

Getting Children Off To a Strong Start



Easy tips and activities for
you to do with your
Pre-schooler


BROOMFIELD
Early Childhood Council
In partnership with Bal Swan Children's Center

Colorado Early Learning
Development Guidelines 

www.earlylearningco.org

The Broomfield Early Childhood Council was founded in 2007 as a partnership based community organization. We focus on building awareness of the whole child and supporting best practices in health and well-being through health, mental health, family support and engagement, and early learning and care. Creating a Broomfield community where all children are valued, healthy, and thriving happens best when people and agencies serving children and families work together in partnership to create lasting solutions that will meet the needs of children, families and their providers.

Learn more at www.broomfieldecc.org or contact us at info@broomfieldecc.org



Why Activity Cards?

Learning begins long before children start school and teaching isn't just for teachers.

No matter how we interact with young children – whether we're first-time parents, grandparents or involved friends and neighbors – we all play an important role in giving them a great start.

These cards have been created by the Broomfield Early Childhood Council quick reference for anyone working with or caring for young children to help create activities that will foster strong development. They are taken directly from the Colorado's Early Learning & Development Guidelines, www.earlylearningco.org

The research-based Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines provide descriptions for what children can know and be able to do so that everyone who interacts with young children can prepare them for a lifetime of success. Encourage children to show independence in self-care tasks, helping when necessary (e.g. brushing teeth, wiping nose, toileting, washing hands, feeding oneself)

Active & Healthy



Why it's important:

A nutritious diet, safety and health practices and physical activity will help your child's healthy development and prevent accidents and illness.

Some activities to do with your child:

- **Plant a garden**
- **Practice fire drills**
- **Cook a healthy meal together**
- **Establish a regular routine for bedtime**
- **Introduce your child to a variety of healthy foods**
- **Provide time for exercise and physical activity**
- **Encourage children to show independence in self-care tasks, helping when necessary (e.g. brushing teeth, wiping nose, toileting, washing hands, feeding oneself)**

Build Skills

Why it's important:

The development of gross and fine motor skills allows children to explore and learn about their world and develop healthy bodies.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Play “Red Light, Green Light,” or “Mother May I”**
- **Walk or ride to your neighborhood playground**
- **Set up an obstacle course**
- **Pretend to be crawling or jumping animals**
- **Use finger puppets to create a puppet show**
- **String beads or cereal on pipe cleaners, yarn or ribbon**
- **Build with blocks and then knock them down**

Make Friends & Express Feelings

Why it's important:

Children's ability to develop positive relationships and ideas about themselves, regulate their emotions and behavior, and express emotions allows them to feel confident in their abilities to interact with others, approach new situations, and express their individuality.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Act out social situations such as resolving a conflict or asking a friend to play**
- **Talk about the emotions of the characters when reading a book**
- **Find books that specifically talk about feelings**
- **Encourage and model using words to express strong emotions**
- **Learn a new game or skill together and talk about how it felt to try something new**
- **Make a collage of favorite things**

Talk!

Why it's important:

Children's ability to effectively communicate and oral language in different environments and for a variety of purposes is key to children's learning and social competence and is a stepping stone for learning to read and write.

These skills do not usually come naturally to children and often need to be taught. Some ways to teach these skills include reading books about social skills, modeling behaviors for your child, helping them practice with siblings, you, a puppet or doll etc.



Some activities to do with your child:

- Act out a favorite book or story
- Ask open ended questions about the child's day or interests
- Ask the child to tell a story and record or video tape it
- Play charades
- Practice following two-step directions
- Use dolls, stuffed animals or action figures to practice directional and spatial words such as "on," "in," "between," "under," "over," etc.

Read!



Why it's important:

Developing an interest in books and their characteristics and the ability to understand and get meaning from stories and information provides a positive foundation for reading that will affect the child's future approach to learning.

