

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards

<http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/>



Vroom Tips 4-Year Olds



Vroom Tips are activities to do with your child that support growth and development. This document is a complete set of Vroom Tips that align with the standards for your child's age or you can join Vroom (<http://www.joinvroom.org>) to access over 1,000 tips and access other features of their site.



I. Physical Development

Dance Duet

Let your child pick a fun, fast song to dance to. Take turns making up dance moves. Your child can start, then you copy him/her. Keep going back and forth by repeating the moves and adding new moves. Before you know it you will have a whole dance routine!

Brainy Background

When you and your child build on each other's moves, your child is using his/her memory and focus to follow and remember the moves as well as his/her flexible thinking skills by making up his/her own moves. These skills are important for creativity and learning.

Ages Four Year Olds



I. Physical Development

Mini Chef

When you're cooking, have your child help with simple tasks like adding an ingredient. Ask him/her what he/she thinks will happen when you add the ingredient (like pouring a cup of milk into flour) and then talk together about what actually happens.

Brainy Background

This is a real-life science experiment. Guessing about what might happen promotes your child's curiosity, which is critical to learning.

Ages Four Year Olds



I. Physical Development

Near and Far

When you're outside, you can start a fun game with your child. Give him/her a place to stand and have him/her guess how many steps he/she is from you. When he/she walks back, have him/her count his/her steps aloud. Try all different distances!

Brainy Background

Young children can tell that there is a difference between large and small quantities! By doing fun, back and forth games like this, you're building on this capacity and helping your child understand more about what numbers stand for.

Ages Four Year Olds





I. Physical Development

Paint the Garden!

Going for a walk? Gather a brush, fill an empty container with water, and take a color walk outdoors, painting the flowers and leaves as you go. Talk with your child about what he/she sees. Enjoy the textures, colors, shapes, and living creatures by expressing your own joy and wonder.

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Taking a color walk helps your child notice the life all around him/her outside, building his/her skills in observing and describing his/her experiences. It also develops his/her appreciation for nature and provides a wonderful way for you to enjoy nature together.



I. Physical Development

Sign Game

When you're out and about, point out simple signs and ask your child what he/she thinks they mean. If he/she gets it wrong, remind him/her that it's a good guess, and ask him/her to keep guessing. Point out clues! (There is a barber inside, so the sign says "Hair cuts").

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Helping your child look for clues about what words mean is an important step in learning to read, write, and communicate, as well as developing critical thinking skills.



II. Approaches to Learning

Daily Do-Over

Bedtime is a great time to look back on all the fun you and your child packed into the day. So tonight, ask your child what his/her favorite parts of his/her day were—like stepping in a puddle or popping bubbles at bathtime. Then share yours with him/her—he/she will love hearing about your day!

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

By reflecting on your day together, you are helping your child build his/her vocabulary and his/her memory skills. And by sharing an event from your day you are giving him/her a peek into the world of adults.



Name Game

In a waiting room or just hanging out in the living room? Flip through a magazine with your child and take turns making up names for the people in it. Start naming people with A then B. Then go backwards and start with Z, then Y.

Brainy Background

Playing this game involves remembering, thinking creatively, and not going on autopilot. These are all important skills for learning new things.

Ages Four Year Olds



Snack Sorters

Give your child three different snacks like pretzels, cheese, and apples. Talk about what's the same and what's different. Ask your child if he/she can put one type of snack together (like all the pretzels). Then ask if he/she can find another way to sort the snacks, like by size, shape, or color.

Brainy Background

The skill of making connections is essential to learning. When your child puts things into categories, your child is learning concepts like size, color, and shape. He/She is also learning to think flexibly by seeing how things can go together in different ways.

Ages Four Year Olds



Tiny Tent

Grab a blanket to make a tiny tent at bedtime. Pretend to be camping outside with your child. Say: "Shh ... what do you hear? See? Smell? What do you think is happening outside our tent?" Afterward, snap a pic of your child at your campsite!

Brainy Background

Pretending is very important to learning—it helps your child to imagine, be creative, and take the perspective of others. And it's fun!

