

When bathing your child, lather his hair thickly with shampoo so that you can shape his hair in several ways.

Your child will be entertained at bath time and will have a chance to see himself in a new way.



Why this is important

Your child can get more out of shampoo than clean hair. He can enjoy seeing his image change in the mirror. This game can help make your child comfortable and familiar with his image even as things change.

What you do

- Use shampoo to create a thick lather in your child's hair.
- Hold a small hand mirror for him to see his new look.
- Shape the lather and let your child see himself in several new hair styles. Pull his hair up into a tall peak or form many small spikes on his head.
- Watch his response, and take your cue from him. If he laughs, say, *What funny, tall hair you have!*
- Add more hair shapes to the game, or try a soap beard and sideburns.

Another idea

Challenge his hand-eye coordination by offering him a second mirror to view the back of his head. Demonstrate how to hold two mirrors in order to view the back. Offer to hold one mirror if he cannot hold both successfully.

Create a space in your home where your family can share objects with each other. Your child will enjoy sharing, talking, and hearing what other family members say.



Why this is important

Your child may enjoy sharing but may also need help doing it. You can encourage and expand this behavior by providing a family sharing place. Together you will talk about the shared items. Words will become the principal way of sharing as your child grows, and he will enjoy the stories that accompany each object. He will learn that although he cannot take home all objects and experiences, he can share them through his words and drawings, and later with his letters and photographs.

What you do

- Find a space in your home to dedicate to sharing. The space should include a flat surface and an upright surface for hanging items. You can use a box or low shelf with a cork board or cloth hanging behind. Make sure the flat space is within your child's reach. **If you hang items on a cork board, make sure thumb tacks or push pins are kept out of your child's reach.**
- Draw your child's attention to an object on display: *Look, Alex, here's a letter. It's from Grandma. She sent us a new picture.*
- Give him time to handle the object and then later share it with other family members. He may ask questions about the item to help him remember it.
- Encourage your child to share an object with you, and then thank him for his contribution to the sharing space.

Another idea

Remind your child about the sharing place when playing outside. Help him find interesting objects throughout his day that he can place in the sharing space. You can also encourage him to display his artwork for everyone to enjoy.

Read a familiar book to your child and pause in the middle of a repeated line. Your child will practice using words by filling in the blanks of the familiar story.



Why this is important

When you read stories to children they hear many new words used in different ways. Your child will increase her understanding, memory, and use of words as she listens to a story. She may also begin to notice printed words on a page. Her experiences of listening and helping to tell a story will help her learn to love reading. Completing, or filling in, a familiar sentence is an easy way for her to practice her memory skills and use her growing vocabulary.

What you do

- Choose a familiar story, such as *The Little Red Hen*, which has repeated words and sounds.
- Invite your child to say the repetitive lines in the story as you read. For example, when the Hen asks who will plant the wheat, you can read, *The Duck said...* Then let her fill in the words, *Not I!*
- Point to the words as she says them. Later, encourage her to point to the words.
- Challenge her by leaving out a word that shows the sequence of the story. For example, read *Who will help me...this wheat?* She will need to choose from several words (*plant, water, cut, or eat*) by remembering what has already happened and what comes next.

Another idea

You can keep your child interested in this activity by choosing funny stories with repeated noises and sounds. Stories about animals, machines that act like people, or families and familiar situations provide fun opportunities for your child to contribute to telling the story.

Encourage your child to mold and explore dough while you describe the shapes she makes.

Your child will begin to connect the shapes she feels with her hands with the shape words she hears you say.



Why this is important

Exploring molding dough gives your child the experience of learning how three-dimensional shapes are formed. The experiences children gain directly through using their hands and fingers leave a special and lasting understanding of the physical world. Easy art exploration can give your child confidence for later creative expressions.

What you do

- Give your child opportunities to press and mold soft materials, such as molding dough. Help your child dampen a clay or dirt area outside in order to make mud. Explain in advance that this is a messy activity! Let her explore freely without direction.
- Describe what she is doing as she plays: *You've made something flat and round. What a long coil! You pushed your thumb all the way through the middle.*
- Try making molding dough using the following recipe:

2 cups flour 1 cup water
1 cup salt 2 tablespoons cooking oil
2 tablespoons cream of tartar 1 tablespoon food coloring

Mix all ingredients together in a saucepan. Cook over low–medium heat, stirring constantly until it forms a ball. Put the ball on a board and knead for 2–3 minutes. Store the dough in an airtight container between play sessions.