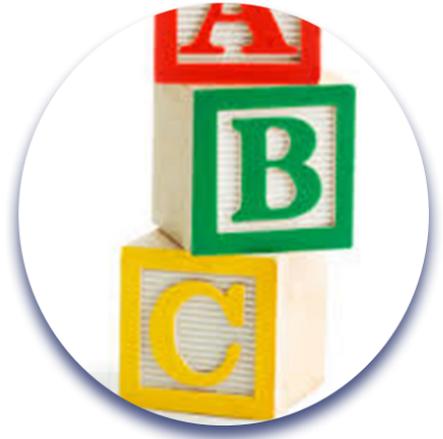
Some activities to do with your child:

- **Read different kinds of literature such as fiction, non-fiction and poetry on a range of topics**
- **Make predictions based on illustrations or portions of story or text**
- **Compare events in books to the child's own experiences.**
- **Handle books respectfully and appropriately and model how books are read (such as front-to back, one page at a time, and with words from left to right)**
- **Visit the library**
- **Provide materials such as flannel board sets, puppets, and other props to act out and retell stories**

ABC's

Why it's important:

Phonological awareness (awareness that language can be broken into words, syllables, and smaller pieces of sound) and alphabet knowledge (names and sounds associated with letters) are crucial building blocks for emerging readers.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Find the letters in the child's name in signs, books, or magazines**
- **Learn rhyme poems or finger plays (find a few popular ones)**
- **Repeat rhythmic patterns in poems and songs through clapping, marching, or using instruments to beat syllables**
- **Make a collage of pictures with the same beginning sound**
- **Match upper case and lower case letters**
- **Play with magnetic letters, alphabet blocks, or stamps**
- **Trace letters made of sandpaper or rice, use alphabet cookie cutters or pasta alphabets**

Write!

Why it's important:

Although children's ability to physically write is closely tied to their development of fine motor skills at this age, which often varies significantly, identifying letter-sound relationships and a desire to communicating their ideas on paper in whatever way they can, is a critical first step.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Have your child tell you a story that you write down and then have them illustrate it**
- **Display writing and drawings**
- **Make a grocery list together**
- **Model use of printed material for various purposes such as for pleasure or to find information**
- **Make a schedule or to do list with pictures and words**
- **Experiment writing or tracing letters or the child's name using different materials such as paints, pencils, markers or crayons**
- **Make a card for a friend or relative**

**** Remember that you are trying to build your child's confidence by encouraging effort rather than being concerned about how well they write or draw at this age.**

Think!



Why it's important:

Critical thinking skills (such as the ability to think through problems and apply strategies for solving them, make connections among events or ideas, and think abstractly or symbolically) allows children to better understand the world around them and adapt to a wide range of situations at home and in the community.

Some activities to do with your child:

- **Talk about activities for yesterday, today, and tomorrow**
- **Plan an activity or project together**
- **Sort the same group of objects in multiple ways**
- **Provide a variety of items for pretend/dramatic play**
- **Encourage the use of household items in more than one way such as using cushions for a fort and a cave or a paper towel roll for a tunnel and a telescope**
- **Value children's thinking and hard work regardless of accuracy**

Count!

Why it's important:

Children's abilities to understand numbers, quantity, and the relationships between them as well as having a basic understanding of shapes, the position of shapes in space, patterns, and measurement help children to make generalizations and think abstractly.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Sing counting songs or finger plays such as “5 Little Ducks” or “5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed”**
- **Recognize numbers and quantities in everyday things, like the number of apples to buy, the number of cars that pass, etc.**
- **Have children group and order materials when cleaning up**

Measure



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Predict how many scoops or cups of water will be needed to fill a container and test the prediction**
 - **Provide everyday opportunities to explore numbers and patterns such as helping set the table**
 - **Track children's height or compare heights/weights of multiple family members**
 - **Make a snack or meal together and let children measure or count the needed ingredients**
- **Order objects by size or length**
 - **Measure objects using non-standard units such as blocks or the child's foot for length, or using marbles or beans to measure weight**

Shapes

Some activities to do with your child:

- Use clean up time to practice concepts such as “in,” “on,” “under,” and “beside”
- Point out shapes in nature and around the house or play “I spy” using shapes
- Order/group toys or other objects by size or shape
- Use mealtimes to show how shapes combine and separate to make other shapes, such as cutting a square sandwich into 2 triangles or cutting a pizza into slices



Patterns

Some activities to do with your child:

- Use art materials and other objects to create patterns (e.g., weaving, painting, stringing beads, stacking blocks)
- Sing songs that repeat words or have patterns such as “She’ll Be Coming Around the Mountain” or “Bingo”
- Sort, classify, and serialize (put in a pattern) objects using attributes, such as color, shape, or size
- Search for patterns in nature such as the petals of a flower, geese flying, leaves on a stalk, etc.

Experiment!

Why it's important:

Children learn about living things and natural processes and are increasingly able to by make connections, predictions, and generalizations based on their observations by using their natural curiosity to explore and ask questions about their environment.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Encourage children in exploring natural objects such as collecting small rocks, feathers, leaves, and other objects**
- **Make a collage out of natural objects**
- **Make a “Weather Wheel” and predict what the weather will be tomorrow**
- **Observe and describe patterns observed over the course of a number of days and nights, such as the phases of the moon or the change in plants or animals during different seasons**
- **Plant a seed and make drawings to record changes over time**
- **Encourage children to experiment and discuss what they discover**
- **Involve children in taking care of a plant, garden, or pet and identify common needs**

Community

Why it's important:

By learning about themselves, their family, and their community, children develop self-identity and expand their understanding of places and people outside their direct experience.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Through books, class visitors, and field trips, extend children's knowledge of what people do in the community**
- **Talk about the differences among people (e.g. language, ability, race)**
- **Create and interpret simple maps of the classroom, playground, and neighborhood**
- **Use imaginative play (such as playing restaurant or grocery store) to create situations in which children exchange money in a play situation**
- **Build with blocks or draw various environments, such as towns, farms, and oceans**
- **Clean up trash in a nearby park or open space area**
- **Visit historical places**
- **Tell stories about past events**

Create!

Why it's important:

Various activities in music, dance, visual art, and drama allow children to use their imaginations and creativity to display their understanding of a wide variety of knowledge and ideas.

Some activities to do with your child:

- Provide age-appropriate art materials (e.g. non-hazardous paints, modeling materials, a wide variety of paper types, writing and drawing utensils of various sizes and types, collage materials)
- Visit an art museum or gallery and use an artist or medium as an inspiration for an art project
- Act out a favorite story or a past experience
- Use different voices and/or facial expressions when reading or telling stories

Dance & Play

Some activities to do with your child:

- Provide appropriate instruments (e.g., maracas, rhythm sticks, bells, tambourines, drums, sand blocks, shakers) for musical experimentation
- Play different types of music and ask children to label how the music makes them feel or draw a picture of what they think of when they hear the music
- Go to a child-appropriate musical or dramatic performance
- Encourage children to move and use their bodies in space (e.g., pretending to be a cat, a volcano, or a butterfly)
- In reading stories to children, look for words and images that suggest movement (e.g., “Can you move as softly as the wind blew?”)
- Play “Musical Chairs” or “Stop and Go Dancing”



Learn

Why it's important:

When children develop positive approaches to learning (including initiative, curiosity, persistence, attentiveness, and cooperation) they are more likely to have success in school.