Ages Four Year Olds





III. Social and Emotional Development

Daily Do-Over

Bedtime is a great time to look back on all the fun you and your child packed into the day. So tonight, ask your child what his/her favorite parts of his/her day were—like stepping in a puddle or popping bubbles at bathtime. Then share yours with him/her—he/she will love hearing about your day!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

By reflecting on your day together, you are helping your child build his/her vocabulary and his/her memory skills. And by sharing an event from your day you are giving him/her a peek into the world of adults.



III. Social and Emotional Development

Face Off

Make a face that expresses a feeling and ask your child to make a face that expresses the opposite feeling. If you make a happy face, he/she should make a sad face. Talk about when he/she remembers people making these faces. Then take a selfie together with your goofiest faces!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

This game helps your child learn empathy, by practicing understanding the emotions of others—and express his/her own feelings. It's an important skill that we use every day as adults!



III. Social and Emotional Development

Faces and Feelings

Next time you're stuck in a waiting room with your child, pick up a magazine. Point out a face in one of the pictures and have your child copy it. Ask your child what he/she thinks the person is feeling. Discuss with him/her when you and he/she might have felt this way too.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When you talk about your own and others' feelings, you're helping your child learn to take a new perspective, which are helpful in getting along with others.





III. Social and Emotional Development

Menu Maker

Involve your child in meal planning. Ask him/her to choose how to organize the meal, like by color or family favorites. For example, you could have your child ask family members to choose their favorite foods and then help your child draw or write a menu based on everyone's favorites.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Your child must use his/her skills of organizing, making connections, and putting things into categories in order to create a menu for mealtime. Your child is also practicing early literacy skills and learning about the importance of language in everyday life.



III. Social and Emotional Development

Practice Positivity

Practice saying things in new ways with your child. You can take turns saying something negative then try to talk about the same thing in a positive way: "I don't like loud noises" can become "I like quiet sounds."

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When your child learns how to describe things and people in different ways, he/she is learning communication skills and how to understand others' perspectives. These skills are helpful in having good relationships now and in the future.



III. Social and Emotional Development

See You Later

Before you go to work or drop your child off somewhere, share a favorite "See you later" story, such as "After a while, crocodile" or "See you soon, cocoon." Create a new goodbye tradition. Tell him/her that after it's finished, it will be time for you to leave. Reassure your child that you will see him/her later.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Transitions can be difficult for toddlers. When you create a goodbye tradition through the "See you later" poem or another story, you give him/her some control, which helps him/her feel safe.





III. Social and Emotional Development

Shopping Search

When shopping for groceries (or anything really), call out something you're looking for on the shelf and have your child help you find it. Give him/her a clue: "It's in a red box." Can you do five in a row before you reach the end of the aisle?

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Helping your child pay attention and follow your clues improves his/her focus and self-control.



III. Social and Emotional Development

Thankful Tidbits

At bedtime, take turns with your child listing things you're thankful for. Here's an easy one to start with, "I'm thankful for you!" Then, help him/her think of something he/she is thankful to have in his/her life. See how many times you can go back and forth.

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Every back and forth conversation builds your child's brain. After he/she says something, repeat it back in complete sentences. And did you know that paying attention to what's positive in your life has been shown to lead to more happiness and satisfaction? For both of you!



III. Social and Emotional Development

Today's To-Do

Talk back and forth with your child about the plans for the day. Talk about what you are having for breakfast, where he/she is going for the day, what you might do, and what he/she hopes to do today.

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

There is no better way to learn how to plan than practicing. When you give your child the chance to think ahead about the day, you invite him/her to call on what he/she already knows and apply it in flexible ways to a new situation.



III. Social and Emotional Development

Use Your Words

Does your child get upset and start to cry and whine? Remind your child to use his/her words to say what is bothering him/her or what he/she wants. If your child is too upset to talk, try to guess what your child wants to say until he/she lets you know that you "got" it!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Helping your child learn to communicate his/her upset feelings in words is one of the most important tools you can give him/her for managing these feelings, and expressing himself/herself in ways that can be understood and responded to.



IV. Language and Literacy

Alphabet Moves

With your child, go through the alphabet and make the shape of each letter with your bodies. The letter "A" can be a triangle with your arms above your head and your legs standing wide. Ask your child to make the letter "B" with his/her body. Take turns making the other letters!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Your child must use focus, self-control, and memory to recall the shapes of letters to represent them with his/her body. Through firsthand experience, he/she is learning about language and literacy.



