

# PARENT HANDOUTS

# Family Communication Toolkit

**ALPHABET PRACTICE IDEAS**  
Tips for learning letters

**ART VS. CRAFTS**  
It's all about the process

**CONVERSATION STARTERS**  
after school questions

**LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**  
Talking & listening activities

**MESSY PLAY**  
and why it's so important

**PLAY IS THE WAY!**  
The importance of play

**CONFERENCES**

**SUPPORT**

**ADDRESS CONCERNS**

**SCROLL**  
to take a look inside!

# SUPPORT EVERY CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT & SUCCESS


➤ Address individual **student needs** quickly and effectively by providing targeted **handouts** that guide families in supporting their child's development.

➤ **Save time and reduce stress** by having ready-to-use resources that effectively communicate with families

### PENCIL GRASPS

*stages of learning to write*

As your child grows, their ability to hold and use a pencil will naturally develop. Learning to grasp a pencil correctly is an important skill that lays the foundation for writing. Here's what you need to know about the stages of pencil grasp development and how you can support your child at home.

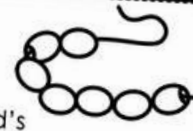


Whole Hand Grasp (1-2 years old)	Digital Pronate Grasp (2-3 years old)	Four-Finger Grasp (3-4 years old)	Tripod Grasp (4-7 years old)
Your child will use their whole hand to hold a crayon or marker. They will likely grasp the crayon with their fist and move their entire arm to make marks on paper.	As they grow, your child will start to hold the crayon with their fingers pointing down toward the paper. They may still use their whole arm to draw, but they're beginning to develop more control.	Around this age, your child may begin using all four fingers to hold the crayon, with their thumb opposite the fingers. This grasp gives them more control over their movements, but they may still switch between this and an earlier grasp.	Your child will likely transition to a tripod grasp, where they hold the pencil with three fingers (thumb, index, and middle finger). Their wrist may still be a little stiff, and they'll move their whole hand to draw. As they mature, they will use their fingers to move the pencil while keeping the wrist steady.

### FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES

*fantastic finger work-outs*


Building strong fine motor skills is crucial for your child's development, especially as they prepare for writing. Here are some fun and effective activities to help improve hand-eye coordination, hand/finger/wrist strength, and pencil grasp:



- 1. Play Dough Play:** Squishing, rolling, and shaping play dough strengthens fingers and hands.
- 2. Stringing Beads:** Threading beads onto a string improves coordination and precision.
- 3. Lacing Cards:** Encourage your child to practice lacing through holes in cards to develop fine motor control.

### ALPHABET PRACTICE IDEAS

*tips for learning letters*



Learning the alphabet is an exciting part of your child's early literacy journey! Here are 6 fun, hands-on activities you can do at home to help your preschooler recognize and learn their letters. These activities are easy to set up and will make learning a playful experience for your child.

- 1. Alphabet Hunt**  
Hide letter cards around the house and go on an "Alphabet Hunt" with your child. When they find a letter, ask them to say its name and sound.
- 2. Letter Matching Game**  
Create a matching game by writing letters on small pieces of paper or cards. Have your child match the uppercase letter with the lowercase letter.
- 3. Playdough Letters**

**Games with Dice:** Rolling dice helps and coordination.

**LEGO and Blocks:** Stacking and pieces build hand strength and

**Scissors:** Cutting paper with child-safe scissors strengthens hand muscles and improves

Screen time on tablets and iPads can be used for development. Encourage more of these essential skills.

©Play to Learn Preschool

Use these for:

★ WELCOME PACKETS

★ OPEN HOUSE

★ PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

★ FAMILY NIGHT

★ MONTHLY INFORMATION

★ ADDRESSING CONCERNS

Includes  
30 Handouts

### DECOMPRESS AFTER SCHOOL

*transitioning to home*

After a full day of learning, playing, negotiating space with others, sharing the teacher's attention, and staying focused, your child may need time to decompress. It's common for children to become deregulated after school as they transition from the structured environment of the classroom to the more relaxed setting of home. Recognizing this need for downtime can help your child adjust more smoothly and prevent after-school meltdowns.



### PLAY IS THE WAY!

*the importance of play*

Play is essential to your child's brain development. Through play, children learn language, math, literacy, science, and critical social skills. Play is not frivolous! Research shows that play is the natural way young brains learn and grow.



<b>CONCENTRATION</b> Painting and drawing help preschoolers practice the focus they'll need for schoolwork.	<b>FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS</b> Cooking and following recipes build the ability to follow oral and written directions.
<b>PROCESSING INFORMATION</b> Sensory play with materials like sand, water, or play dough helps children process new information.	<b>PROBLEM-SOLVING</b> Puzzles and building blocks encourage children to think critically and solve problems.
<b>IMAGINATION</b> Dressing up and role-playing grow your child's creativity and storytelling abilities.	<b>CURIOSITY</b> Outdoor play and nature exploration foster a love of learning and questioning.
<b>COLLABORATION</b> Playing together in activities like building with blocks teaches teamwork and planning.	<b>EMPATHY</b> Pretend play with baby dolls or animals nurtures kindness and caring.
<b>VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT</b> Reading and re-reading books enhance language skills and comprehension.	<b>SETTING GOALS AND DREAMING</b> Pretend play helps children imagine possibilities and set big dreams.

**Outdoor Exploration:** Let your child explore nature in...  
**Free Art Time:** Provide art supplies like crayons, markers, paper, and play...  
**Building and Construction:** Offer blocks, LEGO, or other building materials, and let your child...  
**Imaginative Play:** Encourage your child to play dress-up, create a pretend store, or role-play different scenarios with...  
**Quiet Time with Books:** Allow your child to browse through picture books or "read" aloud to their stuffed...

### READ ALOUD TIPS

*how to share books with kids*

Reading aloud to your child is one of the most impactful things you can do to support their language development, imagination, and love of learning. Here are some ideas for how you can make the most of this special time together:



<b>HAVE BOOKS EVERYWHERE</b> Keep books in the car, family room, and bedroom so reading can happen anytime.	<b>LET YOUR CHILD CHOOSE</b> Encourage your child to pick their favorite books. This makes reading more engaging for them.	<b>RE-READ FAMILIAR BOOKS</b> Children love hearing the same books over and over. It helps them understand the story better!
<b>VISIT THE LIBRARY</b> Make regular trips to the library to pick out new books and attend storytimes.	<b>CREATE A COZY SPACE</b> Find a cozy spot to cuddle up with your child while reading to make it a comforting and special part of the day.	<b>LISTEN TO BOOKS TOGETHER</b> Use audiobooks or streaming services to listen to stories together during car rides or quiet times.
<b>MAKE READING A ROUTINE</b> Make reading a non-negotiable part of your daily routine to help instill a love of reading.	<b>BE EXPRESSIVE</b> Use different voices and expressions to bring the story to life. This makes reading more fun and engaging for your child.	<b>TALK ABOUT THE STORY</b> Ask questions about the story, discuss the pictures, and encourage your child to predict what might happen next.

