



ANYTIME TIPS

LETTER HUNT

Play the “Letter Hunt” game with your child as you drive home from school, look at books, or grocery shop. Look around for letters. Point out letters that are important to him (letters in his name, favorite words). Ask your child to name the letter. Your child will start to recognize letters when he sees them. Recognizing letters of the alphabet will help him as he begins to read and write.

I SPY

Play “I Spy” with your child. Look for colors, shapes, letters, or familiar signs. For example, you could say “I spy something that begins with the letter ‘S,’” or “I spy something blue.” Ask her to look around and try to guess what you were describing. Take turns and let her choose the next item.

Playing I Spy will help your child:

- > Recognize objects in her environment
- > Learn new words to describe objects

RHYMING WORDS

Make up rhymes about the things you see at home or as you go about your daily routine. “I see a big pig.” “You have a red bed.” Ask your child to name some rhyming words. It’s okay to make up your own words.

Finding words that rhyme helps your child:

- > Recognize the different sounds in words
- > Build listening skills

SING SONGS

Sing songs throughout the day with your child. They can be familiar songs like “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” or a song you made up. Singing songs helps children hear the rhythm in words.

Try new ways to sing songs by:

- > Adding movement
- > Making up new words

TALK

When you and your child are out in the community, talk about what you see. Your child will learn new words when you talk to him about what you see. When words are connected to real things that are happening, it is easier for him to understand them.

Some things that you might say include:

- > “Look, there is the store where we go to get food.”
- > “Look at the man with the sign. What do you think he is doing?”

COUNT TOGETHER

Take a walk around your house or neighborhood and ask your child to find objects as you go. First, have your child find one of something. Have her continue on, finding two objects that are the same. Keep going until you find 10 objects that are the same. You can also collect items for your child to count such as bottle caps, plastic lids, or small toys.

When you count with your child, she is learning:

- > That a number represents a specific number of objects
- > The order of numbers

SORTING GAME

Use a variety of objects to make a sorting game. Collect items around the house (plastic bottles, old buttons, jars, lids, toys), and ask your child to sort them.

Ask him to sort the items:

- > By color
- > By shape
- > By size

PLAY BOARD GAMES

Playing simple board games is a great way to practice counting skills. It also helps your child learn how to take turns. Find games that are recommended for preschool ages and play them together.

Some suggestions for board games include:

- > Trouble
- > Dominoes
- > Chutes and Ladders

FUN WITH TEXTURES

Children like to feel things that have texture. Cut letters, shapes, or numbers out of a textured material, such as sandpaper, bubble wrap, or felt. Let your child run his fingers over the object, saying the name of the letter, shape, or number as he touches them. Glue the objects onto cardboard and keep them out where he can play with them.

Touching the objects will help your child:

- > Recognize the letter, number, or shape
- > Explore the way different objects feel



BEDTIME

CLEAN-UP TIME

Make cleaning up a game. Have a contest to see who can pick up the most toys in five minutes. Give each child a category to look for: a specific color, size, shape. When the time is up, count the objects in each group to see who found the most. This is a fun way to clean up for the night and learn concepts, such as shapes and colors. You can also talk to your child about the size of her toys and compare them. Which one is the largest? Smallest?

NIGHT SKY

Create stars in your child's room. On a clear night, take a piece of aluminum foil and a toothpick outside. Look at the stars and then map them out on the foil by poking holes in it with a toothpick. When you go back inside, turn off the lights and shine a flashlight behind the foil. The "stars" will show up on the wall or ceiling.

BEDTIME STORY

Read a story to your child before he goes to bed. Make it a time to relax. Find a cozy spot, or sit on his bed to read. Explain that when you are finished with the story, it will be time to go to sleep. Making activities like storytime part of a routine helps your child know what to expect.

BATH TIME — SINK OR FLOAT?

Take a few waterproof toys with you to the bathtub. Drop them in the water to see if they sink or float. Ask your child what she thinks will happen when you drop each item. Will it sink to the bottom or stay on the top of the water? Why does she think that happens? Playing with objects that sink or float is helping your child learn scientific concepts, like predicting and testing her prediction.

