

The California Language Arts Content Standards identify critical reading and writing skills that are predictors of literacy success. Possible experiences are listed by content area.

## Concepts about Print

**Name Cups** Place cut-out letters of your child's name in a cup and have them put their names in order. Put letters to other family member's names in the cup as well and help them spell out those names. Have your child compare the letters in their names to other family member's names. A variation on this would be to have letters spread out on the table and have your child find the letters in their name to put in their cup.

**Messaging** Put your family member's names in a bag and have your child draw one out. Your child can then "write" a message to their "pen pal" (the person whose name they've drawn). Have them dictate a short message, draw pictures to illustrate and then deliver to their "pen pal" to read.

**Treasure Hunt** Family members search for objects using a set of cards with photos and drawings paired with words to guide them. They bring their "treasure" back to the group to share, demonstrating the match between the object and graphic. Encourage your child to look at the accompanying word.

**Obstacle Course** Set up an obstacle course for your child to practice a variety of motor skills (e.g., walking, running, balancing, crawling, etc.). Prepare written labels and instructions with pictures, signs and words for each part of the course.

For example, by the steps post a sign for "Steps" and the direction "Go Up", accompanied by an upward arrow and a simplistic drawing of a person climbing up steps. Before your child begins the course, show them each part of the course, and have them read or interpret the symbols and signs.

## Phonological Awareness

**Clap the Syllables** Begin by saying your child's name. Then say the name in syllables, clapping for each beat. Encourage your child to clap the beat with you. Each family member's name is said and clapped in turn.

**Broken Word Game** Say to your child, "Guess what I'm saying", and say a word in syllables such as mo-tor-cy-cle, di-no-saur. Allow your child to take turns being the leader of the game with other family members.

**Rhyming Games** Take some pictures displaying rhyming words and spread them out on the table beginning with one pair of pictures and gradually expanding the set. To help your child find rhyming mates, each pair of rhyming pictures can have matching jagged, puzzle-like edges. Your child can match pairs, say the words represented by the pictures, and fit the pairs together.

**What Did You Hear** Have your child close their eyes and listen to the sounds around them. After approximately one minute, have your child open their eyes and describe what they think happened while their eyes were closed. You can add to the game by intentionally making sounds for the children to identify.

**Find the Ticking Clock** Find a wind up clock or timer that ticks and have your family members take turns hiding it while others cover their eyes. Then, guess where it is.



## Alphabetic Principle

**Magazine Letter Search** Give your child magazine pages (or food flyers) and scissors and ask them to go on a letter search. Have your child cut out the letters they choose and glue them on a piece of paper. You can frame the search by asking your child to find letters in their name or you could print letters on cards and put them in a grab bag for your child to draw and search for.

**Alphabet Soup** Place foam, wooden or magnetic letters in a few large bowls with soup ladles. Give all players a small bowl. Family members each take a turn to take a ladle of letters. Each player explores their "serving", identifies their letters and compares with others. You can also add containers for your child to sort and count their letters.

**Alphabet Bingo** Make or purchase cards with upper case and lower case letters and a picture that represents the object.

**Clay/Playdough Letters** Children love to roll playdough or clay to make long "snakes". Encourage your child to form letters with their rolled clay.

**Find the Letters in Your Name** Divide a sheet of paper for your child that says "Letters in my name" written on one half, and "Letters not in my name" written on the other half. While out and about or inside your home ask your child to look for signs, labels, mail, books and other objects that have letters on them. Your child can then decide which half of the paper to write that letter on.

Some activities adapted from *Ladders to Literacy A Preschool Activity Book* by Angela Notari-Syverson, PhD., Rollanda E. O'Connor, Ph. D. and Patricia F. Vadasy, M.P.H



Have your child select a symbol (you could use a set of stickers for example) that starts with the same letter and sound as your child's name as well as other family members names. For example, Maria Monkey, Alex Apple, Lulu Lion, Mom Muffin, Dad Dinosaur, Tomas Tree etc. Then, activities can be planned that give your child opportunities to recognize the letters in their name and the sounds they make. **These activities give your child practice in letter knowledge, letter recognition, name recognition and phonemic awareness.**

**Find Your Name** Place all the family names (pets too if you want) with their linked symbol face up on the table or floor where your child easily reach. Have your child find theirs. Ask them to say the name and name the corresponding object and make the first sound. Next they can repeat this with the other family member's names.

**Name Grab Bag** Put all the family names with their symbols in a bag or basket. Ask your child to pull one out and decide whose name it is.

**Names Memory Game** Make a double set of family names with symbols. Place them on the table or floor face down. Your child turns over a card and says the name and sound. The card is left face up and turns continue until a match is found.

**Find the Name** Place the family's names with symbols on the base of a wooden puzzle under each puzzle piece. Children take turns removing a piece and identifying whose name is underneath.

**Name Movement Game** Spread large letter links on the floor. Play music and when the music stops call out a name and have your child find that name.

**Matching Letters to Names** Give children plastic, wood or foam alphabet letters and have them select the letters that correspond to their name.

**Letter Link Song** Make up a song such as:  
(Sung to tune of Frère Jacques: <https://youtu.be/6-JoTos8-oE>)

Ruby robot, Ruby robot

R-R-R (make r sound) 2X

Ruby Ruby robot, Ruby Ruby Robot

R-R-R 2X



The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and State of California have developed content standards for Math. Possible activities and experiences are listed by math content area.

