



# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

## Overview

Animal Walks are simple and fun exercises that invite children to use their imagination to move their bodies to copy animals. They are an easy way to get a quick dose of gross motor play into your child's day. These tasks get kids moving and active and allow them to release energy. Many of these movements develop core strength, balance, and agility which are wonderful for helping children control their sensory needs. Gross motor skills are a big part of children's healthy development at all ages.

## Have fun with these Animal Walks!

### Kangaroo Jumps

1. Start in a standing position.
2. Put both feet together and squat down.
3. Jump as high as you can using only your feet and no hands.



### Octopus Wiggles

1. Start in a seated position on the floor.
2. Attempt to lift both legs off the ground at the same time while wiggling your legs and arms.

### Frog Jumps

1. Start in a squatted position.
2. Place your hands on the floor in between your knees.
3. Using your feet, jump forward and land with your hands and feet on the ground.

Invite your child to think of other Animal Walks you can go on together.





## Overview

This interactive listening activity builds focus and memory skills. It features playing with sounds and music while building vocabulary around body parts. Body Songs also support your child's developing math skills in creating and repeating simple patterns. In this game, you and your child take turns and copy each other using parts of your body to perform a "body-song."

## Let's Play!

1. Begin by performing a simple "body-song" pattern such as tap your knee, clap, tap your knee, clap.
2. Each time you tap your knee, sing, "knee," and each time you clap, sing, "clap." Your body-song will sound like this: knee, clap, knee, clap.
3. Invite your child to copy your song by saying, "Can you play my song?"
4. Play your body-song again and give your child an opportunity to copy your actions and your words.
5. When your child correctly copies your song, say, "You're playing my song!"
6. Continue creating several different patterns involving body parts for your child to copy.
7. Invite your child to create their own body-song.
8. Then, it is your turn to play their song!
9. Add variety and expand vocabulary by "playing" different body parts (thigh, back, cheeks).
10. Have fun by using different voices as you sing the body parts or actions in your songs.

Enjoy creating body-songs together!



## Overview

An empty box is a great starting point for creative and imaginative play. What's fantastic about boxes is there's no right way to play. They can be stacked, flattened, pushed, or pulled. Let your child decide what they want to do and follow their lead. You could start by talking about the box together. For example, ask, "How big is it?" "What can fit inside?" or "What does it remind you of? A house? A car?"

## Try one of these ideas to get you started:

### Make a Plane or Car

- Use paper plates for wheels and steering wheels.
- Cut off the box flaps and stick them back on as the wings and tail of a plane.
- Let your child draw markings and racing stripes.



### Make a Robot Costume

- Cut out a head hole and armholes.
- Let your child decorate the box with foil and colored markers.



### Use the Box to Encourage Active Play

- For example, turn it sideways to make a tunnel.

## Creativity

Your child may want to change or decorate the box. Some of these might be useful:

- Scissors
- Tape and glue
- Paints, marker pens, or thick crayons

Boxes of any size are fun to play with and will get your child's imagination working. Enjoy imagining and making together!



## Overview

Being able to cross the midline, a pretend line that goes down the middle of the body, is needed to learn simple skills. Simply, it means someone has the ability to cross from one side of the body to the other in order to do a task like writing, drawing, reading, or putting on shoes and socks.

**Here are some fun ways to include crossing the midline practice into your child's day:**

### Play Simon Says.

You can encourage crossing the midline with how you give directions for each of the movements or actions you have your child complete. A few examples are, Simon says: touch your right knee with your left hand, touch your right shoulder with your left hand, cross one foot over the other foot, or close your eyes and tap a fingertip to your nose.



### Figure Eight.

Have your child draw (or trace) figure 8s on a piece of paper, in sand, in shaving cream, or in other fun textures. Take turns drawing or tracing using each hand.

### Dance with Scarves or Ribbons.

Dancing, in general, is an excellent crossing the midline activity, but adding scarves or ribbons just makes it more fun! You can do this with music that gives specific motions or just dance as you want. If you want some music with motions, search the Internet for “preschool songs with scarves” and discover one that works for you and your child.





## Overview

Squishy, soft, and colorful, fun dough can be shaped into anything and enjoyed by people of all ages! Children can be creative when playing with fun dough by making shapes and playing make-believe. Around your home, you can look for rocks, sticks, containers, cookie cutters, plastic utensils, plastic bottle caps, or small toys to use in play.

## Fun Dough Recipe

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup plain flour
- ½ cup salt
- ½ tablespoons oil
- ½ cup cold water (or less)
- 2 drops liquid food coloring

### Steps:

- Combine plain flour and salt
- Add water, food coloring, and oil
- Mix until ingredients are combined
- Add more flour if the dough is too sticky

Dough can be reused; store on a shelf in an airtight container.



## Overview

Problem solving involves identifying a problem, thinking of ways to solve it, and trying out possible solutions. Rolling marbles, cars, or other round objects down a ramp is not only satisfying to watch and fun to do, it also invites children to develop problem-solving skills in an authentic way.

## Supplies

- Cardboard
- Wood
- Paper
- Round toys (marbles, balls, etc.)
- Things that roll (cars, etc.)

## Directions

1. Set up ramps or incline planes using cardboard, wood, or paper propped on a chair or counter top.
2. Using the round toys and things that roll, start items rolling from the top of the ramp.
3. Alter the angle (slope) of the ramp and notice changes in the speed of the items.
4. Think about the weight of the items rolling down the ramp. Is there a difference in speed between items? Are the faster ones heavier or lighter?



