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ISSUE NO. 12
JAN - JUN 2011
\$5.00 (incl GST)



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Baby's First School

It's been said that the best learning starts from home. With this in mind, the creators of My Playschool.net – The Resource for Home Learning suggest these easy-to-recreate activities you can do at home with your child.

Your child at age one is curious, beginning to show signs of independence and is more aware of herself. Life is a busy time for your little one, who will often be exploring her environment; feeling, holding, pulling, pushing and banging. Your child will gradually start to be more verbal, making more gestures and sounds to communicate with you.

This is an opportune time to introduce activities to stimulate your child. However, it is important to be aware that your child at this age has a very short attention span, thus she might not be able to complete each activity at a chosen time. Be alert for moments when your child seems to be looking for something to do, either in the morning or after a nap.

Your efforts to interact with your child through reading, talking, singing and performing selected activities with him/her will help to build trust and security, which will motivate your child's learning.

Here are some activities that can help your child develop self-confidence, independence, vocabulary and build an awareness of the environment. These activities can be repeated at various times over an extended period of time when your child is between 12 and 18 months.

CONTAINERS AND LIDS

Tools A stainless steel, lightweight and non-breakable pot with a lid, a plastic jar with a lid and a cardboard box/shoebox with a lid. Ensure that it will be easy for the child to put on and take off the lids.

Moving on Show these items to your child and allow her to explore the items. She will

probably need assistance to put on the correct lids. Do allow her the experience of trial and error before she is able to put on the right lids on the right items. Use the words "on" and "off" as lids are put on and taken off.

Play benefits Develops awareness of matching lids, problem solving through free exploration and awareness of the words "on" and "off".

WHAT'S OUTSIDE

Tools Board books with pictures of trees, flowers, bird and grass. You can easily borrow these from the library. Read the books to your child and talk about the pictures. Tell your child that these things are found outside.

Moving on Find a separate occasion to take your child outside after you have read the book again. Point out the things in nature that are found in the book; go near a tree, touch it, encourage the child to touch it and talk about how big and tall the tree is. Tell your child that its leaves are green.

Touch the grass and tell her that the grass is green as well. Allow her to feel the grass and highlight to her that the tree is much taller than the grass. Use hand gestures to demonstrate the word tall, so that the child can understand the word.

Show the child some flowers, allow her to touch and smell the flowers, but remind her that she should not pluck the flowers. Tell her that trees and grass and plants all have green leaves.

Play benefits This activity develops an awareness of the outside world, helps the

child to learn the colour green, and builds skills in associating what she sees outside with what she sees in a book.

PUT IT THROUGH THE HOLE

Tools Obtain a plastic/tin container with a plastic lid, and cut a slit in the middle of the lid. Gather five keys that can be easily pushed into the slit. Encourage the child to pick up a key and push it through the slit.

Moving On If a tin/metal container is used, the key will make a sound when it hits the bottom of the container. Emphasise the sound to the child and use the word 'inside' each time the key is inserted through the slit and hits the bottom of the container. Allow the child to continue until all the keys have been pushed through the slit and continue the activity as long as the child is interested.

Other materials like cardboard shapes or styrofoam circles can be used for pushing through the slit. Be sure that the items are large enough, so that the child will not be able to swallow it.

Play benefits This activity develops the awareness of the word "inside", eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills, following directions and problem solving.

FINGER PAINTING

Tools Edible paints. A child at one tends to be very curious and will put her fingers in her mouth to taste the paint.

Moving on Use two tablespoons of flour and add a little water at a time until you have made a thin paste. Add a few drops of food colouring and mix well. Tape some wax/tracing paper to a table and place a spoonful of this edible paint on the paper. Help your child put on an old shirt or smock before she starts to paint with her fingers.

Show her how to move her fingers and hands on the paper and use the words "wet" and "slippery" during the activity. Avoid drawing pictures. Allow your child to freely explore spreading the paint on the wax paper.

When the activity is completed, press a piece of drawing paper firmly over the wax paper to have the picture printed on the drawing paper. Hang the picture to dry and allow the child feel the picture once it is dry. Use the word "dry" and tell the child that water has evaporated from the picture to make the paint dry.

Play benefits This activity develops fine motor skills, awareness of the words "slippery", "wet" and "dry" and free exploration and creativity.

BIG AND SMALL

Tools A big and small spoon, a big and small lid, an empty toilet tissue roll and an empty paper towel roll, a pair of big and small shoes or several similar items of big and smaller-sized things.

Moving on Pick up the big spoon and tell your child that it is bigger than the other spoon. Tell her that the other spoon is little. Say the word "big" and "little" several times as you continue to show her the big and small objects.

Place the big and small items of the same set together in a row. Tell your child to pick up the big spoon. If she does it correctly, praise her and instruct her to put it back in place. If she picks up the incorrect item, tell her what it is, identify the size and tell her to put it back in place.

Continue working only with the concept of "big" until she is confident in choosing the bigger item correctly. Avoid using the word large, as interchanging words at this age →



may confuse a child. Introduce the "little" concept when you feel that she is secure in choosing the bigger object each time a big and small object are compared.

Play benefits This activity develops an awareness of the concepts, "big" and "little", vocabulary in naming the objects, following directions, skill in making a choice and comparisons and eye hand coordination. **BC**

For more articles on home-learning activities for toddlers, log onto <http://myplayschool.net> – The Resource for Home-Learning.