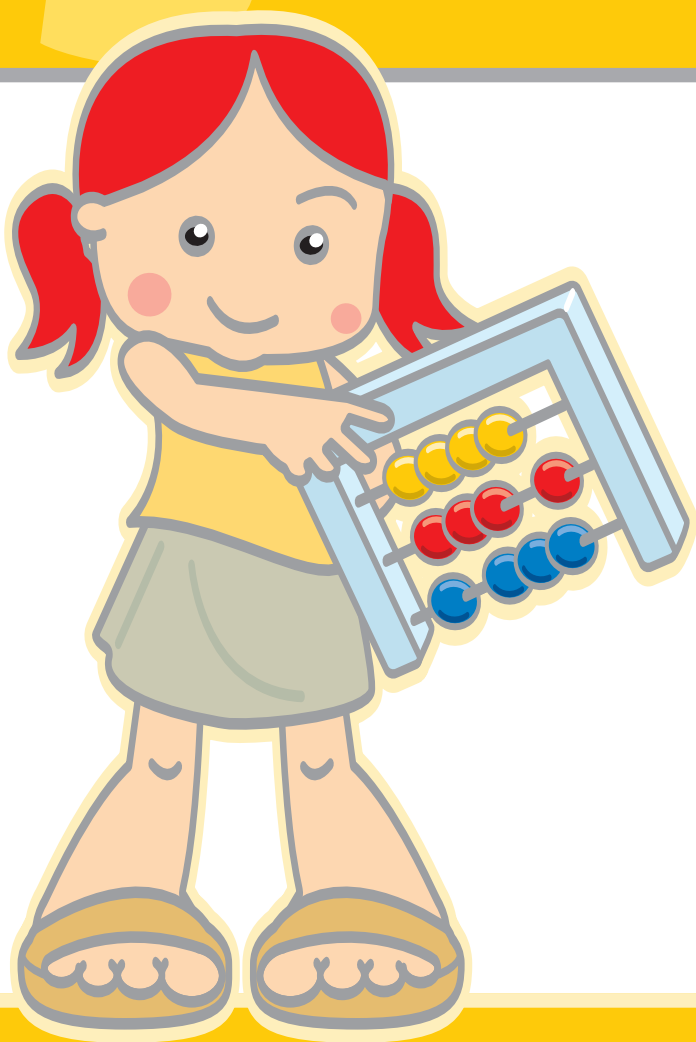


4 & 5 MIND builders

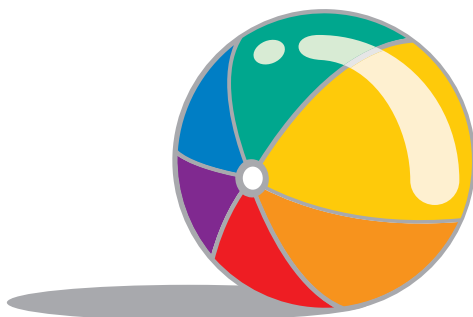


A New Ending

Read a story with your child that she is familiar with, but tell her that you are going to make up a new ending together. Part way through the book, stop reading and ask your child if she knows how the story ends. Let her tell you in her own words the ending that is written in the book. Then ask if she can think of a different ending. If she needs help, ask her questions about how the story could be different. For example, **Do you think he has a dream while he is sleeping? What do you think he dreams about? What do you think he will do when he wakes up?** Let your child continue the story as long as she can, or keep asking questions to help her create a new ending.

Challenge: Write down the new ending that your child created, and have her draw pictures to go with it.

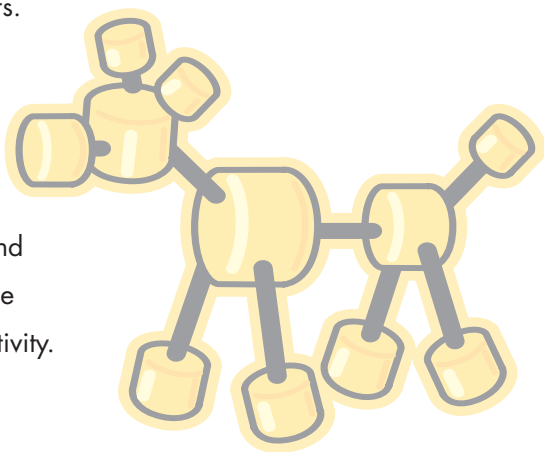
Making up a new ending to the story builds your child's imagination and her language skills.



Marshmallow & Toothpick Sculptures

Next time you are at the grocery store, buy a bag of miniature marshmallows and a box of toothpicks. Let your child use the marshmallows and toothpicks as building tools. He can connect the marshmallows with the toothpicks by poking the toothpicks into the marshmallows. He can use his imagination to make buildings, animals shapes and letters.

You can also use pretzels and cheese cut into little blocks, or play dough and straws or popsicle sticks, for this activity.



Challenge:

Make a simple three-dimensional structure out of your building tools. See if your child can copy your design.

This activity builds your child's imagination, creativity, and problem-solving skills as he figures out how to construct objects from the marshmallows and toothpicks.



A Field Trip

On a day when you will have several hours to spend with your child, plan a trip to a new place that will have new things for your child (and maybe a friend) to see and experience. For example, you can go to the zoo or a children's museum. You can visit a regional park that may have a lake, picnic areas and playgrounds. You can visit an art museum, a pet store, or a natural history museum, depending on whether your child likes painting, fish or dinosaurs. Or go on a shell-collecting trip to the beach. Visit a farm and see the farm animals, or go to a pumpkin patch and pick out a pumpkin to carve. Whatever you do on your special trip, talk about what you see and teach your preschooler new words and ideas. For example, at the farm or zoo, learn about the animals together – what are their names, what they eat, where they live. At the park, talk about the different kinds of trees or plants or how the play equipment works.