BATH TIME — MAKE A BOAT

Give your child empty bottles, plastic bowls, sheets of foil, or other objects that are safe for the water. Ask him to create a boat using the materials. Once he has made his boat, test it to see if it floats. Add small objects to see how much weight it can hold.

Ask your child:

- > Do some materials float better than others?
- > Which boat is the strongest?
- > What happens if the boat fills with water?

FAMILY MEETING

Before bedtime, have a family meeting. Talk about what happened that day and what will happen the next day. If something is bothering your child, help your child think of a solution to her problem. Having time to talk about something that is on her mind before going to bed can make it easier for her to fall asleep.

CAMP STORIES

Pretend that you are camping. Turn all of the lights off and use a flashlight to see each other. Take turns holding the flashlight. Whoever is holding the light gets to tell a story. When that person is finished, she can pass the light on to the next person. Telling stories helps your child build comprehension and listening skills.

BRUSH YOUR TEETH

Make a chart with your child to help him remember to brush his teeth every night. You can make the chart on a piece of paper, or use a blank calendar. Each night after he has finished brushing, let him cross off the day or put a sticker on the day to show that he has finished. When he fills up the chart or calendar, give him a special reward like staying up five extra minutes!

GET READY FOR TOMORROW

Before going to bed, plan out the next day. What will you do? What should you wear? Talk about what the weather will be. Give your child two or three clothing options to choose from. Let her choose what she will wear the next day, and lay it out so it is ready to go when she wakes up.

BODY PARTS

Help your child learn about body parts as he is taking a bath. Sing a song like "This is the way we wash our arms, wash our arms, wash our arms. This is the way we wash our arms, when we take a bath." Repeat the song, using a different body part each time. This song will help your child learn new vocabulary words and better understand his body.



MEALTIME

PLAN MEALS TOGETHER

Ask your child what she would like to eat. Make a list of the meals you will have that week. Discuss the ingredients you need to buy to make the meals she requested. Did she choose something from each food group? Do they include healthy choices like fruits and vegetables? This is a great time to talk about which foods are good to eat every day and which foods should only be eaten occasionally.

Planning meals with your child helps her:

- > Understand how to make a healthy meal
- > Be more likely to eat meals because she helped plan them

MAKE A GROCERY LIST

Ask your child to help you create a grocery list. Plan out the meals you will eat for the week, and write down the ingredients. As you write the items down, talk about what you are doing. "We are going to have spaghetti this week, so I need to write down spaghetti noodles, sauce, and cheese. Let's have broccoli with our spaghetti." Give him paper and a pencil to help you "write."

When your child helps make a list, he is learning that:

- > Writing is used for a specific purpose
- > Scribbles and pictures represent words

FOLLOW A RECIPE

Follow a recipe and cook with your child. Show her how to follow a recipe. Let her help you wash fruits and vegetables. Ask her to measure out ingredients and help mix them together. Explain why you need to follow a recipe. Ask her what she thinks would happen if you did not follow the recipe.

When your include your child in cooking, she is:

- > Building her self-esteem as she completes a task
- > Learning about math, science, and reading by following a recipe and measuring ingredients

VISIT THE GROCERY STORE

Visit the grocery store with your child. Talk about the items on your list and where you will find them. Show him where the healthy foods are (produce section, for example) and talk about what foods should not be eaten all of the time (candy, cookies). Let him cross the items off of the list as you get them. Describe the items as you place them in the cart. "A carrot is a vegetable, and it is orange."

Describing items and asking your child to describe what he sees:

- > Helps him learn new words
- > Helps him learn how to follow directions

SHARE FAMILY NEWS

At the dinner table, ask everyone to share "news" about their day. Listen to what your child has to say and share something that happened in your day.

Having conversations with your child:

- > Helps her understand turn taking in conversations
- > Lets her know you're interested in what she has to say
- > Gives her an opportunity to express her feelings

EAT TOGETHER

Whenever possible, eat meals together as a family. Choose a time of day when everyone is able to sit down and eat together. Turn off the TV and all electronics. Focus on having time together as a family and talk about your day.

