

# **Activities for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers**

## **Activities for Babies**

### **Shaker Bottle**

#### **Materials**

- Clean, empty 16-ounce soda bottle with cap
- Colored rice or pasta
- Glue gun or quick-bonding glue

#### **Directions**

1. Make sure the soda bottle you are using is clean and dry.
2. Place colored rice or pasta into the bottle and glue the cap on.
3. Little ones will love to see what's happening inside as they shake and rattle their bottle.

### **Climb Aboard**

#### **Time**

- 5 to 10 minutes

#### **Materials**

- None

#### **Directions**

1. By positioning yourself on the floor in a playful position, you invite a decision to participate.
2. While lying on the floor, call your crawling baby to come play with you.
3. Let your baby approach and initiate the rest of the game, such as climbing on top of you.

#### **Extensions**

- Cover your face with a small blanket or pillow and play peekaboo, allowing your baby to remove the cover.
- Say, "Want to go up?" and lift your baby into the air.
- Invite your baby to lie down next to you to giggle and play.

# Floating Catch

## Time

- 5 to 10 minutes

## Materials

- Variety of lightweight scarves of different colors and patterns

## Directions

1. As you sit on the floor together, throw a scarf into the air and catch it in your arms as it floats back down.
2. Throw another scarf and tell your baby to hold out her arms so that it falls there.
3. Continue playing with both of you catching scarves.

## Extensions

- Wad the scarves into balls and throw them playfully at your baby.
- Put one scarf over your head and another over your baby's.
- Put one scarf over your head and let your baby pull it off.
- Put on some jazzy music and keep the scarves moving.

# Texture Crawl

## Time

- 5 to 10 minutes

## Materials

- Safe articles with interesting textures, such as a rubber floor mat, carpet samples, silk scarves, chenille rug, bubble wrap, a piece of corduroy, velvet, satin, sticky side of a piece of contact paper, etc.

## Directions

Your crawling baby will love feeling these interesting articles if you scatter them across the floor. Get down on the floor and explore them together, using words like cool, smooth, and bumpy to talk about what you feel.

## Extensions

- Demonstrate how to feel them with the face or feet.
- If your baby can stand against a low table, put some of the objects on top for feeling from a different angle.
- Float a sheer scarf over your baby's face.

- Put some of the objects in a box and help your baby to pull them out.

## Fun with Faces

### Time

- 5 to 10 minutes

### Materials

- None

### Directions

It is always fun for your baby to explore your face. Put your baby's hand on one part of your face or head, such as your nose, mouth, chin, ear, etc. and say what it is.

### Extensions

- Take turns going back and forth between the baby's body parts and yours. Talk about what you are doing.
- Use a stuffed animal or doll to point to body parts.

## Buzzy Bee

### Time

- 5 to 10 minutes

### Materials

- None

### Directions

1. Communications can be fun when they are silly. While holding your baby on your lap, move your fingers around in the air and make a buzzing sound.
2. Make the *buzzy bee* land on your baby's tummy with a tickle.
3. Repeat for as long as your baby is interested.

### Extensions

- Make the bee stop dramatically and then suddenly go again.
- At mealtime, pretend to let the bee eat some of the food.
- Make other sounds with your mouth as you draw the baby toward your face.

## In and Out

### **Time**

- 5 to 10 minutes

### **Materials**

- Medium-sized box or laundry basket
- Familiar objects or toys

### **Directions**

Once your baby can sit up, there is much to be learned from the simple act of filling and emptying just about anything. Place objects into a box or laundry basket and demonstrate how to take them out and put them back in, talking about what you are doing as you work together.

### **Extensions**

- You can make it even more fun by using a silly voice and making the objects run and jump into the laundry basket.
- Name each toy as it goes in and out.
- Hide the toys behind you and take them out one at a time, saying, "Oh, here's the little kitten (ball, book...)." Hand each one to your baby to put into the basket.
- Help your baby gather more objects to put in and take out. Talk about what you are looking for and doing with them.

## **Highchair Fun**

Be sure to use string that is not long enough to pose a choking hazard, and never leave your child unattended in her highchair.

### **Materials**

- Clear contact paper
- Tape

### **Directions**

1. Tie one end of short lengths of string to a few of your child's toys.
2. Tie or tape the other ends to the tray of her highchair.
3. She will enjoy throwing the toys off the highchair tray, then pulling the strings to get them back again.

# **Activities for Toddlers**

# Noise Blower

## Materials

- Empty cardboard tube (toilet paper or paper towel rolls)
- Wax paper
- Elastic band
- Crayons, markers, ribbon, stickers, fabric, construction paper, and other items for decoration

## Directions

1. Cover one end of a cardboard tube with a piece of wax paper, using an elastic band to hold the wax paper in place.
2. Blow and hum into the uncovered end to make a vibrating sound.