Reading aloud is a wonderful way to nurture your child's love for books and learning. By making it a joyful and regular part of your routine, you're giving them a gift that lasts a lifetime.

# Child Development & Learning

## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

*talking & listening activities*



Language development is a critical part of your child's growth. It involves learning to understand and use words, sentences, and conversation. Here's how you can encourage language skills at home, and what to watch for in terms of speech and language delays.

### LANGUAGE VS. SPEECH

<b>Language</b> Refers to the system of words and rules used to communicate ideas and emotions. It includes understanding others (receptive language) and expressing thoughts (expressive language).	<b>Speech</b> Refers to the physical act of making sounds that form words. It involves articulation, voice, and fluency.
---	---

### TIPS FOR ENCOURAGING LANGUAGE SKILLS:

- **Talk Regularly:** Engage in conversations with your child throughout the day. Describe what you're doing, ask questions, and encourage your child to express their thoughts.
- **Listen Actively:** Show your child that you're listening by responding to their words, expanding on what they say, and maintaining eye contact.
- **Read Aloud Daily:** Reading books together enhances vocabulary and comprehension. Point to pictures, ask questions, and discuss the story.
- **Sing Songs and Rhymes:** Music and rhymes help children hear the rhythm and patterns in language, which supports language learning.
- **Play Word Games:** Engage in simple games like "I Spy" or "Simon Says" that encourage listening and following directions.

### SIGNS OF POTENTIAL DELAYS

<b>By 18 months:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not using at least 20 single words</li> <li>• Not combining two words</li> <li>• Not responding to their name</li> </ul>	<b>By 2 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not using simple sentences</li> <li>• Difficulty following simple directions</li> <li>• Not showing interest in interactions</li> </ul>	<b>By 3 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear speech, difficulty talking in sentences</li> <li>• Trouble being understood by others</li> <li>• Limited back-and-forth conversation skills</li> <li>• Showing signs of echolalia (repeating others' words without understanding)</li> </ul>	<b>At any age</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regression in language skills</li> <li>• Not responding to sounds or speech</li> <li>• Lack of give-and-take in conversations</li> <li>• Limited ability to answer questions.</li> </ul>
--	--	---	---

#### When to Consult a Doctor:

If you notice any of the above delays or have concerns about your child's speech and language development, it's important to consult with your pediatrician. Early intervention can make a significant difference in helping your child develop strong communication skills.

©Play to Learn Preschool

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

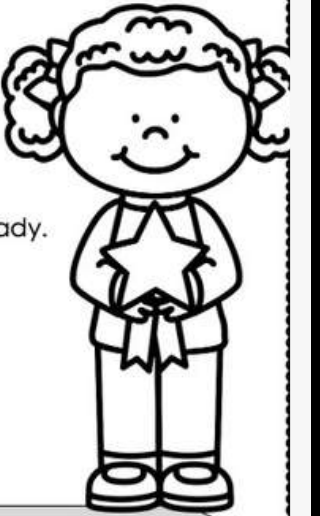
FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES

SELF-HELP SKILLS

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## SELF-HELP SKILLS

*developing independence*



Our job as grown-ups is not to do everything for our children. Our job is to teach our children to do everything for themselves! This starts as soon as they are physically, emotionally, and verbally ready. Preschool is the peak time for developing self-help skills. When we foster independence, we teach our children that they are capable, strong, smart, problem-solvers.

### PRESCHOOL SKILLS

- Take off jacket
- Take off backpack
- Unzip backpack
- Remove folder
- Put on jacket
- Put on backpack

### BATHROOM SKILLS

- Pull down pants
- Sit on toilet
- Wipe self
- Pull up pants
- Flush toilet
- Turn on the sink water
- Pump soap
- Wash hands
- Dry hands

### LIFE SKILLS

- Get dressed
- Put on/take off shoes
- Brush teeth
- Put laundry in hamper
- Feed self
- Drink from an open cup
- Pick up toys
- Wipe up spills
- Help with chores

Teaching self-help skills takes lots of time and patience! It is sometimes easier to just do it for them. Resist the urge!

- ✓ Allow extra time.
- ✓ Talk your child through the skills as necessary.
- ✓ Support your child by starting the task (zipper, for example) and then allowing them to finish it.

### ADVANCED SKILLS

Children should be fairly independent with these skills prior to kindergarten.

- Zipping coat
- Tying shoes
- Button pants
- Snap jacket
- Recite grown-up's phone number

©Play to Learn Preschool

# School Readiness & Success

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS

### guide for families



While teachers certainly don't expect children to come to school at age 5 knowing everything already, the first couple of weeks will go much smoother if the child has a solid foundation. Students who are entering kindergarten should be able to:

#### 1. Verbalize Wants and Needs

Children who greet one another with a "Hello," who ask their teachers for what they need, who negotiate well with peers, and who speak up for themselves will do well socially in kindergarten.

#### 2. Write Their Names

Ideally, the children will write their first names from left to right with a capital first letter and the rest lower case. At the very minimum, though, they need to be able to write some form of their first name that is recognizable to the teacher.

#### 3. Handle a Book

Not read it, but rather be able to locate the cover, hold it the right direction, turn the pages, and locate the text. The one and only way to teach this skill is to read to your child every single day. Have books in every room and in the car. Make sure that your child sees you reading your own books, too. Read, read, read!

#### 4. Dress Themselves

Kindergartners need to be able to put on their own coats and shoes and button their own pants. If your child hasn't mastered shoe tying at the beginning of the year, don't panic! Keep practicing, but be sure to send him to school in easy that they can do themselves.

#### 5. Be Independent in the Bathroom

Kindergarten teachers are likely not going to be able to accompany their students to the bathroom. The students must be able to handle their own pants (no overalls or onesies!), wipe themselves, and wash their own hands. Start practicing at age 4. *This one's important!*

#### 6. Use Scissors, Glue and Crayons

There's a lot of coloring, cutting and pasting going on in kindergarten. The children who already know how to use their school supplies at the beginning of the year get a big gold star.

#### 7. Identify Some Letters and Letter Sounds

Starting with the letters of their name, children who are entering kindergarten should know most of the upper case and many of the lower case letters. It's helpful if they also know that letters make sounds, but not imperative that they know what each one is.

