

BARNARDO'S - NATIONAL CHILDREN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
& FINGAL COUNTY LIBRARIES

Time Together

A Parent's Guide To
Games & Activities
For Young Children

A black and white illustration of a young child riding a tricycle. The child is wearing a hat and a jacket. The tricycle has large wheels and a small basket on the back. In the background, there is a wooden chair and a table. The scene is decorated with several circular patterns of varying sizes, some containing smaller patterns or textures.

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Edited by Norah Gibbons and Angela Canavan

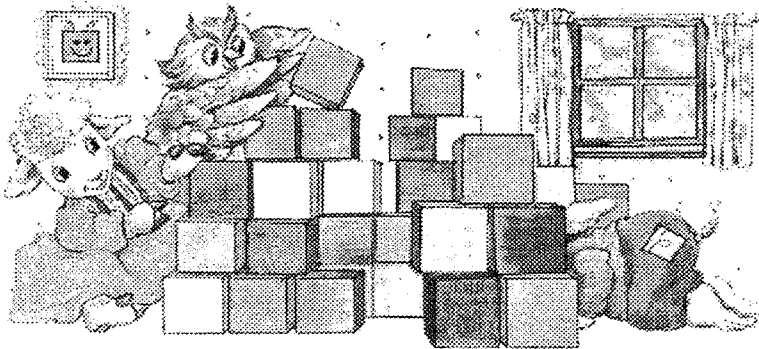
GAMES & ACTIVITIES

Introduction

Fingal County Libraries and the National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardo's have compiled a series of four activity booklets for parents of children under five years. This is the *Time Together* series which is designed to introduce parents to the various activities. Each booklet lists a selection of fun, creative activities to enjoy with your infant, toddler or pre-school child. The activities encourage interaction and communication. They help the child's emotional, social, physical, intellectual and cultural development. A comprehensive book list is included in each booklet which will guide you to further information on each topic.

Why introduce games and activities to children?

- ▶ Play has been described as *the work of the child*. Games and activities are a crucial part of children's play and are the tools through which children learn.
- ▶ There are many ways to play. Play can be active, exploratory, imaginative, messy, solitary or enjoyed in a group.
- ▶ Games and activities help develop independence, social and communication skills and they encourage sharing.
- ▶ Intellectual development is fostered through games and activities. A sense of achievement and confidence in one's abilities are important building blocks in developing a child's self esteem.
- ▶ With imagination and the creative use of local facilities and materials, games and activities can be inexpensive and accessible to all.



BABIES

Games and activities should be chosen with a view to the baby seeing, hearing, touching, mouthing, stretching, reaching, grasping and manipulating. Everyday activities such as feeding, dressing and bathing can be easily converted into fun games.

Tips for parents

- ▶ Provide a supply of colourful, safe objects that your baby can explore, handle and enjoy.
- ▶ Allow time to turn the everyday parenting tasks into a game, for example, create a positive activity around spoon feeding or dressing your child.
- ▶ Choose toys with different textures and sounds that can be used in interactive play, for example, rattles and soft toys that make sounds when pressed.
- ▶ Develop your babies reactive abilities using games like hiding and peek-a-boo.
- ▶ Bathtime can be a particularly enjoyable time for both parent and child. Adequate time should be provided to develop play and games in the bath.

EXAMPLES: GAMES AND ACTIVITIES BABIES

Exploring

Carry your baby around a room. Follow the baby's gaze and move towards the objects selected. Talk to the baby and describe the objects. Repeat often.

Peek-a-Boo

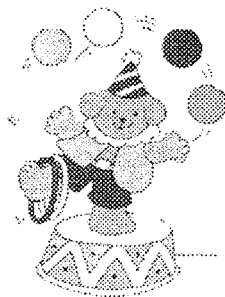
This game helps your baby anticipate actions as you pop your head / finger / hand in and out of a chosen location.

Dumping Objects

Dump a selection of objects or toys in and out of a box. Name the objects and let baby touch and explore them.