Older children can make this for themselves, decorating the tube with crayons, markers, stickers, scraps of ribbon, fabric, or construction paper.

# Music and Movement

## Materials

- Homemade rhythm instruments, real musical instruments, such as piano or guitar, or recorded music

## Directions

1. The goal of this activity is to have your child experience movement as it relates to music or rhythm.
2. Play different types of music and have your child physically express how the music makes him feel: run for fast music, tiptoe for soft music, hop and bounce for happy music, march for a parade tune, and so on.
3. You can also tap out a rhythmic beat and encourage your child to clap or hop in time to the beat.

# Magic Celery

## Time

- 5 to 10 minutes

## Materials

- Celery stalks
- Clean jars
- Food coloring

## Directions

1. Celery stalks take on beautiful flower-like colors when you place them stem down into jars of colored water about an inch deep.
2. Leave several hours or overnight.

### **Extensions**

- For a rainbow effect, add several colors, one at a time, waiting several hours in between.
- For a special treat, buy some white or light-colored carnations and color them with the same process.

## **Foot Tracing**

### **Materials**

- Drawing paper
- Crayons, markers, or paints

### **Directions**

1. Have your child stand on a piece of paper while you trace around her feet with a pen or crayon.
2. Then trace your own feet and compare sizes.
3. Color the feet with crayons, markers, or paints.
4. Older children may want to use crayons, markers, or paint to add nail polish and funny rings to the toes.

## **Toddler Mural**

Toddlers love to color and will usually color on anything and everything if you let them. Try this idea if you have a runaway artist in your home.

### **Materials**

- Large sheet of drawing paper
- Art easel
- Fat crayons
- Yarn
- Scissors

### **Directions**

1. Tape a large sheet of drawing paper to the easel.
2. Cut several pieces of yarn about 2 feet in length.
3. Cut a small notch at one end of each crayon and wrap and tie a length of yarn around it.
4. Tie the other end of the yarn to the top of the easel. (Be sure to cut the yarn long enough to reach the paper, but not so long that it poses a choking hazard.)
5. Now your toddler can scribble any time she wants without waiting for you to set out the crayons and paper.

If you don't have an art easel but do have an empty wall in the basement or playroom, use that instead. Tape a large sheet of paper to the wall. Above the paper, hammer in a few nails and attach the yarn and crayons to the nails.

## Spaghetti Mobiles

If your child is likely to eat the glue-covered noodles, substitute corn syrup thinned with a little water for the glue. Many toddlers will enjoy just playing with warm spaghetti noodles on a highchair tray or tabletop.

### Materials

- White glue (or corn syrup)
- Food coloring in 2-3 different colors
- Containers for glue
- Cooked spaghetti noodles
- Styrofoam meat tray
- Yarn or ribbon

### Directions

1. Decide how many colors of glue you want to make, and pour the glue into that many containers.
2. Add a few drops of food coloring to each glue container, using a different color for each container.
3. Show your child how to dip the spaghetti, one piece at a time, into the colored glue, and lay it on the Styrofoam meat tray.
4. Repeat, using different colors of glue, until your child tires of this activity.
5. Let the noodles dry, then remove from the meat tray, tie on a piece of yarn or ribbon, and hang from the ceiling as a mobile.

## Rock Painting

Golf balls or Ping-Pong balls also work well for this activity.

### Materials

- Shoebox with lid or diaper-wipe container
- Paper
- Scissors
- Tempera paint
- Rock

### Directions

1. Cut a piece of plain paper or construction paper to fit the bottom of the shoebox or diaper-wipe container.
2. Pour a small amount of paint into a dish and dip a rock in the paint.
3. Place the rock into the shoebox or container and shut the lid.
4. Shake the box up and down and from side to side.
5. Open the lid and look at the design the rock has made.
6. Dip the rock in another color of paint and repeat the shaking procedure until your child tires of it.

## Marker Painting

### Materials

- Dried-up markers
- Tempera paint
- Paper

### Directions

1. Let your child use dried-up markers in place of a paintbrush.
2. Dip them in liquid tempera paint and use to write or draw on paper.

## Shadow Tracing

### Materials

- chalk

### Directions

Go outside with your child on a sunny day. If your child will stand still long enough, trace his shadow on the sidewalk or driveway. Have him change positions, then trace his shadow again. Make several tracings, then see if your child can fit his shadow back inside the tracings.

For a fun alternative, trace his shadow on a big sheet of newsprint or other paper. Let him fingerpaint his shadow or color it with crayons or markers.

