to find them
- She's to wait a different room or close her eyes when you go and hide the soft toys
- She may need clues as to where the toys are hidden (if she can't spot them).
- You may want to firstly say 'it's in the bedroom'

15) Indoor camping

- Throw a large sheet over your kitchen table and camp out underneath.
- You can sing songs, eat some snacks together, and even pretend to go fishing
- If you have a small pop-tent, it can also be set up indoors temporarily
- Don't forget to give the kids some flashlights!

From 3 years

1) Jumping Games

- Have a dice, or make one up using a scrap cube-sized box (mark each side with numbers from 1 to 6)
- Parent and child stand at one corner of the house
- Parent and child then take turns in throwing the dice and hopping forward according to the number shown.
- See who gets to agreed other end of the house the fastest

2) Snowflakes

- Draw circles (medium sized), cut them out
- fold the paper circle in half, then half again (ie. In the end it looks like a triangle shape)

- Using scissors, snip little sections along the sides of the triangle.
- When finished, unfold and see the cut out patterns!
- For older child, the patterns can serve like 'stencils' where she paints through the holes with water colour

3) Draw what I draw

- Have 2 pieces of paper
- Parent draws something simple, and child follows (drawing on her own paper)
- Reverse the role

4) Mirror Dance

- Choose an upbeat song that you and your child enjoy dancing to
- Ask your child to pretend there's a mirror between you, and that he is your reflection
- As you move, your child should imitate your movements as precisely as possible (keep your dance slow and controlled to begin with)
- When he is more confident, try variations of movements

5) Animal songs

- Talk about how animals make different noises
- Ask your child if she can think of some creatures that make high-pitched noises (eg. squeaking mouse)
- Then ask if she can identify animals that make low pitched sounds (eg. A growling bear)
- Have fun making the noises.
- Your child may want to act out the animals' behaviours or movements too.
- See if you child can sing a favourite nursery rhyme using animal sounds

6) Name that tune

- Sing a tune (or just hum the tune) that your child knows well and lets him identify the name of the song
- Then sing or hum just the first part of the song

7) Clap your name

- Count how many syllables there are in your child's name. eg. 'Vai' is one syllable, "Anya" is two syllables, etc
- Show your child how to say his name slowly and clap on each syllable
- When he has managed this, see if he can add his surname
- Clap out other names within the family. The more syllables the better.
- Clap out other words he knows

8) Spot the shape

- Tell your child you're thinking of a particular shape, eg. A circle
- Ask him to look around and point out any objects nearby that make circles, eg. The top of a milk tin, a sign in the aisle.
- Count up to how many circles he's seen.
- Then ask him to look for squares, rectangles, etc
- With older child, you can introduce the idea of cylinders, cubes, etc

9) Treasure Hunt

- Hide a small treasure (eg. a bag of toys) somewhere in the house
- Write clues on post-it pads and stick them around the house
- Each clue must lead to another clue
- The last one will lead the children to the “treasure”

From 4 years

1) Our Family (Family Tree)

- Draw circles on a large piece of paper
- The child draws pictures of herself and siblings (or stick photos)
- Then draw two more circles above for Mom and Dad (child then draw parents' faces too)
- And so the tree grows
- Don't forget to write everyone's names under the circle

2) Counting and sorting coins

- Take out your coins, lay them on a table
- Child sorts according to size (if they're not familiar with dollars and cents yet)
- Child makes one row of 10 same-sized coins
- Child makes 2-3 rows of the same height
- For older child, it can be a game of maths (ie. Addition), eg. Stack 3 coins, and have 3 rows, then the child determines how many coins in total there are, etc.

3) Pat the rhythm

- Tell him you're going to pat a rhythm on your legs and ask him if he can copy it on his legs
- Pat out a very simple rhythm first (eg. Pat once for 'long', two quick pats for 'short')
eg. 'Long, short', or 'Long, long, short, short'
- Try out different combinations and ask your child to remember and repeat
- Remember to keep them simple and short

From 5 years

1) Up and down notes

- Start by singing a low note, then continue singing a musical scale going up
- Ask your child if the scale is on its way up, or down
- Next, try starting on a high note, and singing a scale coming down. See if she can identify this as up or down
- Variations: Sing two notes, ask your child which is lower, and which is higher (and take turns)

Note: The above activity ideas are extracted from various resources