IV. Language and Literacy

Checklist

Help your child develop routines around eating times, playtime and bedtime. Help him/her make a chart for what he/she does when he/she wakes up: Get dressed, check. Eat breakfast, check. Even look out the window and say, "Will you need a raincoat today?" Grab jacket, check.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Having routines around the major times of the day helps children understand their experience and know what to expect. Predictability helps children feel safe and planning ahead is good for their brains.





Comparison Shopping

The grocery store can be a great place to build your child's brain on the go. Give him/her a banana and an apple to hold. "Which is heavier? Which is larger? Which is softer?" You can do in any aisle. Or even in any store!

Brainy Background

Games like these help your child to think like a scientist because he/she is observing the world around him/her and making guesses about how things compare or fit together. Repeat the game a few times with different foods for him/her to compare. Remember, repetition is how we learn!

Ages Four Year Olds



Daily Do-Over

Bedtime is a great time to look back on all the fun you and your child packed into the day. So tonight, ask your child what his/her favorite parts of his/her day were—like stepping in a puddle or popping bubbles at bathtime. Then share yours with him/her—he/she will love hearing about your day!

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Ages Four Year Olds



Face Off

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Brainy Background

This game helps your child learn empathy, by practicing understanding the emotions of others—and express his/her own feelings. It's an important skill that we use every day as adults!

Ages Four Year Olds





Find the B's

While waiting at the doctor's office or drugstore, look around you and try to spot things that start with a B sound. Take turns spotting B's (like babies, bottles, and baskets) and calling out the words to each other.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

By using waiting times for learning, you're helping your child learn to wait as well as to make connections among letters, words, and sounds—all laying the foundation for reading.



Find the Opposites

When you're waiting somewhere, ask your child to play the "Find the Opposites" with you. You call out something big and he/she responds with the opposite, something small. Start with easy comparisons, like big and small, high and low, or near and far.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When your child learns opposites and distances (near and far), he/she is learning concepts that he/she will use in math, science and reading. Remember, it is always important to play these games in a back and forth way because that is how your child learns best.



Fortune Teller

When driving somewhere, talk with your child about what he/she thinks will happen when he/she arrives: Who will he/she see? What will he/she do? What will he/she do after that? Make it like a conversation by continuing to ask him/her what will happen next.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Back and forth conversations are important in helping your child develop his/her language and communication skills.





Guess Who!

Work together with your child to invent a story about people you pass on the street. Ask him/her, "Tell me about that man who just walked by." See how he/she responds. You can help your child by asking questions like, "What do you think he likes to do for fun?" or "What is his favorite food?" Use your imagination!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

As you and your child create a story, your child uses his/her communication skills to figure out what he/she wants to say and how, in order to be understood. He/She also has a chance to practice seeing through others' eyes as he/she explores how different people might think or feel.



Home Museum

Invite your child to collect special items and display them around the house. Ask him/her to lead you through the museum and share with you why the items are meaningful to him/her. Then you take a turn to choose favorite things and share them with your child.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

As your child takes time to think about what he/she wants to say and how to say it, he/she is practicing important communication skills and using memory to recall past experiences. Celebrating your child's words, feelings, and actions sets up a positive learning environment.



List Master

When you're out running errands, put your child in charge of the list. Have him/her help list out a few things you guys have to do that day. When you finish each task, cross it off the list together!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When you make a list and cross things off the list together, it helps your child learn that written words represent real-world activities.





Love Connections

Take turns talking to your child about love connections. "I love you as much as a bee loves its stinger." "I love you as much as a worm loves the dirt." "I love you as much as a car loves gas." Ask your child to come up with one. Keep going back and forth.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When your child is challenged to find connections and make comparisons, he/she is learning new ways to sort and categorize information. These skills are important in math, reading, and science. You are also promoting creativity and a sense of humor.



Memory Book

The next time you come back from visiting your family, invite your child to help you make a memory book using one or more photos from your visit. Write the words that your child uses to describe what's happening in the pictures.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When you write down your child's words after a family visit, he/she makes connections between his/her real experiences, photos, and his/her words. He/She uses his/her working memory to remember details of the visit and his/her communication skills to describe what happened.