## Nature Bracelet

### Materials

- Masking tape
- Scissors

### **Directions**

1. Before going outdoors with your child, wrap a piece of masking tape to his wrist, sticky side up.
2. As you explore, help him attach colorful leaves, flowers, and other interesting discoveries to his bracelet.
3. When done, use scissors to snip off the nature bracelet.
4. Display on a bulletin board, shelf, or wall.

## **Activities for Preschoolers**

### **Wooden Spoon People**

Your preschooler can create Spoon People using glue yarn, buttons, and a wooden spoon.

#### **Materials**

- Wooden kitchen spoon
- Glue
- Yarn
- Buttons
- Markers

#### **Directions**

1. Use a wooden kitchen spoon to make a spoon person.
2. Have your child glue yarn onto the top of the spoon to make hair and buttons to make eyes.
3. Draw a mouth and nose with markers.
4. Make several of these for a spoon family, and encourage your child to tell a story with these little people.

### **Stained Glass Crayons**

Warning: These come out looking a little like peanut butter cups. Your child just may decide to take a bite!

#### **Materials**

- Broken crayon pieces

- Muffin tin, greased
- Aluminum foil (optional)

### **Directions**

1. This is a good project to use up all those broken crayon pieces.
2. Remove any paper from the crayons and place the pieces in a well-greased muffin tin (or line the tin with aluminum foil).
3. Place the tin in a 400-degree oven for a few minutes, until the crayons melt.
4. Remove from the oven and cool completely before removing from the tin.
5. If you mixed crayon colors in the tins, the circles will have a stained glass effect and are great for coloring.

## **Paint Blot Art**

### **Materials**

- Construction paper
- Tempera paint, liquid
- Spoon
- Rolling pin

### **Directions**

1. Fold a piece of construction paper in half like a greeting card, then open it up.
2. Using liquid tempera paints and a spoon, have your child drop different colors onto one of the inside halves of the paper.
3. Fold the paper again with the paint on the inside, and have your child roll a rolling pin over the paper to spread the paint.
4. Open the paper and have your child use her imagination to decide what the blot looks like.
5. When the paint is dry, fold the paper so the paint is on the outside.
6. Use as a unique greeting card.

## **Egg Carton Flowers**

### **Materials**

- Empty egg cartons
- Scissors
- Paint, markers, or crayons
- Paintbrush
- Pipe cleaner
- Green construction paper
- Glue

### **Directions**

1. Cut apart an egg carton into individual sections and have your child paint the sections with a variety of colors. (Markers or crayons can also be used.)
2. Poke a pipe cleaner through the bottom of each section to make a stem.
3. Cut leaf shapes out of green construction paper and glue them onto the pipe cleaners.
4. Several colorful flowers in a bud vase make a great gift or a decorative table centerpiece.

## Bird Feeder



### Materials

- Pine cone
- String
- Peanut butter
- Knife for spreading
- Bird seed

### Directions

1. Make your own bird feeder with peanut butter, a pine cone, and bird seed.
2. Tie a string around the top of the pine cone under the ridges, so the string stays in place, and knot it, leaving enough string for hanging.
3. Thoroughly cover the pine cone with peanut butter, then roll it in bird seed.
4. Hang the feeder outside near a window and your child can watch the birds eat.

## Making Binoculars

This idea may sound a bit ridiculous, but you will be amazed at how much fun a child will have with these!

### Materials

- Two toilet paper rolls, or a paper towel roll cut in half
- Tape
- Markers, crayons, stickers, and so on

### **Directions**

1. Tape two toilet paper rolls together to make a pair of binoculars for your child.
2. She can decorate them with markers, stickers, and so on, and use them to spot interesting things as you go for a walk or ride in the car.

## **Fruit and Vegetable Printing**

### **Materials**

- Various fruit and vegetables
- Paring knife
- Print pad or stamp pad
- Paper

### **Directions**

1. Cut fruits and vegetables into halves, quarters, circles, or any other shapes, dip into tempera paints or on a print or stamp pad, and then press onto plain or colored paper.
2. Apples cut in half will have a star design in the middle (where the seeds are), while green peppers make a great shamrock design.
3. Cut a potato in half and use a small paring knife to create a relief design: circles, squares, hearts, and so on.
4. If you make letters, don't forget to carve them backwards so they will print correctly.

## **Paper Bag Vest**

### **Materials**

- Large brown paper bag
- Scissors
- Paint

### **Directions**

1. Make a vest from a brown paper bag by cutting a head hole, arm holes, and a fringe along the bottom.
2. Your child can paint and decorate the vest.
3. When the vest is dry, your child can wear it.

# I Spy Word Recognition

## Directions

1. This word game can help develop your child's shape and color recognition skills.
2. As you drive or walk along, say "I spy with my little eye something that is orange," or "... something that is square."
3. Your child will have fun guessing what it is you see.
4. Take turns guessing what the other sees.