Feeding Games

Create a story using the child's food. A common example is the chu-chu train bringing the food down the tunnel.



Dressing Games

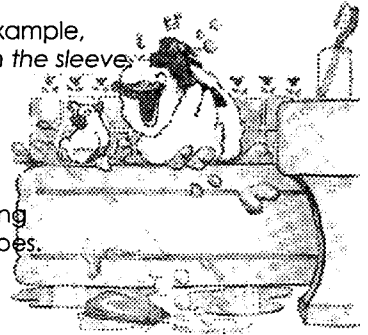
As you dress your child, talk through the actions, for example, Jane's hand goes up over her head and down, down the sleeve.

Bath Games

These include:

Ducking objects under the water.

Filling and pouring water in and out of containers. Using bath books to talk about washing hair and cleaning toes.



TODDLERS

Games that promote bouncing, jumping, stamping, balancing and clapping are crucial for developing skills for this age group. It is important that parents encourage language development, cognitive development, co-ordination and socialisation through games and activities.

Tips for Parents

- ▶ Provide some safe space for your growing child to move and explore.
- ▶ Everyday objects can be a great source of amusement for the toddler, for example, large cardboard boxes to crawl through, pots and pans to bang and a toy or old telephone for pretend conversations.
- ▶ Time spent with your toddler talking and creating games is invaluable in building language and parent child interaction.
- ▶ Introduce large-piece jigsaws or inset board jigsaws to your toddler and simple lotto games to encourage their memory development and recognition skills.
- ▶ Attending group activities, for example, parent and toddler groups help to ease your child into social settings and develops their ability to interact and to start the sharing process.

EXAMPLES: GAMES AND ACTIVITIES TODDLERS

Ball Games

Foam balls are ideal for this age group. Use large ones to catch and kick and small ones to throw and roll. Strong primary colours will attract your toddler. Be careful that your toddler does not bite the foam.

Hiding and Finding

Take turns with your toddler to hide and be found. Behind the curtains or the sofa, under the table or in a big cardboard box are all good places to enjoy this game. Let your toddler find you quickly so that frustration does not build up.

Sorting Shapes

You can make your own shape sorter using a shoe box and cutting out a variety of shapes (2/3 shapes of different colours are sufficient for this age group). Encourage the child to fit the shapes into their correct space. This introduces shapes, colours and counting skills.

Stacking Beakers/Blocks

Provide a set of stacking beakers or blocks for the child to build up and knock down. These can also be used to put one into the other. This helps counting and sorting and develops balance and anticipation skills.

Puppets

Use simple sock or paper finger puppets to open up conversation with your toddler or to tell simple stories. Remember, you do it, then allow your child to copy and imitate.

Copying

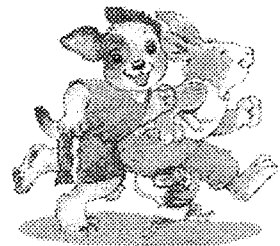
Sit in front of a big mirror with your toddler. Point out the different parts of your body and encourage your toddler to copy you as you name the body parts. Mouth words and expressions, for example, Oh!, Ah!, Ee!, to encourage imitation and language development.

PRE-SCHOOL

Children at this stage are building on the skills already developed and learning new ones. These new skills, such as vocabulary development, running and skipping can lay solid foundations for their progression to the next stage - school.

Tips for Parents

- ▶ If possible introduce your child to nature activities. These build an awareness in children of the world around them.
- ▶ Introduce games where rules, taking turns and sharing are part of the fun.





Activities that help children master the ability to group and match items are essential at this stage. Use everyday items such as plastic cutlery, vegetables or fruit, big buttons and shells to facilitate this.



Activities that aid climbing and co-ordination skills open up the pleasures of outdoor fun activities for children and help your growing child to safely expend their energies.



Provide opportunities for your child to develop through *pretend play* their imaginative and creative abilities. Again the best props are those to be found around you.