Menu Maker

Involve your child in meal planning. Ask him/her to choose how to organize the meal, like by color or family favorites. For example, you could have your child ask family members to choose their favorite foods and then help your child draw or write a menu based on everyone's favorites.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Your child must use his/her skills of organizing, making connections, and putting things into categories in order to create a menu for mealtime. Your child is also practicing early literacy skills and learning about the importance of language in everyday life.





Nature Stories

While outside with your child, look for rocks, leaves, or pinecones, and use these objects to retell one of your child's favorite stories or songs. For example, sing "Old MacDonald" and pretend to use the objects as different animals. Ask your child for ideas.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

At this age, your child uses pretend play to practice his/her understanding of symbols—that one thing can stand for another. Being able to make these kinds of connections and to think creatively are important parts of learning how to read and communicate.



Playtime Picks

Pick a color or letter with your child and, together, go on a scavenger hunt to find as many things as you can in three minutes. How many things in the house are blue? Count out loud together as you find each item. You can also play with letters: How many things do you see that start with T?

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

"I Spy" games like this one are great brain builders. They make your child aware of his/her environment and teach him/her to make connections between similar things. You can try this game with letters, colors, shapes—anything really!



Reporting Live!

While waiting at the supermarket, drugstore, or doctor's office, pretend you're a newscaster. Using your pretend microphone, ask your child questions: "What do you see? Who else is here? What do you think is going to happen next?"

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Giving your child a chance to tell the news provides his/her with an opportunity to observe what is happening around him/her and put it into words. He/She is learning to be an effective communicator. There's nothing like a pretend microphone to get someone talking!





Secret Letters

As your child lies down at night, slowly draw a letter on his/her back with your fingertip. Can he/she guess what it is? Repeat the letter again. The more you practice this together, the better you will get! Soon you will be ready to write whole words!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Your child learns about the world through his/her senses and through back and forth conversations. In this game, you are giving him/her a chance to make connections between not only how letters look but also something new—how drawing a letter on his/her back feels!



Shelf Help

Ask your child to help you organize a shelf in the kitchen. You can suggest categories like, “boxes, cans, cereal, and crackers.” Let him/her organize and categorize. You can even give him/her a towel to wipe out the shelves to help you get started.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Children typically love to do grown-up things. When your child categorizes and organizes, he/she is making connections that will help him/her with math, reading, and science. He/She is also putting himself/herself in your role, which promotes perspective-taking skills.



Sign Game

When you're out and about, point out simple signs and ask your child what he/she thinks they mean. If he/she gets it wrong, remind him/her that it's a good guess, and ask him/her to keep guessing. Point out clues! (There is a barber inside, so the sign says “Hair cuts”).

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Helping your child look for clues about what words mean is an important step in learning to read, write, and communicate, as well as developing critical thinking skills.





Stamp Collection

Take your child with you to get the mail. Check out the different stamps and help your child compare them. Ask him/her, "Are these two stamps exactly the same? How are they different?"

Brainy Background

Figuring out what's the same and different helps your child pay attention and create categories. For example, both of the stamps have blue in them but one's a bird and one's a flower. Creating categories is important in math thinking!

Ages Four Year Olds



Super Secret Handshake

Invent a super secret handshake for you and your child. Take turns adding a step (like shaking twice). Repeat it till you both have it down. Now change one of the steps. How does he/she respond? Go back and forth between the new and old way.

Brainy Background

Creating and learning a super secret handshake helps your child remember and do what is needed to achieve a goal. This is a big step in learning self-control.

Ages Four Year Olds



Tiny Tent

Grab a blanket to make a tiny tent at bedtime. Pretend to be camping outside with your child. Say: "Shh ... what do you hear? See? Smell? What do you think is happening outside our tent?" Afterward, snap a pic of your child at your campsite!

Brainy Background

Pretending is very important to learning—it helps your child to imagine, be creative, and take the perspective of others. And it's fun!

Ages Four Year Olds





Today's To-Do's

Talk back and forth with your child about the plans for the day. Talk about what you are having for breakfast, where he/she is going for the day, what you might do, and what he/she hopes to do today.

Brainy Background

There is no better way to learn how to plan than practicing. When you give your child the chance to think ahead about the day, you invite him/her to call on what he/she already knows and apply it in flexible ways to a new situation.