Challenge: After your special trip, have your child tell you what she liked most. Write down what she says, and let her draw a picture of your trip together.

Giving your child new experiences builds her knowledge and understanding of the world around her.



Another Place at the Table

Before dinner, help your child count how many people will be eating. Have him help set a place for each person. Make stacks of each of the things he will need. He will have to count the number of plates, silverware, napkins, and glasses and make sure that each place has one of each. To make it easier at first, you can make a card for each person who will be at the table and print their name on it. Place the cards around the table, where each person will be sitting. Have your child count by touching or pointing to the item, such as the name card.

Challenge: Teach your child where the table items are kept and have him get them out by himself before setting the table.

Your child is learning to count and something called one-to-one correspondence. This means that when you are counting, each item or person is counted only once.



Look It Up!

Has your child ever asked you a question that you didn't have the answer to? Something like, **Why is the sky blue?** or **What does a worm eat?**

Instead of saying, **I don't know** or making up an answer, try looking it up! Say, **That is a very good question, but I don't know the answer! We should look it up.** There are many places to find answers at the library. Ask the librarian to show you how to use the Internet, the encyclopedia, or a children's book on the subject. You can usually find the answer to your question in less than 10 minutes!

Challenge: Have your child speak directly to the librarian and ask the question herself. If she is having trouble, whisper quietly in her ear so that she knows what to say.

You are teaching your child how to find answers to the questions that interest her. You are also teaching her that it is okay to say "I don't know!"



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four and five year olds

Laundry Helper

The next time you take clean laundry out of the dryer, have your child help you sort! You can make piles for each member of your family before you fold. Or you can make piles of shirts, pants, towels, and so on. Talk about the sizes as you separate:

**This is a little shirt,
whose shirt do you think it is?**

Have your child find the matches for socks and put them together. Give her ideas for what to look for, for example:

**This sock has green stitching,
can you find its match?**

For a change, sing a made-up song together about the clothing, such as:

**This is the red sock that matches the
red sock. Together we have a pair!**

Challenge: Have your child help you fold the clothes and put them neatly into stacks. Then, have her put them away in the proper places.

Your child is learning to sort items by size or color. She is also learning that she is a valuable helper in the home.





Let's Get Organized

Collect a variety of different containers and boxes from around your house (like shoe boxes, crates, or plastic tubs). Help your child sort his toys into the containers and boxes (crayons in one, cars in another). Make sure that each of the toys has its own special place. Help your child draw a picture of the toy on each container. Print the name of the toy clearly on the label. Organize the containers neatly in a special "toy place" so that he can see the labels clearly.

Challenge: Give your child more and more responsibility for cleaning up his toys. With items clearly labeled, he should begin to clean up without your help!

Your child is learning how to sort items into groups. He is also learning to take care of his things and clean up by himself.



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Measure Me!

Measure your child using a piece of yarn or string. Cut the yarn so that it is the same size as she is. Ask her a question that will encourage her to measure the things around her, such as:

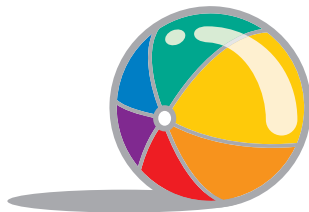
**I wonder what is taller,
you or the table?**

Help her to hold the string up to different items to compare. Tell her what you see:

**You are much taller than the table,
aren't you!**

Challenge: Have her measure very large things such as a car, or the kitchen floor. Ask her, **How many of you is this floor?** Help her to lay the string end-to-end to figure it out, **The kitchen floor is four times longer than you,** or **Your body can go across the floor four times!**

Your child is learning to measure and compare lengths.



Follow Your Nose

Cut up an egg carton and place a cotton ball in each section. Find different scents around the house and put a few drops on each piece of cotton (for example perfume, vanilla extract, orange juice, peanut butter, and shaving cream). Tell your child that you are going to play a “smelling game” with her. Have her close her eyes. Ask her to guess what she smells. One at a time, hold a scented cotton ball up to her nose. Let her sniff it and make a guess.

Challenge: Let your child help you think of some more scents around the house. Help her create some more cotton balls and let her play the game with someone else.

Your child is learning to explore with her senses!

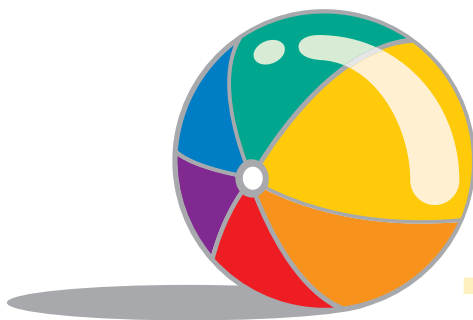


Pet for a Day

The next time your child finds a little creature (like a cricket, bug, or lizard) outside, consider making it a “pet for a day.” Find a shoe box or large plastic tub or jar. Poke some holes in the lid and have your child help you add some dirt, grass, and leaves to the container. Set the container in a cool or shady place where he can watch it. Go to the library and see if you can learn more about your “pet.” Write down the things it does and the things you learn. At the end of the day, release it back into the “wild.”

Challenge: If your child seems interested, consider extending the activity to “pet for a week.” Help him learn more about how the creature lives, what it eats, and how to keep it alive. A snail is interesting to watch, especially if you have a flat, clear surface for your child to see it move.

Your child is learning about the living things around him. He is learning to watch closely and pay attention to detail.



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Notes