Eating dinner together around the same time every day and turning off distractions helps your child:

- > Establish a routine
- > Focus on eating and spending time together

SHAPE HUNT

Take turns looking for and naming the shapes on your dinner plate and at the dinner table. How many can you find? What shape do you see the most? You also can use shapes to create a picture with your food. For example, create a face by cutting a sandwich into a circle. Add olives for eyes, a carrot for a nose, and an apple slice for a mouth.

Talking about shapes helps your child:

- > Recognize shapes in the world around him
- > Describe objects in his environment

WHERE FOODS COME FROM

Talk to your child during meal time. Discuss where the food she is eating came from. Encourage her to share what she thinks. Later, you can add to the conversation by visiting the library or searching the internet together to learn more about the food you ate.

Discussing things together will help your child:

- > Learn more about where her food comes from
- > Increase her vocabulary
- > Practice expressing her thoughts



MORNING TIPS

PLAY 'SIMON SAYS'

Make getting ready for the day into a game. Play "Simon Says" by giving your child easy directions to follow. "Simon says, put on your shirt." "Simon says, brush your hair." This will make getting ready fun.

Your child will also learn:

- > Listening skills
- > How to follow directions

WEATHER CHECK

When your child wakes up in the morning, check the weather. Is it sunny or cloudy outside? Is it raining or snowing? You can look at the weather on the news or on an app on your phone. Talk about what you might need to wear. Do you need a coat, gloves, umbrella, or hat? Make it a part of your morning routine.

When you make choices about what to wear, you are:

- > Practicing cause-and-effect relationships
- > Watching how weather changes over time

MAKE A SCHEDULE

Make mornings fun by creating an easy-to-follow schedule for your child. Talk to them about all of the things he needs to do in the morning (eat breakfast, brush his teeth, get dressed, do chores), and put those in order. Make a schedule on paper or cardboard with pictures of your child doing each thing. Put it in a place where he can see it each morning. Following a schedule is a great way to get your child used to following a routine, a skill he will need once he starts school.

LISTEN TO MUSIC

Adding music to your morning routine can make some tasks more enjoyable. Listen to or make up a song to go along with specific tasks. For example, a song that is 2-3 minutes long is the perfect thing to play while your child brushes her teeth to make sure she is brushing for the right amount of time. Think of a song to sing while she does her chores. Encourage her to complete her task before the song is over.

CHORES

Find easy chores that your child can do each morning.

Give him opportunities to help pack his lunch, make his bed, or feed a pet. Create the chores together. Your child is learning responsibility when he participates in daily chores. These skills will also help him learn to be more responsible in school.

BREAKFAST

Plan out what your child is going to eat for breakfast and have healthy choices available for her each morning. Take a few minutes to prepare each night so that you can save time during the busy morning. Whenever possible, sit down and eat with your child, and talk to her about what the plans are for the day.

EXERCISE

Start each day with some simple exercises. Decide as a family what fun exercises you can do each morning. Write the ideas down on index cards and choose a few each morning to do together. Stretching and yoga poses are fun and easy to do indoors. Beginning each day with exercise starts habits that can improve your child's mood and keep your child healthy.



OUTDOOR TIPS

EXPLORE YOUR SHADOW

On a sunny day, go outside and have your child find his shadow. Ask what makes a shadow? Explore the shape of his shadow by moving around. Trace his shadow using sidewalk chalk. Go back and check the place where you traced his shadow later in the day. Have your child go back and stand in the same place.

Ask your child:

- > Can he fit his shadow into the same outline?
- > Did the shadow change?

BUBBLES

Make bubbles with your child by mixing 1 cup of water with 1 tablespoon of dishwashing liquid. Use a bubble wand or make your own by dipping one end of a straw into the solution and blowing into the other. Group several straws together to make even more! Count the bubbles together.

HOW MANY STEPS?

Ask your child how many steps she thinks it will take to walk to a place outside. Guess how many steps you will take, and then test it out by walking the distance and counting the steps. How many steps did she take? Did it take her the same amount of steps that it would take an adult? Why or why not?