EXAMPLES: GAMES AND ACTIVITIES PRESCHOOL

Creative Cress

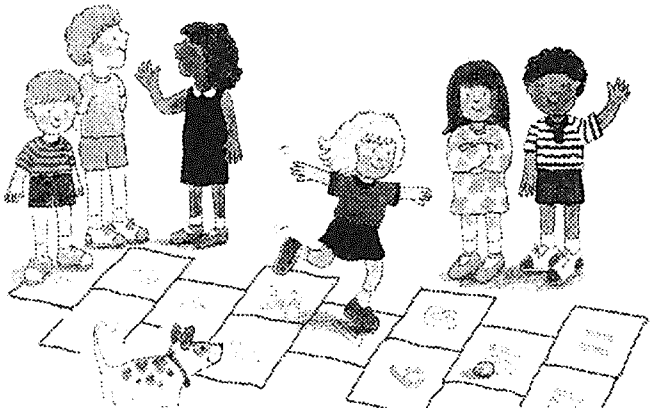
Cress is one of the easiest seeds to grow as it sprouts quickly on any damp surface.



Put cotton wool in a small container. Dampen with water. Sprinkle the seeds thinly on the surface. Keep in a warm place and water regularly. The cress will begin to sprout in 2-3 days.

Hopscotch

Mark out squares like the ones below with chalk, on the path or paving stones. Throw a small stone onto number 1, pick up the stone, then hop all the way to number 12 and back again. After everyone had had a turn, throw the stone to number 2 and so on. If you land on a line, or the stone misses a square, you must miss a go.



Shop

Select empty packaging from your weekly shop, for example, cornflakes box. Involve the child in the collection. Set up shop in a corner of the room or weather permitting, outside. Make *pretend* cash register and money. Use shoe boxes or toy crates as shopping baskets. Hours of fun can be had buying, selling and counting. This game can be as simple or elaborate as you like.

Threading Buttons or Beads

A long shoe lace, preferably a coloured one, is the basis for this activity. Buttons with large holes, cotton reels, pasta with holes can be threaded counted, matched and graded.

This activity needs adult supervision.

GAMES & ACTIVITIES BOOKLIST

Baker, Carol **Reading through Play** **MacDonald Educ.** **1986**
Simple games, new and old, which can be made at home, aimed at stimulating reading skills.

Baldwin, Dorothy **All about children:
an introduction to child
development** **O.U.P.** **1983**
Special section on importance of play, suggestion for toys, books and milestones of mental development.

Barden, Helen **Busy little Gardener** **Conran Octopus** **1993**
Lively and colourful book aimed at introducing very young children to their first taste of gardening. Instructions are simple and included are some garden games and fun activities suitable for 3 yrs upwards.

**Beckett, Geoffrey &
Elizabeth MacGregor** **Amusing the children:
a parents guide to keeping youngsters occupied**
Involves both parents and children in a wide variety of activities such as nature walks, gardening, cookery, finding out plus much more.

Burgess, Lynne **Maths Games** **Scholastic** **1992**
For the 3-6 year olds. Games and activities aimed at developing all areas of learning e.g. What's the Time Mr Wolf? Wheels on the bus.

Corbett, Pie **Kingfisher Playtime
Treasury** **Kingfisher** **1989**
A collection of playground rhymes, games and action songs. Tickle rhymes and rough and tumble games. Nicely presented and illustrated.
Contents include: Dancing, skipping and ball bouncing, dipping and counting out games.

Crowe, Brenda **Play is a feeling** **Allen & Unwin** **1983**
Explores the world of the child including the discovery and development of sensation, movement, language and surrounding.

**Figg, N. &
Ian McNee** **Science Activities** **Usborne** **1992**
Safe and easy to do activities that help children explore the world around us.