Some activities to do with your child:

- **Take a “5 senses scavenger hunt” in the backyard**
- **Share children’s excitement in discoveries, exploration, and manipulation of items in the environment**
- **Allow children to keep their work, such as block structures or art projects, in place from one day to the next so they can continue to work on it**
- **Offer tasks that are just challenging enough but not overwhelming so children learn the satisfaction of rising to the challenge**
- **Model self-talk such as repeating directions to keep one’s attention focused**
- **Show children how to break tasks down into manageable steps**
- **Provide opportunities for children to practice listening and talking with others**

Health

Teach and model basic health and safety rules:

- **Post a sign about proper hand washing procedures in your bathroom**
- **Show children how to cough into their arm and gently remind them each time they forget**
- **Store sharp objects out of your child's reach. Show them how to properly hold and store scissors and other sharp objects**
- **Teach children how to stop before crossing a street and to look both ways**
- **Talk about the importance of wearing a helmet and model that behavior for your child**

Some helpful websites for healthy recipes and snack ideas:

cookingmatters.org/recipes

www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09351.html

www.healthiergeneration.org/live healthier/eat healthier/

www.nutrition.gov/shopping-cooking-meal-planning

Simon Says

Purpose/Skills

- **To listen to and follow verbal directions**
- **To demonstrate understanding through actions**
- **To build vocabulary- body parts, movement words such as up down, jump, clap**

Procedure

- **Explain how to play “Simon Says.” (Tell children that you will give directions for them to follow. If you say “Simon says” first, they should do it. If you do not say “Simon says” first, they should not do it.) Tell children to listen carefully and follow directions.**

continued on reverse

- **Start the game with “Simon says, put your finger on your chin.” Help any children who are having difficulty by pointing to your chin and putting your finger on it. Continue with commands that include up, down, and out.**
- **Once children are comfortable following one-step directions, give them two-step directions to follow. For example, ask them to stand on their right foot and hop in place.**
- **Parent/Teacher Tip: Experienced players of “Simon Says” are often “out,” or excluded from the game, when they make a mistake. Young children and English Language Learners should keep playing even when they make mistakes, so that they can improve through play.**

Enrichment

Invite children to take turns giving the directions.

Source: school.familyeducation.com/preschool/activity/30334.html

Create an Art Space

- **Using what you have at home (shoe boxes, Tupperware containers etc.) organize art materials by type**
- **Gluing a photo of the items on the front of the container will help your child put things back where they belong**
- **Some good supplies to have include: crayons, markers, paper, safety scissors, glue, paints, chalk, clay, popsicle sticks, pipe-cleaners**
- **Scraps of paper, photos from magazines, fabric scraps etc. are great for making collages. Sponges, blocks, toy car wheels etc. can be painted on and used as stamps**

Tips for a successful art time:

- **Allow time for setting up, letting your child explore and create and cleaning up**
- **Bring out only 1 or 2 types of art materials at a time**
- **Praise your child's efforts, e.g. "I like how you used so many colors!"**
- **Try to resist the idea that there is a "right way" or taking over for your child. Remember it is about your child exploring, gaining new skills like learning how to cut with scissors and having fun**
- **Display art somewhere visible, store in a binder or large folder, or take a photo**
- **Jump in and make your own art too!**

Puppets

Benefits of Puppets

- **Puppets help children express their feelings, through what they make a puppet say or do**
- **It can be easier for children to talk about how a puppet feels than how a person might**
- **Shy children often feel more confident when talking to or acting as a puppet's character**

Simple Puppets to Make at Home

- **Small paper bags or square tissue boxes can be decorated with drawings or cut outs to make faces or animals**
- **A popsicle stick with a cut out person or animal becomes a puppet. Photos of your child make especially fun stick puppets. You can cover with packing tape before cutting out to make it last longer.**
- **An old sock with a face makes a great puppet**

Fun Ways to Use Puppets

- **Read a book and make puppet characters from the story. Your children can act out the story with their puppets from behind your couch**
- **Shadow puppets can be made by cutting out a shape (ghosts, dinosaurs, birds etc.) and then shining a light behind them in a dark**

Source: Ideas & tips from Usborne's Entertaining and Educating Young Children guide.

Create a Cozy Corner

A cozy corner is a designated area where children can go to take space and calm down when they are feeling emotional. This space can be the corner of a closet or room or a large cardboard box. You can create a cozy corner with soft blankets, stuffed animals, pillows etc. Select books and other activities that your children can engage with quietly.

Create a Cozy Corner