Ages Four Year Olds



Tomorrow Talk

Today's the perfect time to talk to your child about tomorrow. Find out what he/she hopes tomorrow has in store for him/her: "If you could do anything tomorrow, what would you most want to do? What next?" It's a good way to learn about his/her hopes for the future.

Brainy Background

Asking your child to think about the future helps him/her make predictions and think flexibly. These types of questions also allow your child to make up his/her own answers, encouraging him/her to be creative.

Ages Four Year Olds



Cart Manager

While grocery shopping, ask your child if he/she can manage the cart by sorting your shopping into vegetables, fruits, and frozen foods or by color. Can he/she find a way to keep the boxes lined up so they don't topple over?

Brainy Background

When your child is managing the food and the space for the items, he/she is using math concepts to sort the items. Sorting is important for learning math.

Ages Four Year Olds





Find the Opposites

When you're waiting somewhere, ask your child to play the "Find the Opposites" with you. You call out something big and he/she responds with the opposite, something small. Start with easy comparisons, like big and small, high and low, or near and far.

Brainy Background

When your child learns opposites and distances (near and far), he/she is learning concepts that he/she will use in math, science and reading. Remember, it is always important to play these games in a back and forth way because that is how your child learns best.

Ages Four Year Olds



In the Right Order

Have your child look for letters or numbers in a specific order on signs and license plates. You can say, "Can you find a 1 and a 2 next to each other?" or "Can you find an A and an E next to each other?" Take turns and see who can find the most.

Brainy Background

Your child must pay close attention to their surroundings to find letters or numbers and keep track of what they have seen and how many times. They're also using their working memory to remember the correct order to look for.

Ages Four Year Olds



Little Lineup

Pick a few objects around the house, and line three of them up by size from smallest to biggest. Talk with your child about the lineup. Have him/her turn around while you rearrange the objects. See if your child can put them back into the original order and talk him/her through it!

Brainy Background

Lining objects up by size gives your child the chance to practice using information he/she knows about size. Applying information to new situations—like remembering the old order when the objects are rearranged—is an important thinking skill for school and life.

Ages Four Year Olds





Nature Patterns

Have your child collect items like rocks and leaves. Arrange them in a pattern like one rock, two leaves, one rock, two leaves. Then mix them up and ask your child to recreate your pattern. Can he/she remember the order? Have your child take a turn making a simple pattern for you to remember.

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Noticing and recreating patterns requires your child to use his/her focus, memory, and ability to make connections. These are all important skills for learning. Playing with patterns also gives your child practice with math ideas like numbers, shapes, and comparing sizes.



Pick a Hand

Play a game by hiding something small in your hand behind your back. First, show your child the object, like a coin or a pen, in your hand. Put it behind your back and change hands or leave it in the same. Ask your child to guess which hand the object is in. Let your child hide the object and you guess.

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

When your child guesses which hand the object is in, he/she is focusing, looking for clues, and making predictions. This game helps build an understanding of math concepts. And taking turns is important!



Playtime Picks

Pick a color or letter with your child and, together, go on a scavenger hunt to find as many things as you can in three minutes. How many things in the house are blue? Count out loud together as you find each item. You can also play with letters: How many things do you see that start with T?

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

"I Spy" games like this one are great brain builders. They make your child aware of his/her environment and teach him/her to make connections between similar things. You can try this game with letters, colors, shapes—anything really!



V. Mathematical Thinking

Prepare a Pattern

Do you have a muffin tin or an empty egg carton? Look for things that can fit inside each hole, like pen caps. Make a pattern, like one red cap in a hole, then two blue caps in another, then another red cap. Then give the caps to your child. Can he/she match the pattern?

Brainy Background

Making and re-creating patterns asks your child to focus and use his/her working memory to keep the pattern in mind, even when it isn't there anymore. Being able to recognize patterns is an important skill for math, science, and language learning.

Ages Four Year Olds



V. Mathematical Thinking

Shelf Help

Ask your child to help you organize a shelf in the kitchen. You can suggest categories like, "boxes, cans, cereal, and crackers." Let him/her organize and categorize. You can even give him/her a towel to wipe out the shelves to help you get started.

Brainy Background

Children typically love to do grown-up things. When your child categorizes and organizes, he/she is making connections that will help him/her with math, reading, and science. He/She is also putting himself/herself in your role, which promotes perspective-taking skills.

