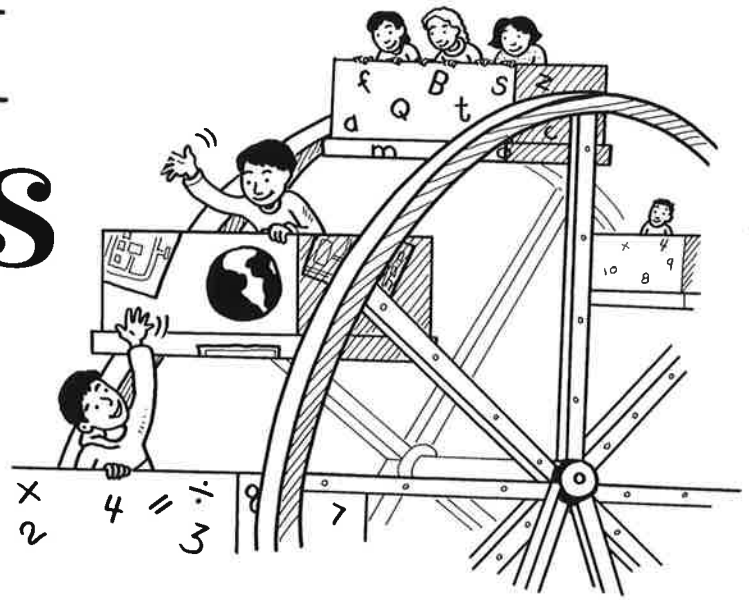


# Shoebox Activities

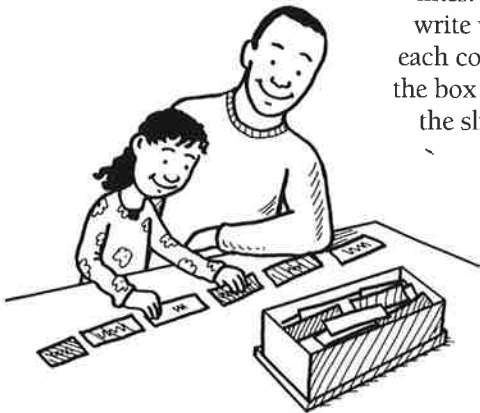
From shampoo bottles to coins and menus, your home is full of everyday materials that your child can use to boost reading, writing, math, and social studies skills. Just help him gather the materials listed, put them inside an empty shoebox, and follow the simple instructions. He'll have "shoebox kits" that he can use for fun learning at home or on the go.



## Sentence box

Your youngster can discover parts of speech and practice making complete sentences with this activity.

**To make:** Cut different colors of construction paper into small strips. Ask your child to assign a color to each part of speech (red = nouns, yellow = verbs) and write a word on each slip. *Note:* She can look through books to find words she likes. Suggest that she write what part of speech each color represents inside the box lid and place all the slips facedown in the box.



**To use:** Have your youngster pull out one of each color and use the words to create a sentence. If the sentence doesn't sound right, ask her what is missing. Does she need another noun? A different verb? She can pull out the correct part of speech and try again—until she's happy with her sentence!

## Recycled words

Here's a new way to recycle empty food containers—into word games for spelling and vocabulary practice.

**To make:** Let your child collect small (rinsed) items from your recycling bin, such as yogurt cups, shampoo and soap bottles, and spice jars. Place in a shoebox, along with paper, pencil, and a pocket dictionary.