#### 8. Count to 10

Kindergartners should be able to rote count (1-2-3-4...) through 10 and also be able to count a set of objects (4 crackers) with good one-to-one correspondence.

#### 9. Rhyme

There is research that shows that children who have good phonological awareness skills (Rhyming is one of them!) tend to become better readers. Play with rhyming words with your child. Sing nursery rhymes and rhyming songs. Read books that have rhymes.

#### 10. Separate from their Grown-Ups

Separation anxiety is very common among children who are just beginning school. Kindergartners who are happy and comfortable in the school setting are off to a great start. Plan a night out without the kids, schedule a drop-off play date, or enroll in a preschool class to practice.

©Play to Learn Preschool

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS

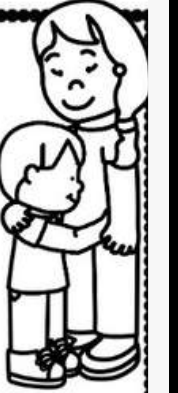
## PREPARING FOR PRESCHOOL

## SEPARATION ANXIETY

## SEPARATION ANXIETY

### tips and tricks from your teacher

It's 100% normal for both students and grown-ups to have some anxiety about parting ways at the school. Here are some tips and tricks to help!



#### ✓ PRACTICE

- Start with small separations and gradually increase the length of time apart.
- Practice the morning routine for a week or two before it happens. Set an alarm for when you'd start getting ready for school and do all the things necessary up to getting into the car (and maybe even driving there and waving at the school).

#### ✓ PLAN

- Drive past the school and point it out at every opportunity.
- Choose a special outfit for school - maybe a t shirt with a favorite character, some snazzy light up shoes, or a cool jacket.
- Look at pictures of the school and, if possible, go in to meet the teacher.

#### ✓ BE POSITIVE

- You may have to "fake it 'til you make it" as you keep your own emotions in check.
- Don't let your child hear you say, "He's going to cry all day" or, "I know she's really nervous." Be positive!

#### ✓ PROCEDURE

- Make sure to say goodbye when you leave. Trying to "sneak out" when the child is busy and not looking sometimes makes your child panic a few minutes later and may make the separation even more difficult the next day.
- A special (short) routine can help with the transition. Some examples are a kiss on the head and on both cheeks, a special handshake and hug, or a special phrase like "I love you to the moon and back!" helps signal to your child that it's time for you to go.
- Whatever you do, do **not** turn around and go back into the classroom to check on your child! The school will let you know if they need your help.

#### ✓ PICTURES, POCKET NOTES, AND PALS

- A picture of your family can be incredibly soothing for a child. If possible, laminate it or somehow protect it as it will be well loved.
- A short note that your child can keep in their pocket can be a magic balm for nerves. Tell them what you are writing (keep it short, only one sentence or phrase!) and they can touch the note every time they feel they miss you.
- Like a photo, a lovey or comfort item can help a child make the transition. Ask the school what the policy is on such items.

©Play to Learn Preschool

# Positive Parenting & Behavior Support

## POSITIVE DISCIPLINE *strategies for families*



Discipline is a challenging part of parenting, and it's completely normal to feel stressed at times. As a classroom teacher, I've found that positive discipline strategies can make a big difference in fostering good behavior while maintaining a loving, supportive environment. Here are some practical tips that can help.

- 1. POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT**  
Catch your child being good and praise them for it! Whether it's sharing toys, following directions, or being kind, acknowledging their positive behavior encourages them to keep it up. For example, "I'm so proud of how you helped clean up your toys today!"
- 2. SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES**  
Children thrive when they know what to expect. Set simple, clear rules and be consistent in enforcing them. Make sure your child understands the rules and the consequences of breaking them. For example, "We use gentle hands with our friends. If you hit, we will need to take a break from playing."
- 3. OFFER CHOICES**  
Giving your child choices helps them feel in control and reduces power struggles. Offer limited, win-win options. For example, "Would you like to put on your shoes first, or your jacket?"
- 4. USE TIME-INS INSTEAD OF TIME-OUTS**  
Instead of isolating your child when they're upset, try a "time-in" where you sit together in a calm space and talk about their feelings. This approach helps them learn to manage emotions with your support.
- 5. MODEL THE BEHAVIOR YOU WANT TO SEE**  
Children learn by watching us. Show them how to handle frustration, solve problems, and be kind. If you make a mistake, apologize and explain how you'll do better next time.
- 6. STAY CALM AND CONSISTENT**  
It's hard, but staying calm and consistent is key. Children feel more secure when they know what to expect. If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a deep breath before responding.

Remember, every child is different, and what works for one might not work for another. It's okay to try different approaches and see what works best for your family. Discipline is about teaching, not punishing, and with patience and positivity, you'll help your child develop the skills they need to thrive.

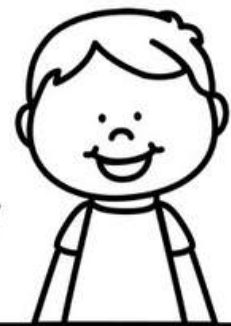
©Play to Learn Preschool

## POSITIVE DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES

## DECOMPRESS AFTER SCHOOL

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

## CONVERSATION STARTERS *after-school questions*



Ever asked, 'How was your day?' and got a 'Fine,' or 'What did you do today?' only to hear 'Nothing!?' Try these open-ended questions to spark more meaningful conversations with your child.

- "WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF YOUR DAY?"
- "WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO TOMORROW?"
- "DID ANYTHING SURPRISE YOU TODAY?"
- "WHAT MADE YOU SMILE TODAY?"
- "DID YOU HELP ANYONE TODAY?"
- "WHAT WAS THE HARDEST THING YOU DID TODAY?"
- "WHO DID YOU PLAY WITH AT SCHOOL?"
- "WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT TODAY?"
- "DID YOU LEARN SOMETHING NEW?"

These questions can turn a simple car ride or dinner conversation into a meaningful exchange, helping you stay connected with your child's experiences. By asking open-ended questions, you encourage them to share more about their day and strengthen your bond.

©Play to Learn Preschool

# Health & Well-Being

## SICK DAYS

*when to stay home from school*

To help keep all of our students healthy, it's important to know when your child is too sick to come to school. Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infections. While some illness spread is expected, keeping sick children at home helps protect the entire school community.



### KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME IF:

- **Fever:** Your child has a fever of 100°F or higher. They must be fever-free without medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school.
- **Vomiting/Diarrhea:** Your child has vomited or had diarrhea. They should stay home until 24 hours after the last episode.
- **Sore Throat/Cough:** Severe sore throat or persistent coughing, especially if accompanied by a fever.
- **Contagious Illness:** If your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness like strep throat, pink eye, or the flu, they should stay home until they've been on medication for at least 24 hours or as directed by your healthcare provider.
- **Unexplained Rash:** Any unexplained rash should be checked by a doctor before your child returns to school.