Ages Four Year Olds



V. Mathematical Thinking

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Take your child with you to get the mail. Check out the different stamps and help your child compare them. Ask him/her, "Are these two stamps exactly the same? How are they different?"

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Figuring out what's the same and different helps your child pay attention and create categories. For example, both of the stamps have blue in them but one's a bird and one's a flower. Creating categories is important in math thinking!

Ages Four Year Olds





V. Mathematical Thinking

Waiting Games

Anytime you're waiting in line, ask your child to guess how long until it's your turn. How many numbers can you count? Or how many times will you sing, "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star?" Take turns inventing waiting games.

Brainy Background

Waiting games are not about right or wrong answers. They're actually about developing strategies for waiting or delaying gratification. Studies have found that delaying gratification helps children thrive now and in the future.

Ages Four Year Olds



VI. Scientific Inquiry

Bath Bottle

Give your child a clean plastic bottle to play with in the tub. How many different things can he/she do with it? Push it under the water? Fill it with water? Float it like a boat? As he/she tries something new ask him/her, "What do you think will happen?"

Brainy Background

Your child likes to make things happen. And it's even more fun when you watch and share his/her pleasure by having him/her guess what will happen as he/she discovers more about his/her world and his/her impact on how things work. When he/she plays this way, he/she is thinking like a scientist.

Ages Four Year Olds



VI. Scientific Inquiry

Cooking Lessons

No matter what you're cooking, your child can be a helper. Give your child a play-by-play of the ingredients you're using and if it's safe, let him/her touch, smell, or taste them. Have a conversation about what you're making: "Red pepper makes the beans spicy."

Brainy Background

Talking about everyday activities as you do them helps build children's communication skills—and their brains! Be sure to point to objects as you say their name to help your child learn new words.

Ages Four Year Olds





VI. Scientific Inquiry

Finger Telescope

When outside, make a telescope with your hands. Circle your fingers and hold them to your eye and look at your child telling him/her, "I see you!" Show him/her how to make his/her own finger telescope. Take turns looking through the finger telescope and sharing what you see.

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

This simple game is not only fun, it gives your child the chance to pay attention to his/her surroundings and think flexibly as he/she sees familiar people and things in a new way. Being flexible is a big part of problem-solving and making the most out of life.



VI. Scientific Inquiry

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Brainy Background

Noticing and recreating patterns requires your child to use his/her focus, memory, and ability to make connections. These are all important skills for learning. Playing with patterns also gives your child practice with math ideas like numbers, shapes, and comparing sizes.



VI. Scientific Inquiry

Paint the Garden!

Going for a walk? Gather a brush, fill an empty container with water, and take a color walk outdoors, painting the flowers and leaves as you go. Talk with your child about what he/she sees. Enjoy the textures, colors, shapes, and living creatures by expressing your own joy and wonder.

Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Taking a color walk helps your child notice the life all around him/her outside, building his/her skills in observing and describing his/her experiences. It also develops his/her appreciation for nature and provides a wonderful way for you to enjoy nature together.



VI. Scientific Inquiry

Salty-Sweet Showcase

When you're in the kitchen, let your child try a few grains of salt and then a few of sugar. Ask how they taste. Which does your child like better? What foods taste like they might have salt in them and what foods taste like they have sugar in them?

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

First-hand experiences like these help your child think like a scientist and use his/her senses to understand the world around him/her. Having back and forth conversations about these discoveries together makes the experience richer."



VI. Scientific Inquiry

Skipper

If you are near water (a pond, river, or the sea), skip rocks into the water, talking back and forth about how differences in the shapes and sizes of the rocks affect how they skip. If you're near a big puddle, you can do a similar experiment with rocks, sticks, or leaves.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

This game helps your child learn to create science experiments—to focus on understanding the evidence (how the size and weight of the rock affects how the rock skips) and to make predictions based on that evidence. Thus, your child is learning critical thinking skills.



VII. Social Studies

Acting Out

When your child does something that he/she should NOT do, tell your child why he/she should not have done it. Then ask your child to draw a picture of what happened on a piece of paper. On the other side of the paper, have your child draw what he/she could have done in a better way. Talk about why this new idea would be a better choice.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Using this strategy changes your approach from "dealing with misbehavior" to "promoting learning skills." When your child comes up with new solutions, he/she is learning not to go on autopilot but to think of more effective ways to deal with problems.





