

# FAMILY ACTIVITIES

## PACKET 4





# THOUGHT

of the

# WEEK



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## Embracing the Chaos of Big Body Play

Crash! Bang! Boom! Thud! echo throughout my 1,500 square-foot-house, only to be followed by an equally thunderous, “Settle down!” bellowed by my husband.

Rough-and-tumble, big body play is a natural part of child development. Children often seek activities that engage all of their muscles in physical movement. Jumping, running, rolling, and crashing are not just an outlet to let off steam but a way for young children to learn how their bodies work. In fact, the benefits of rough-and-tumble play go beyond physical development; it also has been linked to stronger self-regulation and an ability to assess risk, enhanced social-emotional development, a deeper understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication, and the ability to make decisions and solve complex problems (Carlson, 2018).

The benefits of physical play are immeasurable, but what happens when little bodies need to move in big ways and we’re quarantined in small spaces? How do we find a balance in giving our children the movement they need without driving ourselves crazy in the process?

If you have access to open spaces, use them! Large open fields, hiking trails, wooded areas, and bike paths can be great places for children to run, crawl, and climb while remaining a safe distance away from others. Find a hill for them to roll down, a tree to climb, or a space to kick a soccer ball. If you can, schedule time to get outside and into these spaces regularly.

If you are under strict shelter-in-place guidelines, finding outlets for loud and boisterous play becomes more challenging. On Monday night, after yelling “Settle down!” one too many times, my husband decided to embrace the intense need for movement my kids were displaying. Instead of heading outside, he pushed our coffee table out of the way, turned on some music, and began an impromptu dance party in our living room. We did a mix of the twist, the floss, and the worm because my husband had made a mental shift from expecting calm bodies to embracing the chaos. He read our children’s body language and gave them exactly what they needed in the moment – a physical outlet.

Here are a few other things that have helped our family meet the need for big body play while stuck in the confines of our small house:

- Jumping on the bed
- Wrestling in the backyard
- Having a pillow fight
- Playing hopscotch
- Rearranging the furniture to build forts
- Sliding down the stairs in our bean bag chairs

Finding the time, energy, and space to engage in physical activity during this time can be challenging. However, it can also be extremely rewarding to embrace the chaos and the need for big body, rough-and-tumble play. The squeals of laughter from my three-year-old as he anticipates the next tickle fight; the joy on my five-year-old’s face as he masters a spin move in breakdancing; and the sense of accomplishment my eight-year-old exhibits when he climbs a new tree all remind me that not only will we get through this time of quarantine, but we will come out of it even stronger as a family.

For more information, see <https://naeyc.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Big-Body-Play.pdf>

# INFANTS



## Art, Music and Movement: **Painting**

Squeeze several different colors of non-toxic, craft paint in blobs on a hard, easy to clean surface like a highchair tray, cookie sheet or even in the bathtub! For easy clean up, you can take your infant's clothes off and let them explore the paint wearing their diaper. Place your infant in the tub, highchair or in front of the cookie sheet with the paint and watch them play with the paint! Keep a damp washcloth handy in case the paint gets anywhere it should not.

This is a great way for your infant to explore colors and tactile sensations. You don't need paper for this activity, but you can include some if you would like. Since paper often rips when wet globs of paint are being explored, another option is to take a piece of paper and press it into the paint mixture after your baby is done playing to capture the resulting art. Once your infant's hands and feet are covered in paint, you can also get a fresh piece of paper and press their hands and feet onto the paper for a cute way to capture how big they are!

### Children experience:

- Tactile sensations
- Painting with their hands and feet
- Moving their bodies to manipulate the paint

### Materials:

- Non-toxic craft paint (you can also make edible infant-safe paint at home! Learn the recipe here: [www.learning4kids.net/2014/10/07/homemade-edible-finger-paint/](http://www.learning4kids.net/2014/10/07/homemade-edible-finger-paint/)).



## Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Animal Sounds**

### Children experience:

- Diverse phonetic sounds
- Association with pictures of animals and sounds

Get cozy on a chair or couch with your infant and if possible, introduce a farm animal book. Point at each animal and name what they are and then mimic the sound that the animal makes. This activity works especially well with farm animals like ducks, cows, sheep and pigs. Point to the pictures to say "a duck says quack" or "a cow says moo," and then repeat the sounds again. If your infant is older, they may even make the sounds along with you! See if your infant looks at your mouth as you make the different sounds, reaches to touch your mouth to feel the vibrations of the sounds,

kicks their legs, moves their body, or even babbles. These types of reactions show they are responding to the sounds.



## Early Math and Discovery: **Roll and Count**

Infants do not need to know their numbers yet, but that doesn't mean you can't still count for them! Depending on your infant's physical development, either set them sitting up on the floor, leaning against something or surrounded by a support pillow, or lie them on a blanket on the floor on their back.

### Children experience:

- Rolling balls and reaching for them
- Hearing numbers

# INFANTS

If possible, use 5-10 soft, light, squishy and textured balls and very gently roll them towards your baby one at a time. Count them sequentially as you release them to roll. After you have rolled all of the balls to them, let them play or reach for them or grab them! They may try to grab one at a time, get fixated on one, or try to grab them all at once.



## *Myself and Others:* **Peek-A-Boo**

### Children experience:

- Connecting with their family member
- Surprise and delight

Peek-a-boo is a classic game that contributes to healthy social-emotional development for your baby while also making them laugh!. If your baby is sitting in a high chair or seat, this is a great position to play peek-a-boo if they are not eating. If your infant cannot sit up yet, you can play with them as they lay on their back on a soft surface.

Cover your face with your hands to hide it, and when you uncover your face say “Peek!” or “Peek-A-Boo!” and “I see you!” to surprise and delight your infant. You can also try going behind them and surprising them by quickly poking your head around the side. You can make silly voices as you play with your infant to see what makes them giggle. This game can help to connect with your infant, as well as to help develop spatial awareness and object permanence.



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits:* **Tracking a Ball**

To start, lay your child down on the floor and sit in front of them. Once you have the child’s attention, roll a ball slowly from one of your hands to the other within the child’s range of vision. If you don’t have a ball, you can use any rollable or wheeled object you have at home. You could use an apple, a cup, a ball of paper--anything rolls will work! Doing this will help your child learn more about the objects in the world around them, and how they behave.

### Children experience:

- Moving parts of the body
- Tracking movement

Continue this motion as long as the child follows the object with her eyes; stop when she averts her eyes. After a few minutes, try rolling a new object to see if she’ll track it. As you continue with the motion, your child may try to reach for the object and play with it himself. Let them play with it, and you may even try rolling it back and forth between the two of you.

Allow infants to track or play with the balls for as long as the activity keeps their interest. Once you’ve finished with the activity, let your child know that you’re going to move on to something else, and put the rolling object or objects away.

# TODDLERS



## *Art, Music and Movement:* **Musical Instrument Time**

Start by providing musical instruments for children to play. This could be an age-appropriate instrument you have around the house, like a xylophone or drum, or something that you make! Then put on some music, maybe one of your child's favorite songs, and let them know that you're going to be playing along with the music.

As the child starts to manipulate the instruments and move to the music, watch for children who shift from one foot to the other to the beat. The child may also play the instrument along with the beat, or not! Encourage your child by imitating their actions and talking about what they're doing (e.g., "Up goes one foot, then down. Up goes the other foot, then down. You're rocking and balancing on one foot, then the other, Grace!"). You can also play along too! Maybe say, "I'm going to play the next part!" or "can I take a turn with my instrument?"

As children begin to lose interest in the activity, let them know that you are going to play along to one more song and then transition to the next activity, alerting the children to what comes next.