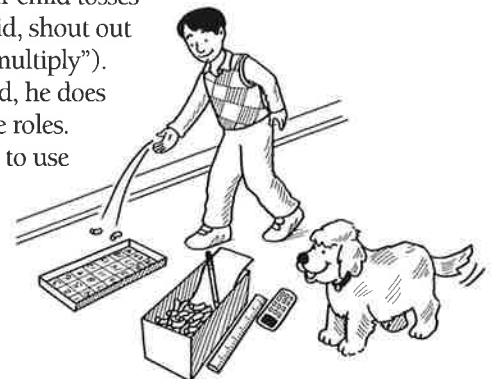
**To use:** Ask your youngster to choose a container and find the longest word on it (*antibacterial*). Have him write the word at the top of a sheet of paper and see how many smaller words he can make from its letters (*bacteria, late, care*). Or suggest that he use words from all the containers to create "word chains" where each word begins with the last letter of the previous word (*vanilla—active—eat—to—open—nutrition*). *Tip:* Encourage him to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary to learn their definitions.

## Math toss

Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division...no matter which math skill your child is working on, this box will make it fun to practice!

**To make:** Help your youngster use a ruler to draw horizontal and vertical lines, each about 2 inches apart, inside the box lid. When he's finished, he'll have a grid of 2-inch squares. Next, he can write numbers in the squares, starting with 1. Finally, let him fill the box with about two dozen counters (beans, dry pasta), scrap paper, a pencil, and a calculator.

**To use:** While your child tosses two tokens into the lid, shout out a direction ("add," "multiply"). When the tokens land, he does the math. Then, trade roles. *Note:* Encourage him to use the extra counters or paper and pencil to figure out the answers. He can check them on the calculator.





## Letter-writing kit

This box is full of fun materials that will inspire your youngster to write regularly.

**To make:** Gather index cards, lined paper, pencils, erasers, colored pens, stickers, envelopes, and postage stamps, and put them in a shoebox.

**To use:** Your child can make postcards by drawing pictures on the backs of index cards. Or she might cut lined paper in half, write her name in a fancy way at the top, and decorate the edges with stickers to create her own personalized stationery. Then, have her write notes to friends and relatives. Suggest that she begin with a greeting (“Dear Aunt Susan,”), add a few sentences about herself, pose questions for the person to answer, and finish with a closing (“Love, Caroline”). Help her address and stamp her postcards or envelopes and put them in the mail.

## Coin rubbings

Here’s a memory game that will give your youngster practice recognizing coins and adding up their values.

**To make:** Fill a shoebox with a penny, a nickel, a dime, a quarter, a half-dollar, a pencil, clear tape, and white paper cut into 2-inch squares.



**To use:** Have your child make coin rubbings by taping a coin to the box lid, laying a paper square on top, and rubbing a pencil lightly over it. He should do this with the front and back of each coin.

Then, mix up the slips, lay them facedown in rows in the shoebox lid, and take turns flipping over two at a time. If it’s a match (heads and tails) of the same coin, keep it. If not, flip them back over, and your turn ends. When every pair has been claimed, add up the total value of your coins. The player with the most “money” wins.

## Map box

This activity will help your child learn to make and use maps.

**To make:** Help her cut several sheets of paper so they’ll fit inside the shoebox lid. Then, have her add pencils, colored pencils, a ruler, more paper, and toy people and cars.



**To use:** Suggest that your youngster draw maps of familiar places (her bedroom, the park) on the sheets of paper. For a map of your neighborhood, she could use the ruler to draw the streets and then add your house, friends’ houses, the playground, and her school. To play, have her put a map in the lid. On a separate sheet of paper, let her write directions from one spot to another, using her map as a guide. Then, she can have her toys “follow” the directions as she moves them around her map.

## Multicultural menus

With a little help from neighborhood restaurants, your youngster can learn about foods from countries around the world.

**To make:** Collect take-out menus from area restaurants representing different cultures (Italian, Mexican, Thai, Chinese, for example). Or print menus from restaurant websites. Put them in a shoebox along with a world map, stickers, small paper plates, a pencil, and crayons.

**To use:** Your child can read the menus to explore the kinds of foods served in different countries. Help him locate each country on the map and put a sticker on the spot. Then, have him “order” a meal from each country by drawing pictures of the foods on a paper plate. Suggest that he write the country’s name in the middle of the plate and label each dish.

# Recipes for Success