Bathtime Leader

As your child gets older, encourage him/her to take the lead at bathtime. Ask him/her: "What will you need for your bath? A towel? Clean clothes?" When he/she is in the bath, you can ask, "What will you do first?" Invite him/her to choose which body part to wash and do it together.

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Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Encouraging your child to take the lead in daily routines shows him/her that you believe he/she can do things independently, which helps him/her feel confident and capable. This helps your child to actively take on challenges and solve problems now and in the future.



Faces and Feelings

Next time you're stuck in a waiting room with your child, pick up a magazine. Point out a face in one of the pictures and have your child copy it. Ask your child what he/she thinks the person is feeling. Discuss with him/her when you and he/she might have felt this way too.

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Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

When you talk about your own and others' feelings, you're helping your child learn to take a new perspective, which are helpful in getting along with others.



Find the Opposites

When you're waiting somewhere, ask your child to play the "Find the Opposites" with you. You call out something big and he/she responds with the opposite, something small. Start with easy comparisons, like big and small, high and low, or near and far.

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Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

When your child learns opposites and distances (near and far), he/she is learning concepts that he/she will use in math, science and reading. Remember, it is always important to play these games in a back and forth way because that is how your child learns best.



Follow the Leader

Walking somewhere? Turn your trip into follow the leader. Ask your child, “Can you do what I do?” while you pat your head. Then play the opposite. If you pat your head, have your child pat his/her stomach. Keep switching from the same and opposite.

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Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

The game of doing the same and then opposite actions helps your child remember the rules of the game, think flexibly, and not go on autopilot. This helps him/her learn to pay attention and exercise self-control—essential skills for school and life success.



Fortune Teller

When driving somewhere, talk with your child about what he/she thinks will happen when he/she arrives: Who will he/she see? What will he/she do? What will he/she do after that? Make it like a conversation by continuing to ask him/her what will happen next.

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Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

Back and forth conversations are important in helping your child develop his/her language and communication skills.”



Home Museum

Invite your child to collect special items and display them around the house. Ask him/her to lead you through the museum and share with you why the items are meaningful to him/her. Then you take a turn to choose favorite things and share them with your child.

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Ages Four Year Olds



Brainy Background

As your child takes time to think about what he/she wants to say and how to say it, he/she is practicing important communication skills and using memory to recall past experiences. Celebrating your child’s words, feelings, and actions sets up a positive learning environment.



List Master

When you're out running errands, put your child in charge of the list. Have him/her help list out a few things you guys have to do that day. When you finish each task, cross it off the list together!

Brainy Background

When you make a list and cross things off the list together, it helps your child learn that written words represent real-world activities.

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Ages Four Year Olds



Memory Book

The next time you come back from visiting your family, invite your child to help you make a memory book using one or more photos from your visit. Write the words that your child uses to describe what's happening in the pictures.

Brainy Background

When you write down your child's words after a family visit, he/she makes connections between his/her real experiences, photos, and his/her words. He/She uses his/her working memory to remember details of the visit and his/her communication skills to describe what happened.

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Ages Four Year Olds



New Timers

When you're at a playground, help your child do things he/she hasn't done before. Try out the swings or the slide, or even feel the different textures on the ground. As long as he/she is safe, let him/her try new playground experiences, with a helping hand if he/she needs it. How does he/she respond? Celebrate what he/she says and does!

Brainy Background

Giving your child the chance to do safe things by himself/herself helps him/her feel confident, competent, and to learn to take on challenges.

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Ages Four Year Olds





Silly Charades

Play a game where your child has to guess what you are. Make different facial expressions and body movements and see if he/she can get it. Sound effects are allowed too! Then ask your child to be something and you try to guess. You can pretend to be animals, objects, or people you both know.

Brainy Background

When your child is guessing what or who you are, he/she is using observational skills and memories of past experiences. When your child is acting and pretending to be someone or something else, his/her perspective taking and communicating skills are promoted.

Ages Four Year Olds



Skipper

If you are near water (a pond, river, or the sea), skip rocks into the water, talking back and forth about how differences in the shapes and sizes of the rocks affect how they skip. If you're near a big puddle, you can do a similar experiment with rocks, sticks, or leaves.