### Children experience:

- Listening to music
- Responding to the music they hear
- Exploring musical instruments
- Playing and moving with the beat



## *Communication, Language, and Literacy:* **Three Little Pigs**

### Children experience:

- Enjoying language
- Interactive storytelling
- Learning sounds

Start telling the story of The Three Little Pigs. You can either read a book you have on hand, or tell the story yourself! Stop periodically to ask questions of the children. For example: "What noises would pigs make?"; "How would the wolf knock on the door?"; "Can you run like the little pigs running away from the wolf?" Getting your child to engage with the story helps develop their imagination and their own storytelling skills. It's important to accept all child responses and copy children's sounds and actions. If they say the pigs would dance away, then go ahead and dance with your child. It's also OK that children will move around

during the story.

Try doing this with other well-known stories as well. Sometimes your child may just want to listen to a familiar and beloved story, but other times it's fun to engage in pretend play with the story, and think about interacting with the characters and the narrative.

To transition to the next activity, invite children to make the sound of an animal or move like one to the next part of the day.

# TODDLERS



## Early Math and Discovery: **Kid Chef**

Choose a low cabinet in your kitchen where you can see your child as you prepare meals but one that is far enough away from kitchen appliances and your workspace to keep your child safe.

Replace the cabinet

contents with some of the materials listed above. If applicable, remove the child-safety lock on the chosen cabinet. If there is no extra cabinet space in your kitchen, simply fill a plastic storage tub and place it on your kitchen floor.

Show your toddler the new space when you have time to play together. Watch as your child dumps out, explores, fills, and fits together the toys and other materials, so you'll be able to support their play and learning.

If your child begins filling a container with materials, find some similar materials, fill your container, and describe what your child is doing. Continue to observe and imitate your child's actions and comment on what you see them do. If you frequently model measurement terms (e.g., big, bigger, biggest), you'll probably hear your child using some of these words as their vocabulary increases.

### Children experience:

- Filling containers
- Nesting or stacking objects
- Using language to describe characteristics of objects

### Materials:

- Plastic bowls in at least three sizes
- A set of nesting cups or boxes ("nesting" toys fit inside one another in graduated order; provide your toddler with three or four nesting items to start with)
- A set or collection of one of the following: soft blocks, beanbags, sensory balls, snap-lock beads, plastic linking toys, lids from baby food jars
- Plastic or wooden spoons, plastic spatulas, measuring cups or spoons
- Pots and pans
- Empty food, condiment, or spice containers
- Containers to store items



## Myself and Others: **Find Yourself!**

### Children experience:

- Identifying themselves and others
- Identifying images
- Describing events
- Thinking about their family and community

To begin this activity, lay out family photo albums that include your child on the table or the floor. As the children look through these pictures with you, watch and listen for them to identify themselves in the pictures. Whenever your child points to themselves, acknowledge their identifications (e.g., "That's you on the wagon, Joey!"). Encourage children to talk about what they are doing in the photo. Your child may also identify others in the photos, and you can go through the same process of asking your child what those people are doing.

# TODDLERS

You may also show your child photos from when they were younger, or different family members when they were younger. Your child might have difficulty believing that's the same person, but that's ok! Your child may also have questions about events that you're describing: "Is that grandma's birthday? Was I there?" Answer all of their questions, and then ask your own, "Do you want grandma to come to your birthday this year?" "What kind of cake do you think that is?" "Is that the kind of cake you want for your birthday?" Accept all of your child's answers!

When your child begins to lose interest, suggest that you are all done with the photos for now, but you can always look at them again some other time. Ask your child to help you put them away.



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits:* **Balls & Buckets**

For this activity, provide buckets and different kinds of balls for children to play with. You can use any balls or buckets you have, or include different kinds of household items that are similar.

Follow the children's lead as they play, imitating their actions and talking about what they are doing. You can listen for counting words, and count as you throw some balls in the bucket (e.g., "One ball in the bucket...two balls in the bucket..."). Your child might want to sit and put balls in the bucket, or stand and toss the balls in. Once a few have made it into the bucket, ask if your child wants to pour them out and play again.

