Family Activities and Children's School Work

The home and the community are exciting places for children to practice the reading, math, and problem-solving skills that they learn at school, as well as to learn new skills and information. Here are some suggestions of everyday activities that can be wonderful learning and practice opportunities.

Remember that in addition to helping your child learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, it's important to help him or her learn to think and solve problems in new situations or with new material.

These activities do not take up much of your time, and they involve children in daily living and household tasks. Children will also begin to see that what they learn in school can be used outside the classroom. Maybe you can think of some other ways children can join in family tasks and learn something at the same time.

These ideas and many others can be found in *The Parent and Child Activity Book* by Lorraine E. Maxwell and *Simple Fun* by Gary Krane.

This publication was supported in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation, #3278344.

I wish to acknowledge Allison Miller, a graduate student in the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis, for her work on earlier drafts of this project.

Lorraine E. Maxwell
Department of Design and Environmental Analysis
New York State college of Human Ecology

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY

Produced by Media and Technology Services
www.mediasrv.edu
printed on recycled paper
327CE2 392/500 12/00 5C ICS MTS00095a

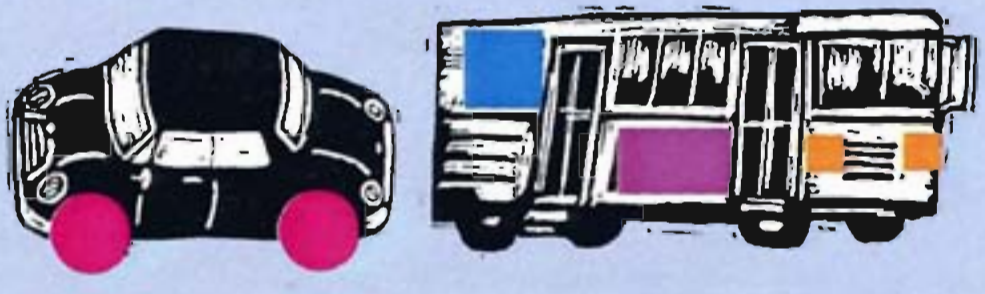
Activities to Do When Traveling

Activities to Do When Traveling

When you are going on a long-distance trip or even on a neighborhood errand, you can turn these trips into educational activities whether you walk, ride in a car or bus, or take a subway.

Traveling 1

- ✓ Ask children to find everything that is red, blue, or yellow, etc.
- ✓ Ask children to find certain shapes such as triangles, circles, and squares.



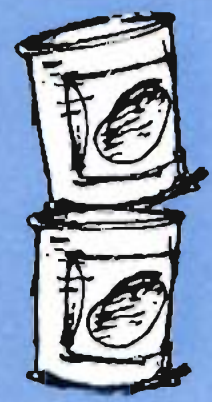
Activities to Do at the Grocery Store

Activities to Do at the Grocery Store

A trip to the store is another great chance to practice math and reading skills. There are many fun and easy activities that you can do with your child while you are searching for items or waiting in line.

Grocery Math 1

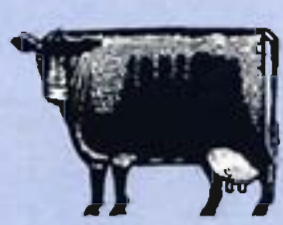
✓ You can give your child a few items that you are buying and have him or her add up the cost. Younger children can add up two, three, or four items. Older children can add up more items.



Activities to Do When Traveling

Traveling 2

- ✓ When traveling in the city, have children count things such as traffic lights and taxis.
- ✓ When traveling in rural areas, ask children to count cows, horses, etc.



- ✓ If children know the alphabet, ask them to find everything that starts with a particular letter.

Bus

How does this help your child?

Not only will children practice counting skills and recognition of shapes and colors, but they will learn to be observant. This is an important skill in school as well as in daily life.

Activities to Do at the Grocery Store

Grocery Math 2

✓ You might ask children who can recognize numbers to help pick out items by size. For example, ask your child to pick out the 20-ounce can of tomatoes or the 40-ounce jar of juice. Ask older children to help you determine which size is a better value by comparing size to cost.

Activities to Do at the Grocery Store

Grocery Math 3

✓ Younger children may not know how to add, so instead you can ask them to count the number of things you are buying. If you are buying a lot of items, have them add only some of them (for example, all the cans).

How does this help your child?

This gives children practice with counting and adding. These are math skills that they need to have to do well in school. These activities also help to teach children about money.

Activities to Do at the Grocery Store

Alphabet Shopping 1

- ✓ Try this simple game called Alphabet Shopping. As you're going down the aisles with your children, see who can get to the end of the alphabet first by finding an item whose brand or generic name starts with the next letter of the alphabet.
- ✓ Younger children who do not know how to read or who are just learning how to read can help you pick out items. They can recognize colors of boxes or cans, brand logos, or read simple product labels (with a little help from you).

