

For Parents: Fun in the Sun

During the warm weather months, many parents also like to “go out and play!” with their children. To encourage them to monitor their child’s development during play, we’ve included this special section for you to pull out or copy for parents. The next page encourages parents to engage in developmentally appropriate play with their children outside of school. Just enjoy spending time with your kids and watch him or her grow.



Go Out and Play! Activities for You and Your Child

Play isn't just healthy and fun. It's also how your child learns! Time spent playing can be a chance to observe your child's development—how he or she plays, learns, speaks, and acts. You can even look for milestones during playtime. Milestones are the things your child should be doing at different ages (see some examples in the box below). Keeping track of milestones is really important. It helps you to see if your child is developing typically for his or her age or if your child could be at risk for a developmental delay. Noticing a delay and getting help for your child as early as possible can help ensure that your child reaches his or her full potential. If you are concerned about your child's development, don't wait. Talk with your child's doctor about your concerns. For more information about child development, tools for tracking milestones, and what to do when you are concerned, visit www.cdc.gov/actearly.

Following are a few activities that you can do with your child to observe his or her development. Remember to have fun and “go out and play!”

People to People—This game is fun for kids learning body parts. Call out, or have your child call out, a body part in the following manner: “toes to toes”, “arm to arm”, “knee to knee”, etc. Then stand in front of your child with the called body parts touching his or hers (your toes touching his or her toes, etc). Take turns being the caller.

Scavenger Hunt—A traditional scavenger hunt easily can be adapted according to your child's age. It also can be adapted for tracking different milestones.

Sort objects by shape and color: Tell your child to collect something green, something blue, and something red. When he or she bring the objects to you, have him or her make piles of the items according to color. You also can substitute shapes for colors.

Understands concept of “2”: Tell your child to find two of one thing and two of another. While he or she is looking for the objects, start a pile for each object. When your child returns, have him or her place the objects in the correct pile.

Dance Party—Grab a music player and head outside for a dance party! Dance Party will showcase your child's ability to imitate and cooperate with others and dress themselves. This game also gets your child to participate in fantasy role playing, singing, dancing, and acting.

Play music and dance with your child. Take turns imitating each other's dance moves. Watch your child imitate dance moves and cooperate by taking turns with you. If possible, have your child “dress up” before going outside, but make sure that the costume is safe for moving around (e.g., clothes do not drag the ground and shoes fit properly and are safe for outside play). This game is also great for a group of children. Have each child take turn being the leader while the other children imitate his or her movements.

Milestones to watch for at different ages:

At age 3: Imitating, turn taking, playing make believe, sorting objects by shape and color, understanding the concept of “2”, following a 2- to 3-step command, and recognizing common objects and pictures

At age 4: Cooperating with other children, negotiating solutions to conflicts, following three-part commands, and engaging in fantasy play

At age 5: Agreeing to rules; enjoying singing, dancing, and acting; and wanting to please/be like friends