

Activities for Children 36 - 48 Months Old



Make a book "about me" for your child. Save family pictures, leaves, magazine pictures of a favorite food, and drawings your child makes. Put them in a photo album, or glue onto sheets of paper and staple together to make a book.	Make a bird feeder using peanut butter and bird seed. Help your child find a pine cone or a piece of wood to spread peanut butter on. Roll in or sprinkle with seeds and hang in a tree or outside a window. While your child watches the birds, ask her about the number, size, and color of the different birds that visit.	Grow a plant. Choose seeds that sprout quickly (beans or peas), and together with your child place the seeds in a paper cup, filling almost to the top with dirt. Place the seeds 1/2 inch under the soil. Put the cup on a sunny windowsill and encourage your child to water and watch the plant grow.	Before bedtime, look at a magazine or children's book together. Ask your child to point to pictures as you name them, such as "Where is the truck?" Be silly and ask him to point with an elbow or foot. Ask him to show you something that is round or something that goes fast.	Play a matching game. Make two sets of 10 or more pictures. You can use pictures from two copies of the same magazine or a deck of playing cards. Lay the pictures face up and ask your child to find two that are the same. Start with two picture sets and gradually add more.
While cooking or eating dinner, play the "more or less" game with your child. Ask who has more potatoes and who has less. Try this using same-size glasses or cups, filled with juice or milk.	Cut out some large paper circles and show them to your child. Talk with your child about things in her world that are "round" (a ball, the moon). Cut the circle in half, and ask her if she can make it round again. Next, cut the circle into three pieces, and so forth.	During bath time, play Simon Says to teach your child names of body parts. First, you can be "Simon" and help your child wash the part of his body that "Simon says." Let your child have a turn to be "Simon," too. Be sure to name each body part as it is washed and give your child a chance to wash himself.	Talk about the number 3. Read stories that have 3 in them (The Three Billy Goats Gruff, Three Little Pigs, The Three Bears). Encourage your child to count to 3 using similar objects (rocks, cards, blocks). Talk about being 3 years old. After your child gets the idea, move up to the numbers 4, 5, and so forth as long as your child is interested.	Put out several objects that are familiar to your child (brush, coat, banana, spoon, book). Ask your child to show you which one you can eat or which one you wear outside. Help your child put the objects in groups that go together, such as "things that we eat" and "things that we wear."
When your child is getting dressed, encourage her to practice with buttons and zippers. Play a game of Peekaboo to show her how buttons go through the holes. Pretend the zipper is a choo-choo train going "up and down" the track.	Practice following directions. Play a silly game where you ask your child to do two or three fun or unusual things in a row. For example, ask him to "Touch your elbow and then run in a circle" or "Find a book and put it on your head."	Encourage your child's "sharing skills" by making a play corner in your home. Include only two children to start (a brother, sister, or friend) and have a few of the same type of toys available so that the children don't have to share all of the time. Puppets or blocks are good because they encourage playing together. If needed, use an egg or oven timer with a bell to allow the children equal time with the toys.	Listen for sounds. Find a cozy spot, and sit with your child. Listen and identify all of the sounds that you hear. Ask your child if it is a loud or soft sound. Try this activity inside and outside your home.	Make an adventure path outside. Use a garden hose, rope, or piece of chalk and make a "path" that goes under the bench, around the tree, and along the wall. Walk your child through the path first, using these words. After she can do it, make a new path or have your child make a path.
Find large pieces of paper or cardboard for your child to draw on. Using crayons, pencils, or markers, play a drawing game where you follow his lead by copying exactly what he draws. Next, encourage your child to copy your drawings, such as circles or straight lines.	When reading or telling a familiar story for bedtime, stop and leave out a word. Wait for your child to "fill in the blank."	Make a necklace you can eat by stringing Cheerios or Froot Loops on a piece of yarn or string. Wrap a short piece of tape around the end of the string to make a firm tip for stringing.	Listen and dance to music with your child. You can stop the music for a moment and play the "freeze" game, where everyone "freezes," or stands perfectly still, until you start the music again. Try to "freeze" in unusual positions for fun.	Make long scarves out of fabric scraps, old dresses, or old shirts by tearing or cutting long pieces. Use material that is lightweight. Hold on to the edge of the scarf, twirl around, run, and jump.



Communication

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is learning to use complete sentences to tell you all about what's happening. He also can follow more than one direction at a time. He has probably learned both his first and last name and can tell you if you ask. He loves to have conversations with a friend or maybe a toy doll or bear. He has learned that a voice on the telephone really comes from a person, even though he can't see the speaker at the time, and your child is more likely to talk than just listen.

