

CHILDREN AT PLAY

By Lois Breneman, © 2003, Revised 2005, Heart to Heart Newsletter, jhbreneman@juno.com



There are so many activities that can be done with your children and grandchildren to help them learn and grow physically, mentally and spiritually.

If your young child is not in a small playgroup, you may want to form one with close friends. At ages 3-5, a group of four children is about the right size. All of these activities work well in a playgroup, as a once-a-week activity. This is a good alternative to preschool, if this is your choice, with lots of godly and loving learning taking place in the home on a daily basis. I believe those who lovingly teach their own children in the home are doing a top-notch job.

Scripture Songs and other Good Music ~ As your children play, fill their minds with good things by way of music. They learn so fast at this young age, so take advantage of it.

Books ~ It goes without saying that reading books to your children should be at the top of this list, but I'll add it anyway, to be sure it isn't overlooked.

Color Mixing ~ You may find you have a budding artist after this activity! Make playdoh (recipe below, but omit food coloring). The playdoh will be white. Divide up into four sections and color three sections red, yellow and blue, using food coloring, by kneading in the colors. Leave one white. Then mix the colors, observing how two different colors make a new one!

- blue with yellow to make green
- red with blue to make purple
- yellow with red to make orange
- blue with green to make teal
- each color with white to make it lighter - pink, peach, lilac, aqua, etc!
- Now have your child find the crayons in his box that match the colors he made!
- Thank God for the beautiful colors He made for us to enjoy!

Playdoh ~ This Playdoh is better than the Playdoh in the store, as well as lots of fun to make!

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 1 Tbsp. Oil
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tsp. cream of tartar
- Food coloring

Blend in blender. Cook about 5 minutes in a Teflon pan sprayed with Pam. Let cool. Wrap well in plastic wrap and it will last a long time. If it dries a bit, just add a few drops of water and work into the dough. This does not need refrigeration. It is fun to make blue, yellow and pink ~ then mix colors to make orange, purple and green. Another method of adding color as well as fragrance such as coconut or peppermint, would be to add Kool Aid, rather than food coloring and fragrance.

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Beanbags ~ Sew up some round beanbags, leaving an opening. Turn right side out. Let the children fill with dried beans or rice, using a spoon. Hand sew shut with a double thread. Toss back and forth to each other.

Ring Toss ~ Using beanbags and a hoola hoop, toss the beanbags into the circle. You can also make a circle with a ribbon. Do not leave a ribbon, rope or cord with young children unattended, however, as it is can be a hazard if it gets around somebody's neck.

Jump Over the River ~ Lay out two ropes on the floor, parallel to each other. Put them close together at first. Have the children jump over the river! Move them farther and farther apart and see who keeps his feet dry the longest! To add more adventure, you could put a stuffed animal into the river, pretending he is just waiting to grab a foot. Only do this if it's not too scary for the children. You be the judge.

Dump Truck Alphabet Game ~ Using toy letters of the alphabet, ask your child to drive to the "Alphabet Store" to buy you an "A," then drive back home. Your girls may want to use a baby buggy to shop!

Scrap Paper ~ Call and ask business offices for stacks of scrap paper that they would normally throw out. Let your children draw, color and paint using that paper. Your local newspaper may also have rolls of unused newsprint that they will give to you. The long rolls are great to spread out at the edge of the driveway (with your children's knees in the cool grass) and let them paint with water colors or poster paints.

Marching Band ~ Using pots and pans, have a marching band. Wrap the teeth of a comb with wax paper and you have a kazoo to hum out your own tunes.

Tent ~ Make a tent by draping a blanket over a card table.

Playhouse ~ Using a huge box, cut out windows and a door for endless fun! Decorate with magic markers.

Train ~ Line up boxes or chairs to make a train. Paint the caboose red, if using boxes.

Airplane Control Panel ~ Save all kinds of colorful and shiny lids. Using a cardboard box, glue on lids of all colors to make an airplane control panel. Shampoo lids flip open - use those too. Kids love to open and close them. Some cosmetic lids are shiny and will be fun to use too. Hot glue should work well to fasten the lids to the box (not a job for little hands)! Since some lids are small and could be swallowed, however, be sure not to leave a child under three years of age in the pilot's seat unattended! If there are tiny tots in the house, make sure that small lids that may become unglued are not left on the floor to be swallowed.

Small Trampoline ~ Let the kids take turns jumping with supervision - to use up some of their energy!

Exercise time ~ Jumping Jacks, Touch the Toes, Reach for the Sky!

Rub Your Tummy ~ Have your children try rubbing their tummy, while tapping the top of their head at the same time.

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In and Out ~ Lay out blocks or objects at 3 or 4 foot intervals (outdoors works best). Have your children run or walk to the left, then to the right - in and out.

Preposition Commands ~ Ask your young child to follow simple commands, which include words such as, "in, out, on, off, over, under, beside, through, below, above, between, around."

Action Commands ~ Ask your young child to follow simple action commands, which include words such as, "walk, run, jump, fly, climb, skip, hop, wobble, limp, smile, cry, laugh, look up, turn around, clap your hands, sit down, stand up, fall down, jump up, lie down, go to sleep!"

Blocks ~ Build a tower, house, a road. Creativity will expand the possibilities!

A City in Your Driveway ~ Draw roads in your driveway with chalk. Add a church, school, fire station, etc. Then drive tricycles and Big Wheels on the roads.

Matchbox Play ~ Using a yard or so of fabric, draw roads and a town with permanent markers for your children to drive the cars around. This can also be drawn on a piece of wood or even cardboard. I loved setting up the "Thomas the Train Stop and Go Set" on a large piece of cardboard with my 2 year old grandson - one I found (new) at a yard sale for just \$6! I drew roads for cars and trucks at the other end, and we had a great time!

Paint the House ~ Paint the outside of the house with water, using large paint brushes.

Squirt or Spray Bottles ~ Squirt or spray each other with water in bottles - outside, of course!

Press Flowers ~ Pick flowers and press between two paper towels and place a few heavy books on top for several days or until they dry. Help your child make a greeting card to send to Grandma!

This article was included in the Heart to Heart Newsletter whose purpose is to bring godly and practical encouragement to women through creative ideas for the Christian family – regarding homemaking, marriage, children and much more. You may receive this bimonthly newsletter by sending your name, city, state, country and the name of the person who referred you to Lois Breneman at jhbreneman@juno.com.