Another idea

Renew your child's interest in the game and extend your child's creativity by offering tools to press and shape the dough: popsicle sticks, sea shells, rocks, or pipe cleaners. **Make sure that these items do not go into your child's mouth. Put away things small enough to swallow when you cannot supervise their use, especially if you use this game with children under age 3.**

Match and Name Pictures

Game 105

Mix up pairs of identical pictures and ask your child to find matches and name them. Your child will learn to recognize which pictures are the same and may say the name of each one.



Why this is important

Your child will learn to recognize similarities between pictures as he learns the name of each pictured object. Although your child may not clearly name the pictures at first, he will learn to recognize and match them as you say the names. By first hearing and then repeating the name, he may begin to link pictures to various sounds, ideas, and vocabulary.

What you do

- Gather two identical copies of 10 or more pictures. Attach the pictures to cards to make them sturdy.
- Place four cards (two of them identical) face up in front of your child. Invite him to find the two that are the same. He may point to or pick up the cards.
- Respond to his choice by saying, *Yes, these two are alike. These are called tomatoes.* You do not need to label the other pictures.
- Shuffle the cards back into the original stack and play again.
- Encourage your child to name the pictures after becoming familiar with the game: *What are these called?*
- Tell him the word for the picture if he needs help: *You know what it looks like to me? It looks like a bulldozer. Can you say bulldozer?*
- Encourage him to stack each matching pair so that he builds a pile of matching cards.

Another idea

As he gets comfortable with the game, add more pairs to each round. Try three or four pairs of cards, and space them so that he must look thoroughly to find each matching set. Encourage him to name all the pictures as he plays.

Talk with your child about what people around him are feeling.

Naming the emotions your child sees helps him begin to recognize and understand them.



Why this is important

Children notice people around them expressing feelings, but they do not have the experience to fully understand what they see. By pointing out and naming emotions when they occur in peers, you help your child recognize what others are feeling. He will have more success interacting with others when he begins to pay attention to the feelings of the people around him. Recognizing another person's emotion is one step in the difficult task of understanding another person's point of view.

What you do

- Point out the feelings of siblings or other children in the neighborhood.. Draw your child's attention to another child's strong emotional expression: *I think Matt looks very happy now.*
- Talk more about what has made the other child feel that way: *Holding that balloon really put a smile on Matt's face.*
- Move on to a new topic if your child shows no interest. From time to time, continue to point out feelings and to name them.
- Offer encouragement when your child notices someone's feelings on his own. *You're paying attention to other people's feelings. You noticed Sara was sad.*
- Comment on feelings that may frighten your child: *Chris is so angry right now. I'm glad his Nana is there to help him. I think he will feel better soon.*
- Encourage your child to help someone who feels sad: *Harry looks sad—with tears in his eyes. I wonder if it's because he dropped his cupcake? I think I'll see if he needs some help. Would you like to come with me?*

Another idea

Encourage your child to name the emotions he sees, beginning with happy, angry, and sad. The names of other emotions, such as suspicious, frustrated, and excited, may take longer for your child to recognize and say.

Encourage your child to save items that are important to him, and help him put them in a book.

Your child can use the book to share important aspects of his life with family.



Why this is important

Your child knows many different facts about himself. You can help him bring those facts together in a book. Collecting personal items in a book gives your child a reason to feel proud. This book also provides a resource that your child can review again at any time and may be a source of identity and security for your child.

What you do

- Help your child collect items that represent his favorite things. For example, *You like peaches so much. Let's save the label from this basket of peaches.*
- Encourage him to set aside special mementos. For example, these could include a leaf from his favorite climbing tree, one of his drawings, or a postcard he receives.
- Fasten together several sheets of construction paper to make a book.
- Add a title to the cover, such as *A Book About Jon*, or ask your child what he would like to call his book.
- Invite him to decorate the cover of the book. Let your child attach the mementos to each page using glue or tape.
- Talk about each page as he assembles it: *This page reminds me that your Grandma loves you and writes to you. And this shows how much you like to draw with your crayons.*
- Make sure to include empty pages in the book so that he can add more items later.