For older children, you can even turn this into a game like skeeball. Line up a few buckets and have the child throw the balls and see if they can get it into the furthest bucket. You can use this as an opportunity to count, ("Look, you got 3 in the blue bucket!").

### Children experience:

- Numbers and counting
- Moving parts of the body
- Moving the whole body

# PRESCHOOL



## *Art, Music and Movement:* **Foil Sculptures**

Give children a piece of aluminum foil to look at and explore. Ask them to describe what they see. Write down on the piece of paper the comments children make about it (for example, “it’s shiny”; “it’s flat”; “it crinkles”). Follow what children do with the foil and do the same thing. If they squish it, you squish it. If they tear it, you tear it. This is called imitation, and children love to be the leader!

Make comments about how the aluminum foil is taking on different shapes. Use words like twist, form, bend and squeeze to describe what children are doing. Tell them that the word sculpture is used to describe an object that is made by molding, bending, or twisting materials into a specific shape. Ask children if they can sculpt their foil into something. Offer children more foil when needed. Twist your foil into different shapes and comment on what you’ve done. Then comment on what children are doing and listen to what they have to say.

If possible, use the paper to write down the words children use to describe their work. However, don’t let creating the list get in the way of having a fun art experience with children.

### Children experience:

- Creativity
- New words



## *Communication, Language, and Literacy:* **Dancing with Letters**

### Children experience:

- Alphabetic knowledge
- Moving to music

Begin by drawing each letter of the alphabet on an individual sheet of paper. Then say to children something like “Today we are going to dance with letters.” Let children pick their first letter.

Play the music and model things children might do with their chosen letter, such as:

- Dancing with the letter in front of their body.
- Dancing with the letter held high.
- Placing the letter on the floor and jumping over it.

Ask children for ideas on how to move with the letter. You can extend this activity by stopping the music and giving children a new letter. Ask children to show you a movement that starts with the same letter—for instance, J is for jumping and W is for wiggling.



# PRESCHOOL



## *Math, Science, and Technology:* **Walking Feet**

The idea of this activity is to give children experiences that will help them understand what direction and position words mean, by having their bodies act out the word. For example, if you said, “Go and sit next to that tree,” children would go near the tree and sit. Moving their bodies in and among other things in their space helps them to learn direction and position words in a physical and direct way. Moving their bodies to a new position makes a real connection in their brain to the word or concept.

Begin this activity by thinking about the space children can move in outdoors near home or at a park. On a series of index cards, write down something you want children to do. Each card should use a position or direction word. Below are some lists of words.

Position words that describe the location of an object or person in relation to another object or person:

- Under
- Next to
- Behind
- On
- Underneath
- The beginning of
- The end of

Direction words describe how something moves:

- To
- Toward
- In
- Into
- Out
- Out of
- Up
- Down
- Forward
- Back

Distance words that describe relationship:

- Near
- Far
- Short
- Long

Children experience:

- Spatial awareness
- Identifying positions
- Identifying directions
- Movement

# PRESCHOOL

Examples of sentences with position and direction words:

- Stand near the car.
- Run a short distance away from me.
- Pick a leaf and stand underneath the tree.
- Jump up!
- Stand on top of a crack in the sidewalk.

Have children pick a card and follow the directions. Every time they carry out a direction, walk to that place and then have them pick another card.

You can stop when you run out of cards or when children lose interest. For a fun ending, read the cards in reverse order and get children back to their original starting point. Or, give children new directions to make it back to the house or car.



## *Myself and Others:* **The New Itsy Bitsy Spider**

Children experience:

- Singing
- Talking about feelings
- Learning how other people feel
- Pretend play

“The Itsy Bitsy Spider”:

The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout.

Down came the rain and washed the spider out.

Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.

And the itsy bitsy spider went up the spout again.

To begin this activity, make some drawings of spiders with different emotions (sad, angry, scared, happy, worried, confused). Then sing “Itsy Bitsy Spider” to children. Ask children to come up with some hand movements to go along with the song, or show them movements to use. Show one of the drawings to the children and ask them how the spider might be feeling. Then show the other drawings and ask children to identify each emotion.