### IN GENERAL:

Children with improving symptoms who are able to participate in school activities can typically return to school. If you're unsure whether your child should go to school, it's always best to err on the side of caution and consult your pediatrician.

Thank you for helping us keep our school community healthy!

More information can be found on the CDC website:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/orr/school-preparedness/infection-prevention/when-sick.html>

©Play to Learn Preschool

## SICK DAYS

## HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

## SNACKS, MEALS, AND HEALTHY EATING

## SNACKS & MEALS

*for learning & growth*



What your child eats plays a big role in their ability to learn, grow, and stay focused. Nutritious snacks and meals provide the energy and nutrients they need to thrive both in and out of the classroom. Here are some ideas to keep your child fueled and ready for the day.

### 1. Balanced Breakfast

Start the day with a breakfast that includes protein, whole grains, and fruit. Try oatmeal with mashed banana, or scrambled eggs with soft avocado slices.

### 2. Healthy Snacks

Offer snacks like yogurt with berries, sliced veggies with hummus, applesauce, or thinly sliced cheese with whole grain crackers. These options are packed with nutrients and keep hunger at bay between meals.

### 3. Nutritious Lunches

Create lunches with a variety of foods—whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and veggies. A turkey and avocado sandwich on whole-grain bread with carrot sticks and an apple is a great example.

### 4. Hydration

Encourage water as the main drink throughout the day. Limit sugary drinks like soda and juice, which can lead to energy crashes and affect concentration.

### 5. Involve Your Child

Get your child involved in meal planning and preparation. They're more likely to eat healthy foods if they've helped choose or make them.



Healthy eating doesn't have to be complicated. By offering a variety of nutritious options, you're setting your child up for success in their learning and growth.

©Play to Learn Preschool

# Creative & Play-Based Learning

## ART VS. CRAFTS

*it's all about the process*



### WHAT IS PROCESS ART?

Process art is all about exploration, creativity, and the joy of making. It's an open-ended experience where children engage directly with materials, experiment freely, and enjoy the journey of creation. The focus is on the process, not the end result. Each child's work is unique, personal, and a true reflection of their individual expression.

### WHAT ARE CRAFTS?

Teacher-directed crafts often focus on producing a specific end product. They typically involve following a set of instructions, with the teacher pre-cutting materials and guiding each step. While these crafts can be cute and provide practice with specific skills like gluing or cutting, they often limit creativity and result in nearly identical outcomes for every child.

PROCESS ART BENEFITS	TEACHER-DIRECTED CRAFTS LIMITATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages creativity and self-expression.</li> <li>Promotes decision-making and problem-solving.</li> <li>Builds confidence through exploration.</li> <li>Allows for individual pace and development.</li> <li>Fosters a love for the creative process.</li> <li>Each piece is unique and personal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses on following instructions to achieve a set outcome.</li> <li>Limits creativity by restricting choices.</li> <li>Can lead to frustration if the result doesn't match expectations.</li> <li>Emphasizes uniformity over individuality.</li> <li>Prioritizes the final product over the experience.</li> <li>Results in nearly identical products.</li> </ul>

### WHY IT MATTERS:

Process art is all about the experience of creating. It allows your child to explore materials, make decisions, and express themselves freely. This approach helps them develop important skills like problem-solving, creative thinking, and self-confidence. Unlike crafts that focus on a specific outcome, process art is unique to each child, fostering their individuality.

Because process art is often more about the journey than the final product, some creations may be too messy or temporary to send home. In these cases, we capture the artwork with photos, so you can still enjoy and celebrate your child's creativity.

©Play to Learn Preschool

## ART VS. CRAFTS

## PLAY IS THE WAY!

## MESSY PLAY BENEFITS

## MESSY PLAY

*and why it's so important*



Messy play is more than just fun; it's a crucial part of your child's development. Through activities like digging in the dirt, splashing in water, painting, and sliding at the park, your child is learning and exploring the world around them. These experiences help develop key skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and sensory awareness.



### PROOF OF LEARNING!

See these marks and stains on my clothes? They show that:

- I am developing my writing and drawing skills.
- I am learning to eat and drink on my own.
- I am honing my physical skills outdoors.
- I am getting stronger by running and jumping.
- I am being creative and artistic.
- I am using my imagination.
- I am curious about nature.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, YOUR CHILD HAD FUN AT SCHOOL TODAY!**

### HOW YOU CAN HELP AT HOME:

- Dress for Mess:** Send your child to school in old clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. Consider purchasing preschool t-shirts or clothing specifically for play.
- Bring Extra Clothes:** Always pack a few changes of clothes in your child's bag. This way, they can continue playing without worrying about getting dirty.
- Dress for the Weather:** Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for outdoor play. Raincoats and boots are perfect for those muddy, sludgy days!
- Embrace the Mess:** Remember that the marks on your child's clothes, the sand in their pockets, and the paint in their hair are all signs of active learning and creativity.

©Play to Learn Preschool

# Academic Practice & Enrichment

## ALPHABET PRACTICE IDEAS

*tips for learning letters*

ABC

Learning the alphabet is an exciting part of your child's early literacy journey! Here are 6 fun, hands-on activities you can do at home to help your preschooler recognize and learn their letters. These activities are easy to set up and will make learning a playful experience for your child.

### 1. Alphabet Hunt

Hide letter cards around the house and go on an "Alphabet Hunt" with your child. When they find a letter, ask them to say its name and sound.

### 2. Letter Matching Game

Create a matching game by writing letters on small pieces of paper or cards. Have your child match the uppercase letter with the lowercase letter.

### 3. Playdough Letters

Roll out playdough and help your child form letters with it. This hands-on activity builds fine motor skills while reinforcing letter shapes.

### 4. Alphabet Soup

Fill a bowl with magnetic letters and let your child scoop them out with a spoon. As they pull out each letter, ask them to identify it and make the sound.

### 5. Letter Tracing

Use a tray of sand, salt, or sugar and let your child trace letters with their finger. They can practice writing the letters while feeling the texture.

### 6. Alphabet Books

Read alphabet books together and point out each letter as you go. Ask your child to find and name letters on the page.

These activities are designed to make learning the alphabet a fun and engaging process. Incorporating these into your daily routine will help your child build confidence and a love for letters!