ABCDEF

Activities to Do at the Grocery Store

Alphabet Shopping 2

✓ Tape coupons of items you intend to purchase on 3x5 file cards and have your child look for those items in the store.

How does this help your child?

These activities help younger children to practice recognizing how letters look and sound. They help older children to practice their reading skills. They also help children recognize numbers and relative sizes of items. Older children will get to practice math skills.

Activities to Do at Home

Setting the Table

At mealtime your child can help set the table. Your child can consider several questions: How many people are eating? How many forks, spoons, and knives do we need? How many glasses do we need?

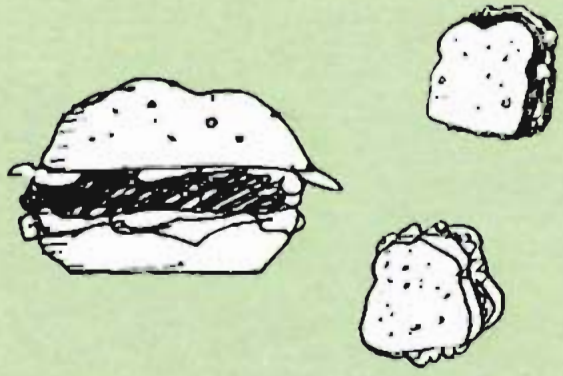
How does this help your child?

This is a good way to practice math skills. This will also help your child learn how to communicate, listen, and follow directions.

Activities to Teach Nutrition

Planning a Meal

✓ Ask your child to plan a meal once a week. This can be breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Have your child make a list of the items that will be needed from the store to prepare the meal (if your child cannot write, you may have to write the list but your child can help to name the items). When you go to the grocery store, your child can help you look for the items that will be needed for the meal he or she has planned.



Activities to Teach Nutrition

Reading Food Labels

- ✓ Ask older children who can read to read the content labels of products. Have them check for amounts of salt, sugar, fat, water, food additives, and other ingredients.

How do these activities help your child?

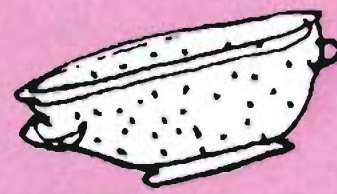
Children will learn how to plan a balanced meal, how to add variety to their diet, and how to do comparison shopping to get the best nutritional value for their money. For example, a 48-ounce drink that is 80 percent water and sugar and only 20 percent fruit juice may not be a good buy in terms of nutrition.

Activities to Do at Home

Activities to Do at Home

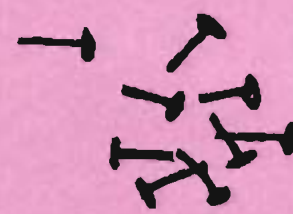
Measuring and Counting

When you need to measure or count something, have your child help you: for example, measuring ingredients for a recipe, cutting fabric, or counting nails.



How does this help your child?

This gives him or her the opportunity to learn new math skills or practice ones already learned in school.



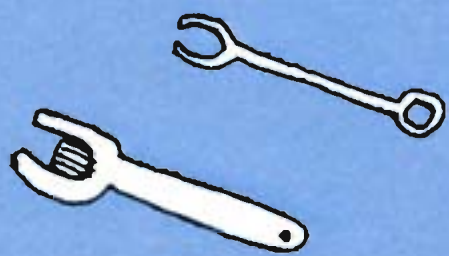
Activities to Do at Home

Reading Recipes, and Instructions

When you're cooking, have your child read the recipe to you. Or if you are putting together a new toy or some other item, your child can read the instructions to you.

How does this help your child?

This will help him or her practice reading skills.



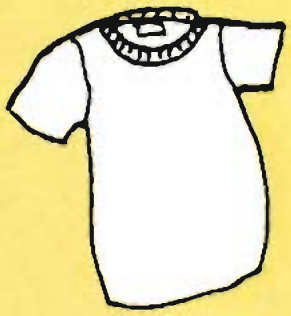
Activities to Do at Home

Cleaning

Involve children in household cleaning and laundry. Reward children when they put all their toys away in a predetermined amount of time (for example, 10 minutes). Have children help you sort dirty clothes (whites, colors).

How does this help your child?

Children will learn how to tell time. Children can practice putting things into categories, and they will practice skills of recognizing colors.



Activities to Do at Home

Get Creative

- ✓ Make up a poem, a secret code, or new lyrics to a song.
- ✓ Paint a flower or an animal on paper taped to a wall or on an old T-shirt.
- ✓ Build something out of glue and pieces of wood, clay, cans, wads of paper, foil, pieces of cloth, paper mache, or any other old scraps you have around the house.

Remember to praise your child when he or she does something right. Don't forget to say, "Great job" or "Thank you." This is positive reinforcement and will help children learn manners as well as feel good about themselves and what it means to be part of a household.

Storing Your Cards

A good way to store and use these activity cards is in plastic sleeves, the kind used in photo albums. Putting the cards in the plastic sleeves allows you to see both sides of the cards and protects them from dirt and damage when handling.