Show one of the drawings a second time and ask children how they would move if they were feeling that emotion. For example, if the drawing showed a sad face, children might hang their head and walk slowly. Then ask children how their voices would sound if they were to talk while feeling that same emotion. Have children sing “Itsy Bitsy Spider” using that tone of voice.

When you’re done, let children know that the spiders are tired from climbing the spout and it is time to let them rest, so that you can end the activity.

# PRESCHOOL



## *Physical Development and Healthy Habits: Germs*

Germs Make Me Sick!,  
by M. Berger

Begin by reading a book about germs to your children (you can read a book you have, like *Germs Make Me Sick!*, by M. Berger, or a Youtube video like this one: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBGsoimPXZg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBGsoimPXZg)). Talk about the story when you are finished reading.

Children experience:

- Taking care of his or her personal needs
- Engaging in healthy practices

Ask questions such as the following:

- Do you remember where germs come from?
- Where do you think germs are on your body?
- What do you think we can do to get rid of germs?

Next take the children to another part of the house where you have placed a box of tissues on a low shelf so they can reach it. Show them how to get one tissue to blow their nose and then where to throw it out. Then say something like “Once you blow your nose, you have to wash your hands because some germs might have sneaked onto them! I have something exciting to show you in the bathroom! Let’s go!” Lead children to the bathroom and show them the step stool (this could be a store-bought stool, a thick piece of wood, or even a low chair they can climb up to). Show them how they can now step up to the sink and wash their own hands to get rid of the germs! Teach them how to use the bar soap or one squirt of pump soap. Have them sing the ABCs song one time as they scrub. Show them how to dry their hands and then turn off the faucet.

Now, provide a model for children by washing your hands while children sing the ABCs song for you! Ask children if they can think of another way to stay healthy. Depending on what they say, you might be able to have them help you carry out these ideas. For example, if they say “keep our clothes clean,” they could help you fold laundry or pour the soap in.



# MORE RESOURCES



## Go on a Bear Hunt!

Many neighborhoods and communities are getting into the fun with this fun, social-distance friendly activity. If you haven't seen any bears in your neighborhood, you can start spreading the word!

More on bear hunts here: [www.womansday.com/life/a31927236/bear-hunt-corona-virus-activities/](http://www.womansday.com/life/a31927236/bear-hunt-corona-virus-activities/)

Hunting is fun, but making your own window setup is also a great activity!

What's a bear hunt without a fun song? [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_ShP3fiEhU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_ShP3fiEhU)



## Rainbow Hunt

While you're out looking for bears, keep an eye out for some beautiful rainbows too! Another great art activity and outdoor walking fun, hopefully you can help fill your neighborhood with animals and color.

More on rainbow hunts here: [www.housebeautiful.com/lifestyle/a31816286/quarantine-rainbow-connection/](http://www.housebeautiful.com/lifestyle/a31816286/quarantine-rainbow-connection/)



## Hearts for Healthcare Workers

Communities are showing support for the hard work of all essential personnel by putting up hearts and other supportive messages on their doors and windows. Young children can help by painting patterns on windows, or making beautiful pictures to hang prominently.



## Butterfly Fun!

The San Diego Zoo is offering a live Butterfly Cam for you to enjoy.

View the feed here: [www.sdzsafaripark.org/butterfly-cam](http://www.sdzsafaripark.org/butterfly-cam)

After you watch, it might be fun to do a butterfly craft, like this one:

[www.artycraftykids.com/craft/easy-preschool-butterfly-craft/](http://www.artycraftykids.com/craft/easy-preschool-butterfly-craft/)



## Read Alouds

Many children's authors are doing live readings of their works! Check out the growing list here for some fun story time, right from the source:

[www.weareteachers.com/virtual-author-activities/](http://www.weareteachers.com/virtual-author-activities/)