- Gibson, Ray** **Usborne Learning Games** **Usborne** **1993**
 Reading and counting activities for young children. A bright lively book offering a multitude of games for parents to play with their children whilst developing their reading, comprehension and listening skills. Games include: Alphabet fishing game, count the spots.
- Gee, Robyn** **Holiday Activities for your children** **Usborne** **1989**
 Variety of games and activities for 4 years upwards. Book mostly addresses parents but a few sections directly addresses children themselves. Ideas include 'growing things', picnics, treasure hunts, chasing and catching games, beach games etc.
- Gilgallon, Barbara** **Travel Games** **Ward Lock** **1988**
 Covers over 200 activities, such as looking games, guessing/memory games to keep children occupied whilst travelling.
- Griffiths, Rose** **Maths through Play easy paths to early learning with your child** **MacDonald** **1988**
 Lots of detailed games and activities which bring Maths to life in an exciting and fun way. Covers 'whole body activities' such as musical statues, dancing, hide & seek, football, fantasy play. Sand games and water play are introduced to help with the concept of measurement. Brick building and construction toys and loads of number games are also covered in detail.
- Guinness encyclopaedia of Games, Puzzles and Pastimes.** **Guinness** **1988**
 Absolutely Everything!!!!
- Hornsby, Beve** **Before Alpha** **Souvenir Press** **1989**
 A structured programme of learning games for the under five's aimed at giving children a head start.
- Hilton, Tessa** **Great Ormond Street Book of Baby and Child Care** **Bodley Head** **1991**
 Cover topics such as play and education outlining the different play stages from 0-5 yrs with suggestions on what to use and do. Includes special section on the importance of messy play
- Jessel, Camilla** **Birth to Three: a parents guide to child development** **Bloomsbury** **1990**
 A photographic account of a child 0-3 yrs old. This book contains a very good chapter on the importance of play, exploration and discovery.
- Jones, Maggie** **Play and Learn:** **Conran Octopus** **1989**
 A bright, colourful book divided into five different age groups with suggestions on active play to stretch your child at the various stages of development.

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|---|--|---------------------|-------------|
| McNiven, Helen & Peter | Toys and Games | Wayland | 1994 |
| Simple ideas for the 4 - 5 year old on how to make their very own toys and games, Activities in this book have been carefully chosen to develop small children's memory and motor skills. Colourful diagrams and photographs throughout and some very useful notes for parents. | | | |
| Matterson, Elizabeth | Play with a purpose for the under sevens (3rd Edition) | Penguin | 1989 |
| Part 1 of this book looks at the importance of play at the various stages of development. Part 2 looks at providing for play i.e. play activities and materials. Includes a good section on physical play, bouncing, running etc. | | | |
| Morrow, Jan | Learning is child's play | Longman | 1987 |
| Covers a wide range of activities such as cooking, growing things and inspiration for a wet day. | | | |
| Rice, Melanie | Growing Things Stoughton | Hodder & | 1991 |
| With a parents help children will get loads of ideas from this book on simple fun activities with seeds and cuttings. | | | |
| Robson, Denny | Having a Party a rainy days activity book | F. Watts | 1992 |
| Lots of ideas on how to prepare for your child' s party, fancy dress and games including "The Feely Box" | | | |
| Staines, J.W. & Mitchell, Margery J. | You and your toddler. the second year: a step by step guide to good parenting | O.U.P. | 1982 |
| Games and activities to encourage your toddler to develop and allow yourself to enjoy sharing his learning. Excellent step by step guide covering a wide range of topics from sand and water play to whistle blowing! | | | |
| | Usborne Book of Dressing Up: costumes, masks and face painting | Usborne | |
| Step by step guide to fancy dress and disguise. | | | |

We gratefully acknowledge the support and enthusiasm of the following people during the production of these booklets.

Madeleine Clarke - Child Care Manager

Paul Harris - Fingal County Librarian

Marjory Sliney - Fingal County Libraries

Eve Marie Kimmerling - Child Care Trainer

Sheila Alwell with the FÁS Community Employment Project



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