©Play to Learn Preschool

ALPHABET  
PRACTICE IDEAS

COUNTING GAMES

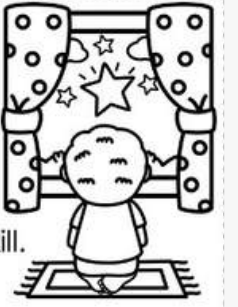
RHYME TIME

NUMBER  
PRACTICE IDEAS

## RHYME TIME

*playing with language*

Rhyming is an important early literacy skill that helps children with reading and language development. Try these fun and easy rhyming games to help your child develop this important skill.



### FINISH THE RHYME:

Recite a nursery rhyme or song, and pause before the last word to let your child fill in the rhyme. Example: "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you \_\_\_."

### RHYME TIME CLUES:

Say, "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with *cat* and starts with /h/." Your child guesses "*hat*."

### SILLY RHYMES:

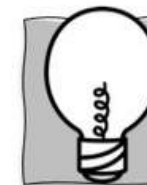
Make up a list of silly rhyming words together like "silly, willy, nilly, billy." Encourage your child to come up with their own silly rhymes.

### READ RHYMING BOOKS:

Choose books with lots of rhyming words, like *Silly Sally*, *Llama Llama Red Pajama*, or *Rhyming Dust Bunnies*, and read them together. Point out the rhyming pairs as you go.

### RHYME MATCH:

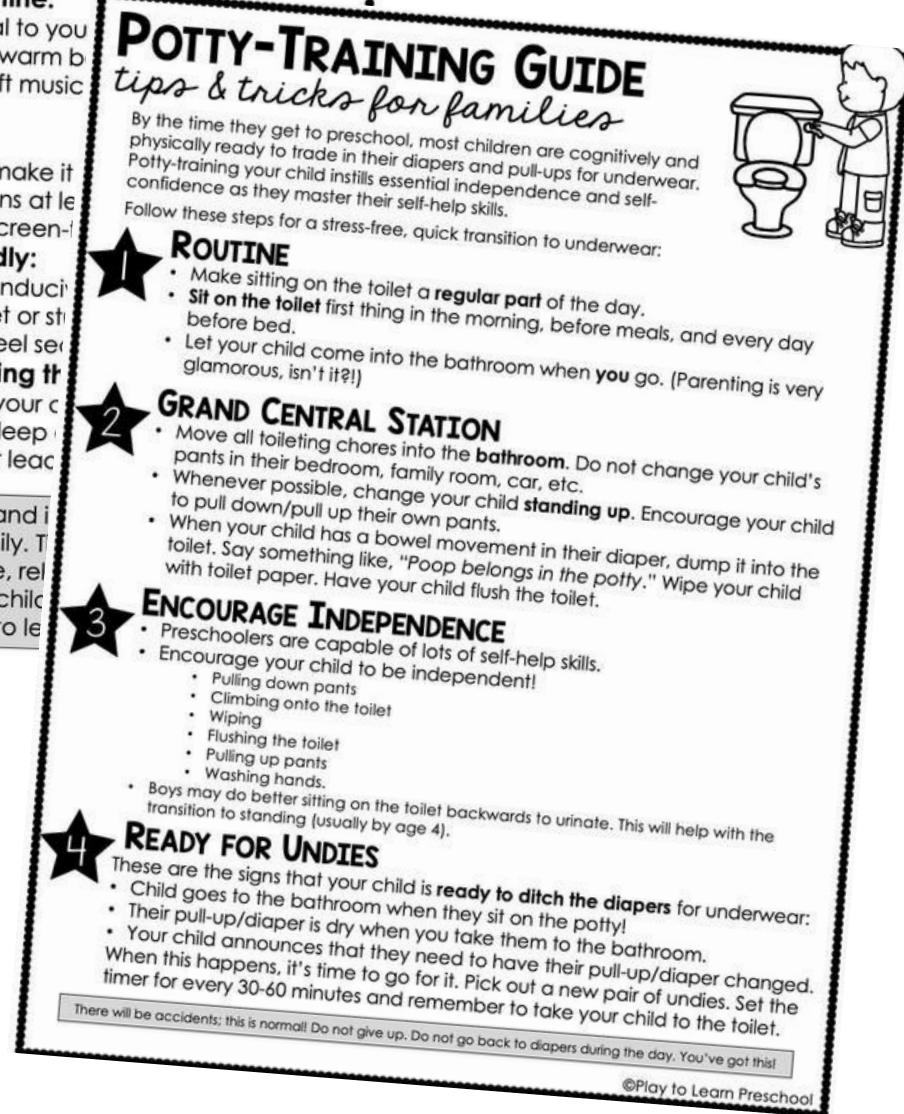
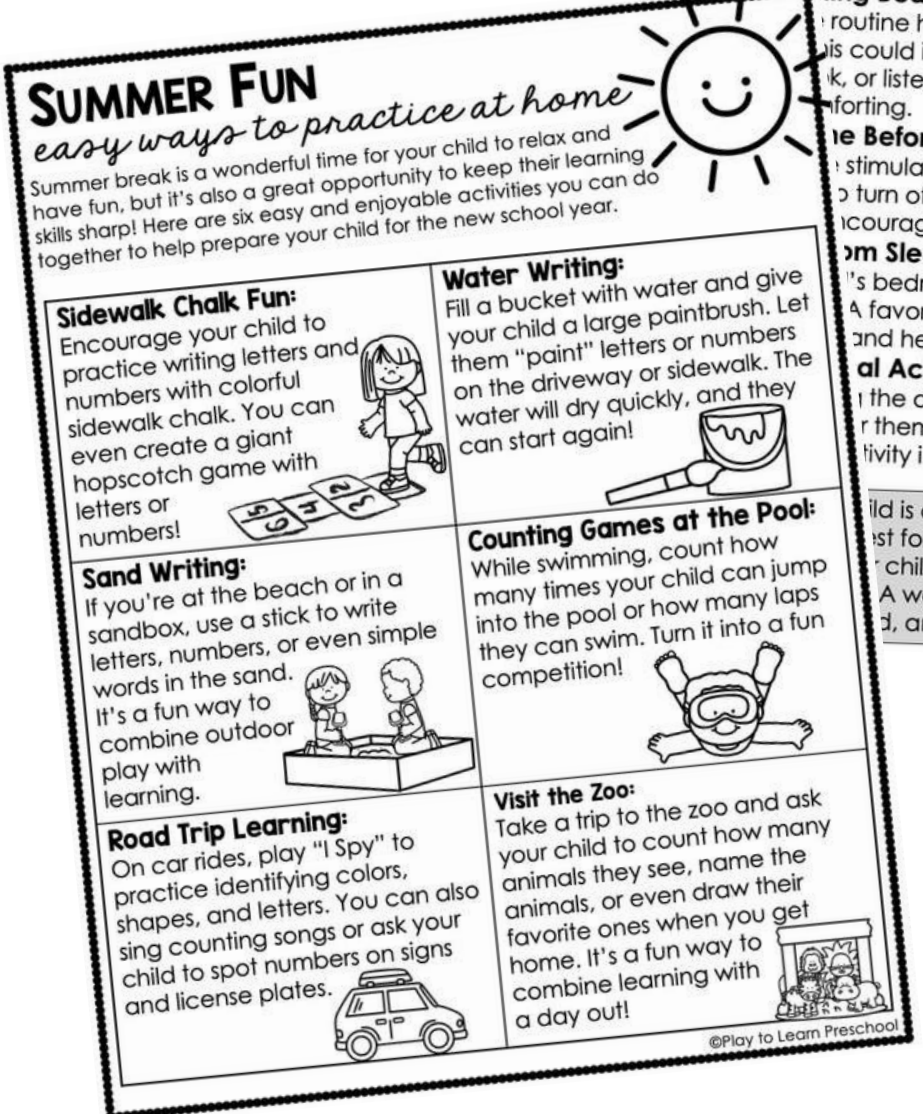
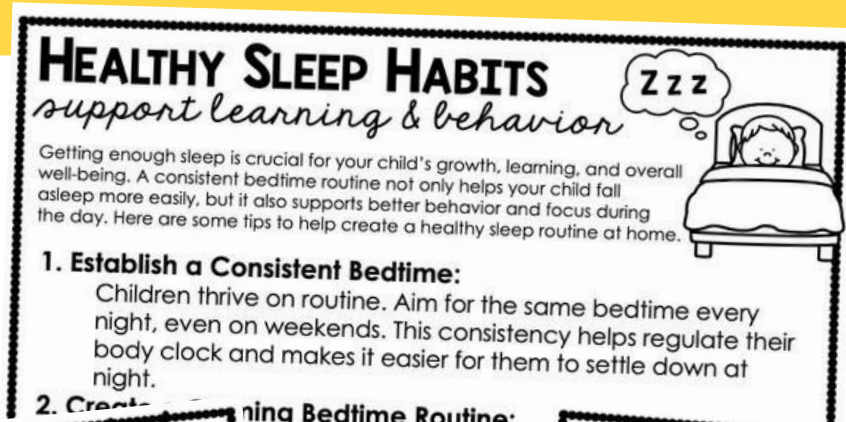
Say a word and have your child find an object in the room that rhymes with it, like "sock" and "block."