Brainy Background

This game helps your child learn to create science experiments—to focus on understanding the evidence (how the size and weight of the rock affects how the rock skips) and to make predictions based on that evidence. Thus, your child is learning critical thinking skills.

Ages Four Year Olds



Today's To-Do

Talk back and forth with your child about the plans for the day. Talk about what you are having for breakfast, where he/she is going for the day, what you might do, and what he/she hopes to do today.

Brainy Background

There is no better way to learn how to plan than practicing. When you give your child the chance to think ahead about the day, you invite him/her to call on what he/she already knows and apply it in flexible ways to a new situation.

Ages Four Year Olds





What Can You Do?

Ask your child to think of things he/she can do in the park like jump, climb, take giant steps, or collect stones. Ask your child to show you one of them. Respond with something you can do, like collect leaves or make a telescope with your hands. Go back and forth.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Are there things you can do together? Things your child can do that you can't? Things you can do that your child can't? You are giving your child the chance to compare and understand that people are the same in some ways and different in others.



Acting Out

When your child does something that he/she should NOT do, tell your child why he/she should not have done it. Then ask your child to draw a picture of what happened on a piece of paper. On the other side of the paper, have your child draw what he/she could have done in a better way. Talk about why this new idea would be a better choice.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Using this strategy changes your approach from "dealing with misbehavior" to "promoting learning skills." When your child comes up with new solutions, he/she is learning not to go on autopilot but to think of more effective ways to deal with problems.



Car Clappers

Sitting in a car in traffic makes anyone antsy. So turn it into a clapping game with just a few simple rules. When the radio is on, have your child clap to the music. When you turn the radio off, your child stops clapping and "freezes."

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Changing the rules of the game requires your child to think flexibly and respond to new information, instead of just going on autopilot. This kind of focus and self-control is an important skill that we use everyday—even as adults!





VIII. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Dance Duet

Let your child pick a fun, fast song to dance to. Take turns making up dance moves. Your child can start, then you copy him/her. Keep going back and forth by repeating the moves and adding new moves. Before you know it you will have a whole dance routine!

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When you and your child build on each other's moves, your child is using his/her memory and focus to follow and remember the moves as well as his/her flexible thinking skills by making up his/her own moves. These skills are important for creativity and learning.



VIII. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Home Museum

Invite your child to collect special items and display them around the house. Ask him/her to lead you through the museum and share with you why the items are meaningful to him/her. Then you take a turn to choose favorite things and share them with your child.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

As your child takes time to think about what he/she wants to say and how to say it, he/she is practicing important communication skills and using memory to recall past experiences. Celebrating your child's words, feelings, and actions sets up a positive learning environment.



VIII. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Kitchen Music

When you are cooking, let your child create an instrument using a plastic container with measuring spoons or keys inside. Clap a certain rhythm and ask your child to try and copy your beat with his/her homemade instrument. Then have your child take a turn at leading, and you follow his/her beat.

Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Going back and forth in a game like this helps your child pay attention and remember the pattern of noises. It's a great brain builder!





VIII. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Menu Maker

Involve your child in meal planning. Ask him/her to choose how to organize the meal, like by color or family favorites. For example, you could have your child ask family members to choose their favorite foods and then help your child draw or write a menu based on everyone's favorites.

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Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

Your child must use his/her skills of organizing, making connections, and putting things into categories in order to create a menu for mealtime. Your child is also practicing early literacy skills and learning about the importance of language in everyday life.



VIII. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Off Beats

When you're doing the dishes, use one of the clean pots and a spoon to make a drum. When you hit the drum twice, have your child hit it once, making the opposite beat.

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Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

This game calls on very important learning skills: paying attention, remembering how many times you hit the drum, and then not going on autopilot, but doing the opposite.



VIII. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Pretend Packing

Pretend you and your child are packing for a trip. It can be for a visit to a family member's house or an imaginary trip, like to outer space. Take turns naming things to bring. As he/she gets older, you can try coming up with things in alphabetical order.

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Ages Four Year Olds

Brainy Background

When you take turns, you help your child practice his/her self-control. As your child thinks of items to bring on your trip, he/she must use what he/she already knows to imagine the future. This involves thinking critically to plan and thinking flexibly to come up with new and creative ideas.