Good Night Everywhere When it's time to go to bed, give good-night kisses all over. Tell your child, "I'm going to kiss you under your arm. I'm going to kiss you on top of your head. Now I'm going to kiss you behind your ear. Good night back there! Good night everywhere!"

Who's This Person? Pretend you suddenly forgot who your child is. Say, "What's your name little girl? Is it Samantha? Is it Rosita? Do you have another name?" (When she tells you her name, you can be very happily surprised!)

Love Notes Write little notes to your child and place them here and there during the day. A note might say, "You are a very helpful brother to your baby sister. She thinks you are really special." A note on your child's toy shelf can say you noticed that the toys were put away. A note by the plate at dinnertime can say that Dad will read his favorite story at bedtime. As you read these notes to your little one, he learns that reading is fun and important.

Where the Creatures Live Help your child learn directions by asking, "Where do birds fly? Up in the sky. Where do the bugs live? Under a rock. Where do fish swim? Deep down in the water." Your child may need a little help at first, but soon she will know the answers.

Weather Person At the start of the day, ask your child to look out the window and tell you about the weather. Is it sunny? Is it raining? Is it cloudy? What will the weather be today? Have your child draw a picture of the sun if the day is sunny, raindrops if the day is rainy, and clouds if the sky is cloudy.

A Card of Love Collect pictures of favorite things and animals, plus some stickers, bits of lace, buttons, and other small craft items. You will also need some pieces of paper and glue. Make a Happy Birthday card for someone special, or a Get Well card. While making the card, talk about how special your friend or relative is. Help your child write a message. Address the card, stamp it, and mail it. This little kindness will bring much appreciation.



36–42 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child can usually kick a ball forward, jump, and perhaps hop on one foot. She likes to do things for longer periods of time now and may spend quite a long time riding a tricycle or pulling things in a wagon. Climbing is getting to be one of her favorite activities. She also enjoys vigorous play with friends. Having used up all that energy, she will usually sleep well through the night.

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| Marching in the Band | Show your child how to march like a member of the band. Be sure to get those knees up high! Invite a friend to join you. Add a drum and a flag and make a parade! |
| Kangaroo Kid | Show your child how the kangaroo jumps around. Pretend to be a mother kangaroo. With your feet together, jump, jump, jump. This is also a lot of fun outdoors or with a friend. |
| Freeze Game | Play the freeze game. Let your child dance or move around in any way he wants, but when you say "freeze," he has to stop right away in the middle of a motion. You can start the movement up again by saying "melt." Take turns playing this silly game. |
| Football Fun | Give your child a medium-size ball. Show her how to kick it by swinging a foot back, then forward. Turn a cardboard box on its side and encourage your child to kick the ball into the box for a goal. Shout "goal!" when your child gets the ball into the box. |
| Airplanes Everywhere | Let your child pretend to be an airplane and run with his arms outstretched. Show him how to lean to the left, then to the right. Make some airplane noises. Swoop down low and then fly around in a circle. Time to slow down; bend down and land. |
| Big Box Basketball | Place an open box or laundry basket on a tabletop or surface higher than chair level. Give your child a medium-size ball to throw overhand into the box or basket. You can also tie a ribbon across the tops of two chair backs with the box on the other side. Show your child how to throw the ball over the ribbon and into the box. |



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is becoming more skilled at buttoning and zipping clothing. He can use a fork and spoon to feed himself. He can spread soft butter on bread. He can hold a pencil or crayon with his thumb and two fingers and likes to draw. When asked, he may be able to draw circles or other simple marks.

Button-Up Bear Let your child dress a large stuffed teddy bear or large doll with real baby clothing. Make sure the baby clothes have a couple of large buttons or snaps to let your child practice small finger work. You might even find some baby shoes with Velcro closures. Tying or buckling shoes is probably too difficult right now.

Beautiful Necklace Cut some circles or flowers out of colored paper, and punch a hole in the center. Then, cut a large plastic soda straw into pieces. Let your child string a shoelace with alternating flowers and straw pieces. She probably will not always alternate pieces, but that doesn't matter. Tie the ends, and she will have her own beautiful necklace!

Picking Peas Buy a few fresh peapods at the market. Show your child how to find the peas inside the shell. Give him a few in a plastic container to shell for himself. When he is finished, rinse off the peas and eat them. Yum!

Sidewalk Artist Let your child draw pictures on the sidewalk or driveway with colored outdoor chalk. If you don't have chalk, give your child a small paintbrush and let her paint a picture with water. The painting will be fun, and so will the magic of evaporation. "Where did your picture go?"

List Maker Keep a small pad of paper and a few pencils close at hand. Before going shopping, ask your child to help you make a shopping list. Let him write his own version of words and see if he can remember what they mean. He can also write a note to his Mom or a pet.