Rhyming is usually a "light switch" skill. As soon as children understand it, the light bulb comes on and they are able to identify and create rhyming words easily.

©Play to Learn Preschool

# Benefits of Using these Handouts:



**STREAMLINE COMMUNICATION**



**BUILD STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS**



**SUPPORT EVERY CHILD'S SUCCESS**



**ENHANCE PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**



**BOOST PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT**



**INCREASE STUDENT PROGRESS**



**BE PROACTIVE, NOT REACTIVE!**

# Easy to Use!

**PREPARING FOR PRESCHOOL**  
*suggestions for families*

Starting preschool is such an exciting and momentous occasion! When children turn 3-years-old, they are no longer toddlers. They are "big kids" who may be ready to start preschool. As families, we can help our children prepare for this next big step by doing these 5 things.

- ★ READ**  
If we were only allowed to give one piece of advice to families it would be, "Read to your child." Read every day. Have books in every room, in your purse, and in the car. Read favorite books so often that you and your child have them memorized. Visit the library often.
- ★ TALK**  
Developing your child's oral language skills is a crucial part of preparing her for preschool. Turn off the movie in the car and engage your child in a discussion about the world around her. Ask questions. Talk about nature, and colors, and letters, and feelings. Put down your phone and listen when your child talks to you. Encourage your child to make eye contact and greet others with a "Hello" and a "Good Bye."
- ★ PLAY**  
Spend time every day on the floor playing with your child. Encourage pretend play and role playing. Get messy! Laugh and have fun together. Offer your child time to play by herself, giving her the opportunity to decide what to do.
- ★ ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE**  
Children who are able to take care of some of their personal needs do better at the beginning of preschool than children who rely on adults for everything. Make sure your child has shoes that she can put on herself. Allow extra time before you need to leave the house each day so that your child can put on her own shoes. Support your child in taking care of her own bathroom needs. If she asks help with her pants, or with wiping, try talking her through it rather than doing it all for her. Teach her to wash her own hands and flush the toilet. It's not glamorous, but these are important skills in preschool!
- ★ PRACTICE**  
Give your child time away from you. Practice separating and giving your child a little bit of space. Invite other children over for play dates and allow your child to go on short play dates as well.

©Play to Learn Preschool

**ALL ABOUT NAMES**  
*your child's literacy journey*

Learning to recognize, spell, and write their name is one of the most exciting milestones in your child's literacy journey! Their name is the most important word to them, and it serves as a foundation for learning letters and words. Here are the three stages your child will experience as they learn their name, along with simple ways you can support them at home.

- 1. RECOGNIZE**  
The first step in learning their name is recognition. Your child will start to recognize the shape and sound of the first letter of their name. They might see the letter "S" and excitedly say, "That's my name!" even if it's just the first letter.  
**How You Can Help:**
  - Label your child's belongings with their name, like their backpack, lunchbox, or favorite book.
  - Play simple games where you write their name and mix it up with other words, then ask them to find their name.
- 2. SPELL**  
Once your child can recognize their name, the next step is learning to spell it. They might start by saying the letters out loud, "E-T-H-A-N," and then begin to write each letter when it's written down.  
**How You Can Help:**
  - Practice spelling their name together. You can do this by saying the letters out loud while pointing to them or using fun tools like magnetic letters on the fridge.
  - Make it a game by spelling their name with their favorite toys or snacks.
- 3. WRITE**  
The final stage is writing their name. Your child will use what they've learned recognizing and spelling their name to write it down. This might start by copying the letters and eventually writing them independently.  
**How You Can Help:**
  - Encourage your child to write their name whenever possible.
  - Provide them with different materials like crayons, chalk, or markers.
  - You can also make it fun by having them "sign" their artwork or write their name on a special craft project.


A name is a key part of their early literacy journey, and with your support at home, they will continue to grow and learn in a fun and engaging way.

If you have any questions or need more ideas on how to support your child's literacy at home, please don't hesitate to reach out.

©Play to Learn Preschool

**PENCIL GRASPS**  
*stages of learning to write*


As your child grows, their ability to hold and use a pencil will naturally develop. Learning to grasp a pencil correctly is an important skill that lays the foundation for writing. Here's what you need to know about the stages of pencil grasp development and how you can support your child at home.



