

Activities from the kitchen cupboards, play boxes and airing cupboards!

Here are a list of ideas and activities which can be played at home. They use free and found or low-cost materials which may be found in the home or can be collected on a walk.

These activities may seem very simple but when children are involved in one activity, they will be covering many areas of learning including maths, language and literacy and creativity. These activities can be used with a range of ages and can be adjusted to the age and stage of the child.

Young children must never be left unsupervised.



The following activities will support children to develop strong muscles, dexterity and flexibility in their wrists, hands and fingers which will help them with pencil control and stamina for writing in the future. It will also help with hand-eye co-ordination.

Use sponges to squeeze water up and then transfer to another bowl and squeeze it out.

Write a secret message and fold the paper into a paper aeroplane and make it fly.

Make a zig zag book or a fan– you could make this out of a piece of paper or the card from a cereal packet.

Use tweezers or tongs to transfer small items or scrunched up balls of paper from one baking tray to another. How many can you move in a minute?

Blowing bubbles and then popping them - Take it in turns to blow and pop! Pop them with your finger or a pencil. Count them as you pop them.

Thread beads/cereal/pasta shapes onto a shoelace or a piece of string. Tie a small piece of card or paper to the end of the string to stop the pieces falling off.

Poke dry spaghetti through the holes of a colander.

Scrunch up a piece of paper or tinfoil into a small ball and play table football by flicking it with your finger – use tins of beans for goal posts

Cut a kitchen roll into small round slices and thread them over a kitchen roll holder/rolling pin or hang them on a mug tree.

Wrap up small objects in tin foil. Guess what they are before unwrapping.

The following ideas will support children to recognise numbers, understand about the quantity of that number, and recognise shapes.

Make number cards 1-5, 1-10, 1-20 out of the card from a cereal packet. Peg the numbers on the washing line. (or onto a coat hanger or just lay them on the floor or table). Remove a number and go and find that number of items. E.g. find 3 spoons. You might find three spoons that are the same or 3 that are different such as 2 teaspoons and 1 wooden spoon. Discuss that you still have 3 spoons, but you have 2 the same and 1 that is different.

Save milk bottle tops, lids from coffee and pasta sauce jars and use them for counters, write letters on them to make words or make some floor artwork.

Make a pattern – Sing 'Put a green and put a red, put a green and put a red, put a green and put a red, now you've made a pattern'

Find sticks of different sizes on a walk and put them together to make shapes.

How quickly can you match up pairs of socks/gloves – talk about what makes the socks the same/different – length, pattern, - introduce language such as heel, toe, cuff, sole, odd sock.

Collect junk mail such as pizza delivery leaflets. Talk about the different letters and numbers you can see. Can you find ones that are the same as in your name or the same as your age?

Go for a maths walk and photograph any numbers you find – door numbers, street signs/road signs/registration plates. Talk about what the numbers look like/are they in order/odd/even? Can you find the number that's the same age as you?

The following ideas will support children to develop their imaginations and creativity. This will then help them to develop their story telling and ultimately their story writing skills later on.

Turn an empty cardboard box, laundry basket or lay out some cushions into a boat, car or aeroplane, a spaceship – draw a map of where you are going. Use empty cardboard tubes to make telescopes or binoculars.

Create a song bag/basket - put some toy together which might match a well know rhyme etc.

Create a feely box - Cut a hole in a box and put several objects inside. Can the child feel around inside and guess what it is they are holding?

Freeze some plastic animals/Duplo etc in pots of water and then put them in a bowl the following day. How long before the ice melts? What makes it melt faster?

Draw a face on a small paper bag and make a paper bag hand puppet.

Children don't need fancy toys to make up stories. Provide objects such as a stone, a comb, a spoon and a pinecone. Let children take the lead to make up and tell the story. Write the story down and read it back – It might be a story about a stone, a comb and a cone but the stone might become a baby, the spoon the mummy, the comb a dog and the cone a cat.

One of the best resources for developing imagination is the floor. What can your living room floor become – a swimming pool, an island?

Make a den using blankets and chairs – or is a bear cave or an underwater world? Add a story book and a torch.