Little Snipper Let your child practice cutting with safety scissors. Show her how to open and close the scissors while you hold the paper. Later, show her how to hold the scissors with one hand and the paper in the other. At first, just snipping the edge is great progress. If she snips off a few pieces, save them in an envelope. Later you can paste the pieces on a sheet of paper for a special art creation!



36-42 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your busy learner is gaining many skills. She can put puzzles together (six pieces or maybe more), draw some shapes, such as circles and squares, and identify a few colors. She can match an object to a picture of that object and notices many similarities and differences. She is very curious about how things work, and your answers really help her understand and learn.

Box o' Blocks Collect blocks and small boxes for your child to use for building. Make something and let him copy what you build. Add pieces of cardboard for a roof and some paint stirring sticks for bridges. Make a town. Add some toy cars and toy people; the town will come to life!

Memory Magic Play this game to help your child develop her memory. In a car or on a bus, tell your child, "We're going on a picnic, and we're bringing a..." Name an object that you would bring on a picnic, such as an apple. Encourage your child to think of another object to bring on a picnic and repeat "We're going on a picnic, and we're bringing..." then name your object (apple) followed by hers (balloon). Take turns thinking of what to bring on a picnic, each time repeating what has already been named. Try to name things alphabetically.

Mr. Sticks Ask your child to draw a stick figure about 5 inches tall on a paper plate or piece of cardboard. Say, "This is Mr. Sticks." Now, hide Mr. Sticks. Give your child clues to lead him to Mr. Sticks: "He's in a room with water, but not the bathroom." "He's in a drawer near a door." Finding Mr. Sticks earns a big hug. Now it's your child's turn to give you clues.

Money Management Make some play dollar bills from green paper. Put them in an old purse or wallet for your child. Pretend to be the storekeeper. Say, "Those socks cost \$2.00." "This lunch costs \$3.00." Help your child count the right amount of money. Now change places. Let your child be the storekeeper. Add to the fun by collecting cereal boxes, empty milk cartons, and plastic juice cans to make a store.

Picture Shopping List From newspaper ads, cut pictures of three or four foods you'll be shopping for. Place them in an empty envelope and take them to the supermarket. Let your child pull out the pictures and remind you of what you need. If your child is holding a picture of apples, buy a few apples. If he is holding a picture of eggs, say, "Yes, we need eggs today."

Quick Picture Puzzle Remove the front of your breakfast cereal box. Trim the edges and cut the picture into six or seven pieces. Your child will enjoy putting the pieces together. You can help her by pointing out ways to match part of a picture on one piece to another part of the picture on another piece. Good thinking!



36-42 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn



Your child is becoming more and more sociable. He can be very helpful with household tasks and can take care of many of his personal needs. He plays with other children but still may not be able to cooperate or share very well. Your approval and attention are very important to him. He likes being silly and making others laugh, especially you.

Dress-Up Fun Let your child play dress-up in some old or interesting clothes. Boots are fun, as well as large hats. A scarf or necklace adds a nice touch. A purse, wallet, or vest also makes the play interesting. Make sure there are some buttons to button, some zippers to zip, or some gloves to stick fingers into for even more skill building! Put a mirror at your child's level. Ask her, "Are you ready to go to town?" "Are you going to work?"

Counting Turns Help your child learn to manage taking turns by counting how long a turn will take. For example, tell your child he can swing until the count of 10, and then it will be his brother's turn. Count 10 swings out loud. "Okay, now it's your brother's turn for 10 swings. Help me count." Your child will learn that the wait for a turn will soon be over.

Wonderful Rhythm and Rock In addition to stories, read poems and rhymes to your child at special cozy quiet times. If you have a rocking chair, cuddle up and rock a little to the rhythm of the words, or just cuddle and rock. Let your child fill in some of the missing words to a rhyme:

You: Hickory, dickory...
Your child: dock
You: The mouse ran up the...
Your child: clock

Cupcakes for All Let your child help you bake some cupcakes for the family. Let her sift, pour, and stir as much as she is able. Let your child spread icing with a plastic knife while you do the cooking and handle anything hot. Talk about who the cupcake is for. Place it on a napkin and write that person's name on the napkin. At mealtime, let your child share the special cupcakes.

Counting Good-Night Kisses When you put your child to bed, count kisses out loud. Ask your child how many kisses for the chin: "Three? Okay, one (kiss), two (kiss), three (kiss). How about your nose?" What a happy way to learn to count.

Set the Table Let your child help you set the table. Place one plate on the table for each person, and then show your child how to put one fork by each plate, then one napkin by each fork. What a good helper!



36-42 months