Whole Hand Grasp (1-2 years old)	Digital Pronate Grasp (2-3 years old)	Four-Finger Grasp (3-4 years old)	Tripod Grasp (4-7 years old)
Your child will use their whole hand to hold a crayon or marker. They will likely grasp the crayon with their fist and move their entire arm to make marks on paper.	As they grow, your child will start to hold the crayon with their fingers pointing down toward the paper. They may still use their whole arm to draw, but they're beginning to develop more control.	Around this age, your child may begin using all four fingers to hold the crayon, with their thumb opposite the fingers. This grasp gives them more control over their movements, but they may still have some difficulty with fine motor skills.	Your child will likely transition to a tripod grasp, where they hold the pencil with three fingers (thumb, index, and middle finger). Their wrist may still be a little stiff, and they'll move their arm to draw.

**NUMBER PRACTICE IDEAS**  
*suggestions for families*

Teaching young children about numbers and counting is more than just learning to count to 10. It involves exploring numbers in different ways to build a strong foundation for future math skills. Here are some key skills your child will develop and ways you can support their learning at home.



<b>Counting Out Loud</b> <b>What It Looks Like:</b> Your child learns to count out loud from 1 to 10 in order. <b>How You Can Help:</b> Practice counting together in everyday activities. Count steps as you walk, count toys as you pick them up, or count snacks.	<b>Counting Objects</b> <b>What It Looks Like:</b> Your child counts a small set of objects, like toys or snacks, and says how many there are. <b>How You Can Help:</b> Give your child up to 5 objects and ask them to count how many they have. Make it fun by using favorite toys or household items.
<b>Recognizing Numbers</b> <b>What It Looks Like:</b> Your child can look at a number (like "3") and say its name. <b>How You Can Help:</b> Point out numbers in everyday life, like on a clock, in a book, or on a sign. Ask your child to name the numbers they see.	<b>Knowing Quantities Without Counting</b> <b>What It Looks Like:</b> Your child can look at a small group of objects (up to 5) and know how many there are without counting. <b>How You Can Help:</b> Hold up your fingers or show a small set of objects (like 4 crayons) and ask, "How many are there?" Encourage your child to answer without counting each one.

PRINT ON BRIGHT  
 COLORED PAPER TO  
 SEND HOME

ATTACH THE PDF TO AN  
 EMAIL OR YOUR  
 CLASSROOM NEWSLETTER

# Empower Families



WITH THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO  
HELP THEIR CHILDREN SUCCEED



**CHANGE OF CLOTHES**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Today at school:

- I had a bathroom accident.
- I spilled my food/drink.
- I got wet/dirty while playing.

Please send in:

- shirt
- shorts/pants
- socks
- underwear

or me to keep in my spare clothes bag at school.

Thank you!

©Play to Learn Preschool

**ALPHABET PRACTICE IDEAS** **ABC**  
*tips for learning letters*

Learning the alphabet is an exciting part of your child's early literacy journey! Here are 6 fun, hands-on activities you can do at home to help your preschooler recognize and learn their letters. These activities are easy to set up and will make learning a playful experience for your child.

- 1. ALPHABET HUNT**  
Hide letter cards around the house and go on an "Alphabet Hunt" with your child. When they find a letter, ask them to say its name and sound.
- 2. LETTER MATCHING GAME**  
Create a matching game by writing letters on small pieces of paper or cards. Have your child match the uppercase letter with the lowercase letter.
- 3. PLAYDOUGH LETTERS**  
Roll out playdough and help your child form letters with it. This hands-on activity builds fine motor skills while reinforcing letter shapes.
- 4. ALPHABET SOUP**  
Fill a bowl with magnetic letters and let your child scoop them out with a spoon. As they pull out each letter, ask them to identify it and make the sound.
- 5. LETTER TRACING**  
Use a tray of sand, salt, or sugar and let your child trace letters with their finger. They can practice writing the letters while feeling the texture.
- 6. ALPHABET BOOKS**  
Read alphabet books together and point out each letter as you go. Ask your child to find and name letters on the page.

These activities are designed to make learning the alphabet a fun and engaging process. Incorporating these into your daily routine will help your child build confidence and a love for letters!

©Play to Learn Preschool

**FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES**  
*fantastic finger work-outs*

Building strong fine motor skills is crucial for your child's development, especially as they prepare for writing. Here are some fun and effective activities to help improve hand-eye coordination, hand/finger/wrist strength, and pencil grasp:

- 1. Play Dough Play:** Squishing, rolling, and shaping play dough strengthens fingers and hands.
- 2. Stringing Beads:** Threading beads onto a string improves coordination and precision.
- 3. Lacing Cards:** Encourage your child to practice lacing through holes in cards to develop fine motor control.
- 4. Playing Games with Dice:** Rolling dice helps with grasping and coordination.
- 5. Building with LEGO and Blocks:** Stacking and connecting pieces build hand strength and dexterity.
- 6. Scissors Practice:** Cutting paper with child-safe scissors strengthens hand muscles and improves control.

**Important Note:** Increased screen time on tablets and iPads can negatively affect fine motor development. Encourage more hands-on play to support these essential skills.

©Play to Learn Preschool

**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
*fostering emotional regulation*

Helping your child develop social-emotional skills like empathy, sharing, and emotional regulation is key to their success in school and life. Here are some practical tips to support this important aspect of their growth.

- 1 Model Empathy:** Show empathy in your interactions by acknowledging your child's feelings. Example: "I see you're upset because your tower fell down. That must be frustrating."
- 2 Practice Sharing:** Encourage sharing by playing games where taking turns is important. Praise your child when they share without prompting.
- 3 Talk About Feelings:** Help your child name and express their emotions. Use books or puppets to discuss different feelings and how to handle them.
- 4 Teach Calm-Down Techniques:** Teach your child simple strategies to manage strong emotions, such as taking deep breaths, counting to 10, or using a calm-down jar.
- 5 Praise Positive Behavior:** Recognize and praise your child when they demonstrate kindness, patience, or self-control. Positive reinforcement encourages them to repeat these behaviors.

©Play to Learn Preschool

**SEPARATION ANXIETY**  
*tips and tricks from your teacher*

It's 100% normal for both students and grown-ups to have some anxiety about parting ways at the school. Here are some tips and tricks to help!