## Tip:

If the toys are rolling away from the ramp, try putting a basket or box on its side at the end to collect them.





## Overview

Gross motor (physical) skills are those which require whole-body movement and involve the large (core stabilizing) muscles of the body to perform daily tasks, such as standing and walking, running and jumping, catching, kicking as well as riding a bike or swimming.

This indoor snowball toss game develops gross motor skills in a playfully fun way. It's easy to set up!

## Supplies

- A large basket, box, or container, and
- 10 pieces of paper.



## Let's Play!

1. Invite your child to help you set up the game by scrunching the paper into balls—these are your snowballs.
2. Place the basket on one side of the room and the snowballs on the other side.
3. Discuss with your child about the best way to divide the snowballs evenly between you.
4. Once the snowballs have been divided in half, you are ready to play!
5. Take turns tossing the snowballs into the basket.
6. Score a point for each one that makes it into the basket. The person with the most points wins!
7. Mix it up and see who can make the most, in a row, into the basket.
8. Your child can also practice writing numbers by adding a pencil and paper to keep score.





## Overview

Turn laundry time into learning time! Whether you do laundry at home or in the laundromat, there are many things you can talk about with your child. These rich conversations help build your child's language and vocabulary development. The next time you plan to wash your clothes, try one of the following activities:

## Sorting Clothes

Asking your child to help you separate the clothes leads to different conversations as well as providing practice in color recognition. For example, you can sort by color (white, red, blue) or by type (shirts, socks, pants). Your child learns new words you model during the conversation. For example, when your child says "towel," you say it is a "big towel."

## Sock Challenge

Turn matching socks into a fun game with your child. After the socks have been cleaned, mix them up and put them in the basket. Take turns pulling two socks out of the basket at a time. Every time you pull out a matching pair, you get a point. Keep playing until you've matched all the socks in the basket. Your child may think this is just a game, but matching skills are foundational to math and science skills they develop later.

## Laundry Alphabet Toss

This activity focuses on the initial sound in each word and the alphabet letter that goes along with the sound. Gather paper, tape, and something to write with to get started. As each load of laundry has been washed and dried, sit with your child and brainstorm the names of all the different items in your pile. Support your child to sound out the names of each clothing item and to write each word on a different piece of paper. Space the pieces of paper apart on the floor and tape each piece down so they will not move. Next, challenge your child to take clothes from the pile and put them next to the written word that best describes them—all the shirts with the "shirts" paper, pants with the "pants" sign, etc. Add variety by asking your child to find a clothing item that starts with the letter "P" or the "P" sound. After sorting the clothes, put them away. While this is not the fastest way to get the laundry done, it will certainly be one of the most fun.



# Paper Airplane Race

## Overview

Support your child to develop new ways of thinking, encourage creativity and curiosity, and develop fine motor skills by having a paper airplane race. Explore and create a variety of paper airplane models then have a race to see which design flies farthest!

## Materials

Have your child help you collect the following materials:

- different types and sizes of paper;
- markers, crayons, or pencils;
- objects that can be used for measuring (ruler, toy, string, etc)

## Make a Paper Airplane

1. With your child, choose the paper you will use to make the airplane.
2. Discuss how the paper should be folded so it will fly. What shape should it be? Not sure? Experiment with folding in different ways to see what works or, you can search the Internet to discover a variety of plans.
3. Decorate your airplanes using the markers or crayons and prepare for takeoff!
4. Take turns flying the airplanes.
5. Use any of the measurement tools you have gathered to determine which plane flies the farthest.
6. Talk about ways to change your airplane. What might you do to the airplane to make it fly farther? Higher? Slower? Faster?





## Overview

Shadows are all around us and are fun to play with. Families can create shadows with a flashlight, phone light, or use the sun. When playing with shadows, children can practice writing and tracing or families can use shadows to tell a story.

## Tracing Shadows

Supplies: light source, paper, writing tool.

1. Create a shadow using the light source.
2. Place a piece of paper on the shadow.
3. Trace the outline of the shadow.

Notice how the shadow changes as time passes (if the sun is your light source) or as you move the light.



## Puppet Show

1. Aim the light source at the plain background.
2. Using body parts, create “puppets.”
3. Use the puppets to talk about fun things or tell a story.

Playing with shadows can happen inside or outside so start to notice shadows and point them out to your child.



## Overview

Storytelling builds imagination, increases children's vocabulary, and is absolutely fun!

## Here is what you need to get started:

### Supplies

- A collection of small items from around your home or pictures cut from magazines.
- A small box, cup, or container big enough to hold the items or pictures collected.

### Storytelling

1. Put the pictures or objects in the box or cup.
2. Let your child go first by choosing one item from the box and starting a story about the object chosen.
3. If they need help getting started, have them repeat and fill in the blanks to this story starter: "Once upon a time there was a \_\_\_\_\_. One day it \_\_\_\_\_."
4. Let your child tell a sentence or two.
5. Then it is your turn to choose an object from the box. Tell one or two sentences about the item you chose that builds onto and continues your child's story—but make it silly!
6. Continue to take turns choosing from the box and building the story.
7. After a few rounds of listening to your silly storytelling, your child will begin to tell silly stories on their turn, too!

Be creative, be silly, and have fun laughing together!

