

Learning Around the House

Every room in your house holds a chance for your child to learn. She might find patterns in the kitchen, discover “invisible” light in the living room, or practice geography in her bedroom. Take advantage of these learning opportunities, and watch her skills grow!



Kitchen

Table patterns

Ask your youngster what patterns she makes as she sets the table. *Examples:* fork, plate, knife, spoon, fork, plate, knife, spoon. Suggest that she add new patterns by folding napkins into different shapes (triangle, rectangle, triangle, rectangle). *Idea:* During a meal, take turns starting patterns for one another to finish. For instance, your child might say, “1, 3, 5, . . .” (The next number is 7 because the pattern is odd numbers.)



Reading zone

Encourage your youngster to read regularly by turning the refrigerator door into a reading zone! Let her post fun things to read like comic strips, greeting cards, and email jokes. Ask other family members to add reading material, too. You might hang up a favorite poem, a new dessert recipe,

or a postcard from a relative. Once a week, clear off the old items to make room for new ones.

Sinking salt

Here's how your youngster can use oil and water to learn about density. First, have her pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooking oil into a clear glass and add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water. The oil will float to the top because it is less dense than the water. Then, let her drop a pinch of salt into the oil. What happens? The salt sticks to some oil droplets, and those droplets become more dense and sink into the water. Then, the salt gradually separates from the oil droplets and dissolves in the water. When that happens, the oil droplets rise above the water again.

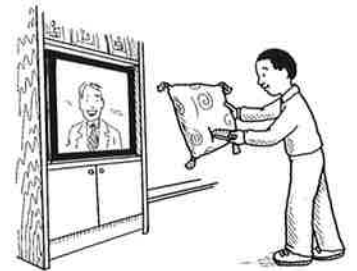
Living Room

Newsprint sentences

Have your child cut out individual words from newspaper headlines. Then, he can arrange them on the living room floor to make silly sentences (“President reads to students wearing pajamas at town council meeting with local alligator”). Suggest that he use a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words—he will build his vocabulary and grammar skills as he builds sentences!

Remote control science

Which materials block the signal from your remote control? Your youngster can try this science experiment to find out. First, ask him to aim the remote at the TV and change the channel. Then, have him press the remote



into a pillow. He can repeat the experiment with items of different materials and thicknesses (paper, aluminum foil, cardboard, cotton blanket). What does he notice? A remote uses infrared light—light that can't be seen by the naked eye. It can shine through thinner objects but not thicker ones.

Estimation contest

Try this measurement game to improve your child's estimating skills. Family members take turns trying to find

objects of various lengths in the living room. Each person chooses an item that he thinks is 1 foot long (say, a magazine). Use a tape measure to check. The person whose object is closest to 1 foot wins that round. Then, look for items that are 2 feet, 3 feet, 4 feet, 5 feet, and 6 feet long. Jot down the winner of each round. Who won the most rounds?

Bedroom

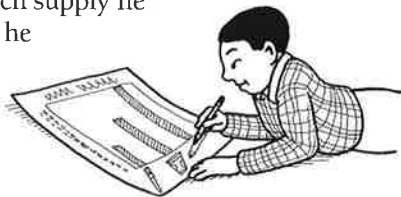


Play-mat map

Have your child make a play mat to learn map skills. Give him a sheet of poster board or a large piece of cardboard to put on the floor in his room. First, help him label each edge of the mat with the correct direction (north, south, east, west). He can use a compass or the sun's location to figure out the directions. Then, have him draw the streets that you use to walk or drive to school, to his best friend's house, or to the store. He can also add buildings. When he drives his toy cars, he can say which way he's going ("To get to school, we go west and then north").

Supply graph

Graphing belongings is an easy way to practice math skills. Have your child choose something in his room (say, art supplies) and draw a bar graph to show how many he has. For instance, maybe there are 5 paintbrushes, 10 cans of play dough, and 15 colored pencils. He can write the numbers 1 through 15 up the left side of a piece of paper. At the bottom, he should draw each supply he wants to graph. Finally, he can draw a vertical bar above each picture that shows the number of each item.



Storytime rotation

Bedtime stories are fun for all ages. Let family members take turns hosting story time in their bedrooms. Each person

brings a blanket and a pillow. Then, the host reads aloud from a book of his choice. This is a good way for your youngster to share what he's reading and to build reading skills. When it's your turn to read aloud, introduce him to books that he might not have discovered on his own. You could try a story that's written for a slightly older audience or a nonfiction book about a subject he's not familiar with.

Bathroom

Momentum and mass

Ask your child to collect several small, lightweight balls that are about the same size (bouncy ball, Ping-Pong ball, golf ball, foam ball). Close the sink drain. She should place each ball at the edge of the sink and let it roll in. It will roll up and down the sink before settling near the drain. For each ball, she should notice how far it travels up the opposite side and count how many times it goes back and forth before it stops. (Each ball gains momentum as it rolls down and loses momentum as it rolls up. Objects with more mass gain more momentum, so the ball with the greatest mass will go higher up the sink and take longer to settle.) *Note:* Other factors also affect momentum. The indentations on a golf ball, for instance, will create friction and slow it down. And bigger balls need more space to gain momentum—can your youngster predict what would happen if she repeated the experiment in a larger sink with a bowling ball and a soccer ball?

Written instructions

Your youngster can practice writing instructions—and you can make sure she brushes her teeth correctly! Ask her to write each step involved in brushing (wet the toothbrush, squeeze toothpaste onto the toothbrush, and so on).



When she finishes writing the directions, she can post them in the bathroom and follow them exactly. Afterward, she can add any steps she forgot. ("Oops! I have to turn on the water before I can rinse!")

Tile math

The tiles on your bathroom wall or floor are ideal for building math skills. Use shaving cream to mark off an area (say, 4 squares by 5 squares). Ask your youngster how many squares there are in all. A younger child can count to figure out the number of squares. An older one can learn about multiplication and calculating area. Have her multiply the number of tiles across by the number of tiles down ($4 \times 5 = 20$). *Idea:* Can she figure out how many tiles are on each wall? In the whole bathroom?

Recipes for Success