- ✓ PRACTICE**
  - Start with small separations and gradually increase the length of time apart.
  - Practice the morning routine for a week or two before it happens. Set an alarm for when you'd start getting ready for school and do all the things necessary up to getting into the car (and maybe even driving there and waving at the school).
- ✓ PLAN**
  - Drive past the school and point it out at every opportunity.
  - Choose a special outfit for school - maybe a t-shirt with a favorite character, some snazzy light up shoes, or a cool jacket.
  - Look at pictures of the school and, if possible, go in to meet the teacher.
- ✓ BE POSITIVE**
  - You may have to "fake it 'til you make it" as you keep your own emotions in check.
  - Don't let your child hear you say, "He's going to cry all day" or, "I know she's really nervous." Be positive!
- ✓ PROCEDURE**
  - Make sure to say goodbye when you leave. Trying to "sneak out" when the child is busy and not looking sometimes makes your child panic a few minutes later and may make the separation even more difficult the next day.
  - A special (short) routine can help with the transition. Some examples are a kiss on the head and on both cheeks, a special handshake and hug, a special phrase like "I love you to the moon and back!" helps signal to your child that it's time for you to go.
  - Whatever you do, do **not** turn around and go back into the classroom to check on your child! The school will let you know if they need your help.
- ✓ PICTURES, POCKET NOTES, AND PALS**
  - A picture of your family can be incredibly soothing for a child. If possible, laminate it or somehow protect it as it will be well loved.
  - A short note that your child can keep in their pocket can be a magic balm for nerves. Tell them what you are writing (keep it short, only one sentence or phrase!) and they can touch the note every time they feel they miss you.
  - Like a photo, a lovey or comfort item can help a child make the transition. Check on your child! The school will let you know if they need your help.

©Play to Learn Preschool

**SELF-HELP SKILLS**  
*developing independence*

Our job as grown-ups is not to do everything for our children. Our job is to teach our children to do everything for themselves! This starts as soon as they are physically, emotionally, and verbally ready. Preschool is the peak time for developing self-help skills. When we foster independence, we teach our children that they are capable, strong, smart, problem-solvers.

**PRESCHOOL SKILLS**

- Take off jacket
- Take off backpack
- Unzip backpack
- Remove folder
- Put on jacket
- Put on backpack

**BATHROOM SKILLS**

- Sit down pants
- Sit on toilet
- Wipe self
- Pull up pants
- Flush toilet
- Turn on the sink water
- Pump soap
- Wash hands
- Dry hands

**LIFE SKILLS**

- Get dressed
- Put on/take off shoes
- Brush teeth
- Put laundry in hamper
- Feed self
- Drink from an open cup
- Pick up toys
- Wipe up spills
- Help with chores

**ADVANCED SKILLS**  
Children should be fairly independent with these skills prior to kindergarten.

- Zipping coat
- Tying shoes
- Button pants
- Snap jacket
- Recite grown-up's phone number

Teaching self-help skills takes lots of time and patience! It is sometimes easier to just do it for them. Resist the urge!

- ✓ Allow extra time.
- ✓ Talk your child through the skills as necessary.
- ✓ Support your child by starting the task (zipper, for example) and then allowing them to finish it.

©Play to Learn Preschool

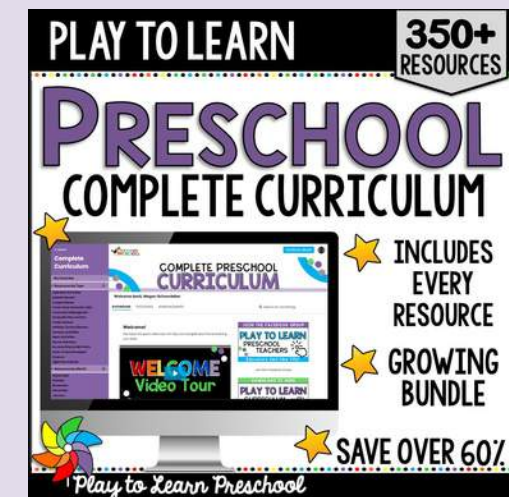
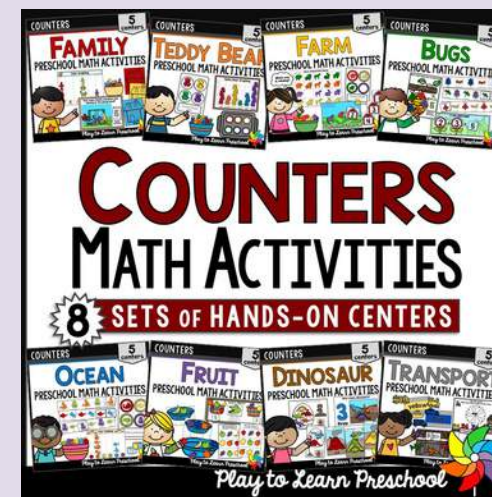
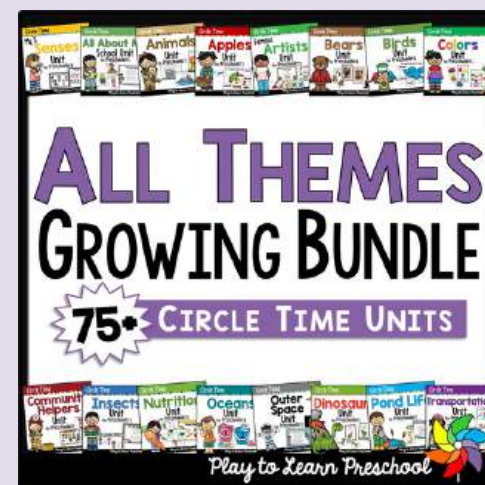
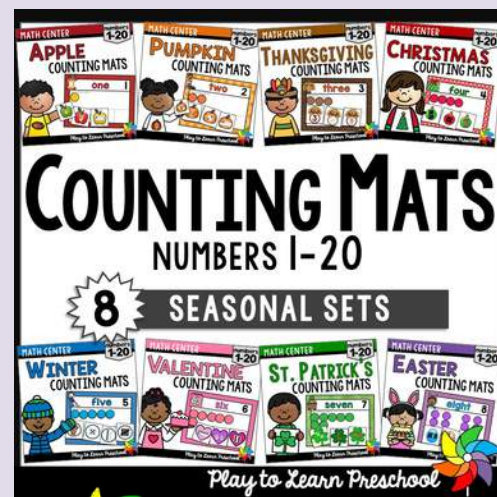
# HAVE FUN PLAYING AND LEARNING WITH YOUR STUDENTS!



## Meet Jamie

Jamie is the founder and C.E.O. of Play to Learn Preschool. She has her bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and a master's degree in reading education. She has taught in both public and private schools and loves to create meaningful and delightful early learning experiences for her preschool students.

© Play to Learn Preschool



@playtolearnps



Play to Learn Preschool