

Literacy

At home

Place alphabet magnets on your refrigerator or on another smooth, safe metal surface. When you are working in the kitchen, ask your child to name the letters s/he plays with and the sounds they make. Can s/he spell some words? (Phonics)

- Buy alphabet soups, cereals and cookies and practice finding “letters of the day” with your child as you snack. Leave plenty of time--this will not help you rush through lunch! (Phonics)
- Ask your child to tell you a new or interesting word s/he learned today. Does s/he know what it means? Write the word in a writer’s journal or notebook.

In the sun

- Lie on the ground and describe the shapes of the clouds.

(Oral language & vocabulary skills)

- As you play outdoors, play “I Spy.” Look around your world and say, “I spy something that starts with the [m] sound. What is it?” If you like, add clues such as “We use it to cut our grass.” (mower) “It’s where we put our letters.” (mailbox) (Phonological awareness; phonics)
- “Finger paint” the alphabet using sand, garden soil, mud, or playground pebbles. At the beach, try making letters “giant-sized” by walking the shapes or letters. Pretend you are writing messages to airplanes that might pass by. (Phonics)
- When you take a walk, point out the directions you are going: turning left or right, going uphill or downhill. Point out which directions are north, south, east or west.

On the run

- Point out printed words in the places you take your child, such as the grocery store. Point out individual letters in signs, billboards, posters, food containers, books and magazines. Ask if s/he know what sound the letter makes. (Phonics; print awareness)
- When you travel, bring along a cookie sheet and set of magnetic letters. Your children can find letters, sort and match, and copy short words they see along the way. (Letter recognition and phonics skills; print awareness)
- Give your child a flier, brochure or page from an old magazine. Circle a letter on the page and have him circle matching letters. This is great for preventing boredom in lines or waiting rooms! (Letter/sound recognition)
- Play with language! Fight boredom in lines and waiting rooms by playing “sound games”: listening for the same beginning and ending sounds or words, creating rhymes, or making “slow motion” language, where you stretch out the sounds in words to make them easier to hear.

Math in a Minute

Helping your child learn to understand and use math doesn't have to take a lot of extra time or money. Here are some easy ways to build mathematics skills at home, in the sun, or on the run.

At home

- Make sure your child sees you using mathematics as you go through your day. Talk out loud about what you are measuring or figuring. Say: "I need to double this recipe. Let's see, 1 cup plus 1 cup is two cups. Can you count with me?" (Number Sense and Numeration; Measurement)
- Laundry Math—Sharpen skills by doing a necessary household job. Ask your youngster to sort laundry—before or after washing. How many socks? How many sheets? And you may find a lost sock as well! (Number Sense and Numeration; Patterns, Relationships, and Functions)
- Place number magnets on your refrigerator or on another smooth, safe metal surface. When you are working in the kitchen, ask your child to name the numbers she plays with and see if she can match them to the correct number of objects. (Number Sense and Numeration)
- Give your child empty plastic food containers or pots and pans. Encourage him/her to stack them on top of or inside of each other. Many children will stay busy for a long time as they touch and handle objects, learning shapes, sizes and relationships. (Geometry & Relationships)

In the sun

- Give your child sidewalk chalk or paintbrushes with a cup of water. Let him/her draw or paint shapes or numbers on the concrete. At the beach or in the garden, have your child draw shapes or numbers in the soil using legs and feet for a "pencil." Show how to write the shapes or numbers giant-sized. Imagine a plane flying overhead and seeing your "code." Try describing just the attributes of a mystery shape (no sides, round, no corners). Can s/he draw it? (Geometry; Number Sense)
- Give your child plenty of containers in many shapes and sizes when you play in the sand or water. Let your child scoop, dump, pour and fill the cups. Ask him/her to predict how many of each of the smaller cups it will take to fill a large container. Use words such as *more than* and *fewer than*. (Volume and Measurement)
- Put an ice cube in the sun and have each child guess how long it will take to melt. Write your predictions with sidewalk chalk or a rock. Keep track of the actual melting time. Whose guess was closer? If you use a bigger ice cube, will it take more or less time? Try it and see! (Measuring time; Estimation; Relationships)

On the run

- While you're on the go, have your children keep their eyes open for numbers: street and building numbers, phone numbers on the sides of taxis and trucks, dates on buildings and monuments, and business names that have numbers in them. Keep a pad of paper and pencils handy to copy down what they see. (Number Sense and Numeration)
- Ask your child to find shapes in your world. Look for circle shapes on the can of soup, or the square on a box of rice as you shop for groceries. Play a game in which you look for other items

that are the same shape as you shop. It will help your child begin to recognize, name, and describe shapes. (Geometry

Fine Motor Activities

- Molding and rolling play dough into balls - using the palms of the hands facing each other and with fingers curled slightly towards the palm.
- Rolling play dough into tiny balls (peas) using only the finger tips.
- Using pegs or toothpicks to make designs in play dough.
- Cutting play dough with a plastic knife or with a pizza wheel.
- Tearing newspaper into strips and then crumpling them into balls. Use to stuff scarecrow or other art creation.
- Scrunching up 1 sheet of newspaper in one hand. This is a super strength builder.
- Using a plant sprayer to spray plants, (indoors, outdoors) to spray snow (mix food coloring with water so that the snow can be painted), or melt "monsters". (Draw monster pictures with markers and the colors will run when sprayed.)
- Picking up objects using large tweezers such as those found in the "Bedbugs" game. This can be adapted by picking up Cheerios, small cubes, small marshmallows, pennies, etc., in counting games.
- Shaking dice by cupping the hands together, forming an empty air space between the palms.
- Using small-sized screwdrivers like those found in an erector set.
- Lacing and sewing activities such as stringing beads, Cheerios, macaroni, etc.
- Using eye droppers to "pick up" colored water for color mixing or to make artistic designs on paper.
- Rolling small balls out of tissue paper, then gluing the balls onto construction paper to form pictures or designs.
- Turning over cards, coins, checkers, or buttons, without bringing them to the edge of the table.
- Making pictures using stickers or self-sticking paper reinforcements.
- Playing games with the "puppet fingers" -the thumb, index, and middle fingers.

Scissor Activities

When scissors are held correctly, and when they fit a child's hand well, cutting activities will exercise the very same muscles which are needed to manipulate a pencil in a mature tripod grasp. The correct scissor position is with the thumb and middle finger in the handles of the scissors, the index finger on the outside of the handle to stabilize, with fingers four and five curled into the palm.

- Cutting junk mail, particularly the kind of paper used in magazine subscription cards.
- Making fringe on the edge of a piece of construction paper.
- Cutting play dough with scissors.
- Cutting straws or shredded paper.

Other Summer Activities

Summer should be a time to relax and enjoy time together as a family. While vacation should be full of play there are many ways to use this time as a fun opportunity to practice the skills learned during the Pre-K year.

Items you might like to have on hand:

- Sidewalk chalk
- Magnetic Letters and Numbers
- Watercolors
- Scissors
- Glue
- Colored Paper
- Magazines to cut
- Picture books
- Play dough
- Puzzles

Board games, such as Chutes and Ladders, Candy Land, Trouble, Uno are great whole family fun.

[This document](#) also provides ideas for fostering independence and increased responsibility.