Another idea

Encourage your child to share his book with family. Write a few simple words next to a picture such as *My pet* or *I found*. He may not use many words to describe each page, but he will enjoy sharing his life with others. Invite family members to ask him questions about his book.

Create a window garden with your child and talk with him about how you worked together to make the window garden grow.

Your child will gain experience in cooperating and taking responsibility.



Why this is important

Completing one part of a group task is an early form of cooperation. By participating in a family project, your child will learn to be a partner in getting the job done. Those roles will carry over into school and, later, into his adult life.

What you do

- Choose a sunny windowsill to grow a family garden together. If possible, you may create your garden outside.
- Make a list of needed items with your child and other members of the family, and together collect a few things such as seeds, potting soil, water, paper or plastic cups, etc.
- Begin by putting potting soil in each cup. Give your child as many opportunities to help as possible.
- Ask him to put the seeds in the cups. Choose seeds that sprout and grow quickly, such as green peas or any kind of bean. Demonstrate how to push the seed down into the soil.
- Explain to your child that the plant needs time to grow. Talk about how each plant needs soil, light, and water.
- Place a watering schedule near the window. Each person can take turns watering. Let your child check off his name on the schedule after his turn: *You watered the plants when it was your turn. When we all remember our turns, the plants get what they need to grow.*
- Let your child watch and imitate your care for the plants.

Another idea

Talk about how each plant is growing taller. Encourage your child to draw pictures of the plants to document the growth. Create more jobs involving the plants such as making stick supports for the plants.

Name or describe a picture you see in a magazine or book and invite your child to point to it on the page.

Your child will have an opportunity to practice hearing and understanding many words.



Why this is important

Naming or describing the pictures you see and then inviting your child to point to them on the page allows him to practice hearing and understanding words. Reading books with him helps him practice using his ability to understand words. This game can help you and your child become aware of the different kinds of things he knows.

What you do

- Invite your child to sit with you and look at a book. Choose a children's book or a family magazine, and pause on pages that interest both of you.
- Ask questions that will let your child demonstrate his knowledge, especially knowledge that goes beyond his spoken vocabulary. A few examples of questions are:

Can you find something that goes fast?

Which plate has two cookies on it?

Can you point to the spaghetti?

Which picture has an open window in it?

- Observe your child thinking about the question and pointing to the answer.
- Follow your child's lead and adjust the difficulty of the game by choosing a book with many pictures on the page, or continue to use a book with only a few pictures.

Another idea

Play the game many times by varying the books or magazines and the questions. When you come to a picture that you know your child is able to say, let him name it and ask you to point. If your child recognizes any letters, invite him to point to and name them as well.

A Shared Family Activity

Game 110

Give your child the opportunity to feel like an important member of the family by involving him in shared activities.

Your child will learn group values and cooperation when participating in a shared activity.



Why this is important

You can help your child feel included in activities or hobbies that have value in your family's culture. He will value activities that make him feel good and that are important to your family. Having a specific job in a shared, family-valued task, such as filling the scoop with birdseed, lets your child feel needed, and he will feel satisfaction when he watches the birds eat the seeds that he helped to prepare. Participating in a shared task builds his understanding of why your family values the activity.

What you do

- Include your child in plans and events that convey your family's values. For example, when you feed birds, let him use his hands to mix the seeds in a large container. (Of course, choose whatever family activity is important to your own family.)
- Invite him to make something that is important to your family. For example, invite him to create a birdfeeder by covering a pinecone with peanut butter and then rolling it in birdseed.
- Talk with him about what he is doing. For example, describe the big and little seeds for big and little birds.
- Take time after he completes his task to sit together and share your thoughts about the event: *I know the birds are going to be happy to get these seeds.*

Another idea

Invite your child to draw a picture about the event. Let him tell you about what happened and what he did. You can record his words on his picture so you can re-read it with him later.