OBSTACLE COURSE

Set up an obstacle course for your child to go through. Think about things that will require your child to run, walk, climb, crawl, or keep his balance. Some items you might use include: tables to crawl under, chairs or stools to go around, boxes for tunnels to crawl through, or outdoor play equipment. He will have fun conquering the course and also work on physical development at the same time!

LISTENING WALK

Go on a walk with your child. Tell her this is a walk where you will not do a lot of talking. You are going to be as quiet as you can to see how many sounds you can hear.

After the walk, ask your child if she heard any:

- > Animals?
- > People?
- > Cars/trucks?
- > Insects?

STORY THAW

Collect some small, waterproof toys and place them in a plastic container. Fill the container with water and put it in your freezer. The next day, take the ice outside. The toys will start to be released from the ice as it melts. Tell a story using each object as it is released. Telling stories together helps your child understand the parts of a story (beginning, middle, and end).

OPPOSITE GAME

As you are playing outside, take turns naming the things you see. Then, try to think of the opposite of those things together. For example, you could say "I see a BIG tree!" and your child could add "I found a SMALL tree." Naming opposites is a fun way to strengthen his vocabulary and understand the world around him.

BACKYARD SAFARI

Take a walk around your backyard or your neighborhood. Look around and talk about the types of animals you see. When you get home, encourage your child to draw pictures of the animals you saw.

Discuss the animals and where they live:

- > Do they live in the ground?
- > In a tree?
- > In the water?

BACKYARD DIG SITE

Explore what's in your backyard by giving your child a small area to dig in the dirt. Use a small shovel or gardening tool to move the dirt around. Look for plants, rocks, insects, seeds, and anything else you can find. Once she has found a few items, talk about them.

Ask your child:

- > What shape is it?
- > What color is it?
- > What does it do? Or what is it used for?

GO TO AN EVENT

Find fun events in your community. Plan to attend an event together. Before you go, talk to your child about what you might see. If you are going to an outdoor festival, you might see games, people, booths, food trucks, and even a parade.

When you talk about when you will go, discuss:

- > The month of the event
- > The day of the week you will go
- > The time you will leave



STORYTIME

ACT OUT A STORY

Read your child's favorite book and then act it out together. Find items around the house to use as props. Dress up like the characters in the book. Retell the events in the story in your own words by pretending to be the characters. Acting out a story helps your child learn that each story has a beginning, middle, and end. It also makes the story more fun when everyone can participate.

PICTURE WALK

Choose a book with lots of pictures. Look at the cover and read the title of the book. Ask your child what she thinks the story is going to be about. Go through the book and look at every picture in order. Without reading the words, talk about the story.

Ask questions:

- > What do you think is happening?
- > Why do you think that?
- > What are the characters doing?

After looking at all of the pictures, read the story. Ask your child if her predictions were right. This helps her learn to use pictures to get information about the story. It is also a great way to start a conversation about a story.

TELL A STORY

Tell your child a story from your childhood or share a story about your family. Think about what your child would want to know. What was your first day of school like? Who were your friends? What was your favorite game to play? Ask your child to tell a story about something that has happened to her.

When you tell stories, your child is learning:

- > How to be a good listener
- > How to use language
- > Comprehension skills

MAKE A BOOK

Make a book with your child. Think about a topic that he is interested in, and help him write a story about it. Ask him to draw the pictures, and help him write the words on the page. Read the story together!

Writing a story helps your child:

- > Learn about the parts of a book
- > Understand that words have meaning
- > Express his thoughts

GO TO THE LIBRARY

Visit the library with your child. Talk about what a library card is. Spend time looking at the books in the children's section. Show her how the books are arranged. Find books that she likes, and check them out. If she is old enough, let her get her own library card.

When you visit the library, your child:

- > Can find more books about things she likes
- > Has access to a wide variety of books
- > Learns how to take care of books

PARTS OF A BOOK

As you read, talk about the parts of a book. Show your child where to start reading. Point out that books are read from left to right and top to bottom.

Share the following with your child:

- > Title – the name of a book
- > Author – the person who wrote the words
- > Illustrator – the person who drew the pictures
- > Cover – the front of the book