### Number Sense and Operations

**Games with Dice** Make a large die out of a box with number dots and the corresponding number symbol. Children take turns rolling the die, identifying the number and then leading the family in doing the action that number of times. They will practice ways of representing numbers and counting

**Number Bingo Game** Make playing cards that have written numbers in each of the squares. Children take turns rolling the die and placing the correct number of dots under that number. They will practice ways of representing numbers and counting.

**Bears in a Cave** Using an overturned plastic sorting tray or box to represent a cave and seven or eight plastic counting toys (bears, dinosaurs, animals etc), two family members act out a scenario in which a group of toys are having a picnic and decide to play hide-and-seek. While the child covers their eyes, the other person takes some of the small toys and hides them in the cave, leaving the remaining ones in plain sight. The child who has been covering their eyes tries to guess how many bears are hiding in the cave practicing counting and addition and subtraction

**The Goldfish Game** A family member tells a story about a whale who loves to eat goldfish. The children play the part of the whale and places the number of fish the family member says on a blue napkin that represents the ocean. The family member then says how many goldfish the whale gobbles up. The child eats that many goldfish and then identifies how many goldfish are left. This would practice counting and simple addition and subtraction.

A variation of this game would be for the child to use small bottle lids to match to the number of fish they have. The game could be for some fish to hide in the caps from the whale and practice one-to-one correspondence.

### Geometry

**Secret Socks** A family member can create a "secret sock" which contains several mystery shapes. The secret sock is given to the child. The child feels the shapes inside the socks without looking, and in their own words, the child describes what they think is inside. This activity gives children practice in identifying and naming shapes and their properties.

**Shape Scavenger Hunt** Show your child a few different shapes. Discuss the similarities and differences of those shapes. Have your child choose a shape to look for in the environment such as a circle. Your child can now go into the environment to find an object shaped like the shape they chose. They will be identifying and naming shapes and their properties.

**Shape Story** Using differently shaped flannel pieces or drawing shapes on a large piece of paper with markers, make up a story with each shape having a name and character such as Cindy Circle, Trini Triangle. Integrate the characteristics of the shapes into the story such as the circle rolling because it has no points and the triangle looking the same no matter which way it turns. Have your child take turns continuing the story. This story gives your child practice in identifying and naming shapes and their properties.

**Shape Sculptures** Give your child a collection of twist ties, pipe cleaners and/or rubber bands to rearrange and reshape. Describe what they are doing with the materials and model new ways to use them. They will be practicing creating and naming two and 3 dimensional shapes.

**Shape Printing** Give your child objects of different shapes to dip in paint and create prints with. Look for and comment on patterns and properties of the prints they create. This activity involves children in naming two dimensional shapes and patterning.



## Algebra

**Spin and Match** This activity requires game pieces of varying colors and features (large/small, light/heavy, dark/light, curved/straight) and a spinner made by a family member. The spinner will reflect the features of the pieces. For example if the children are interested in big and little, a spinner is divided in half with BIG written on one side and little written on the other. If they want to sort by color or shape, the spinner can be divided into wedges of color or sections with shape pictured. Sitting in a circle around the pieces and spinner, family members and the child take turns spinning, reading the spinner, and selecting the indicated pieces. This game gives children practice in sorting and classifying.

**Frogs on Lily Pads** Using small plastic frogs and two inch squares of paper in a variety of colors, tell a story about a frog who crossed a pond by jumping on colored lily pads. Arrange the squares in alternating colors in a line. As you make the frog jump say the color of the square. Other animals could be substituted in the story. Your child can then use their frogs and squares to make their own colored path and build on the story. This activity gives your child practice in classifying, color naming and patterning.

**Graphing** Graphs can be created with your child using any concrete characteristic such as eye or hair color, type of shoes they're wearing, a grouping of objects such as buttons (colors, how many holes), colors/kinds of vehicles family has, number of letters in your name, etc. Your child will be practicing sorting, classifying, counting and comparing amounts.

**Animal Habitats** Talk with your child about the different places that animals live (farm, forest, sea). Provide photos and natural items such as sticks, leaves, shells, and small plastic animals and have them sort the animals to create animal habitats. This activity gives them practice in sorting, classifying, and counting.

**Treasure Collections** Have your child gather objects to make a collection. These collections could happen on a neighborhood walk, outside on the playground at the park or from inside the home. Give your child boxes or other containers and spread the collection items on the table. Initiate the activity by talking about the characteristics of the items you see and notice how things are the same or different. Encourage them to explore their collections, talk about aspects of the objects (shape, color, texture, etc.) and place them in groupings. Add magnifying glasses for more detailed examination. This activity gives children practice in classifying, sorting and seriating.

**People Patterns** Your child can look at the clothing they're wearing (colors, buttons/zippers, shoes/sandals) or decide on a way they want to pose their body (hands up/ hands in front of their body, bending to the left/bending to the right) and create patterns using other family members. You could start by suggesting a pattern and then see if your child can suggest other patterns.

**Sound Patterns** Explore the sounds of musical instruments or the way voices can be changed (high/low, soft/loud, quick/long). Create a musical or voiced pattern for your child to follow and then have them suggest other patterns.

## Math Related Books

### Counting

**26 Letters & 99 Cents** by Tana Hoban

**Count and See** by Tana Hoban

**Fish Eyes: A book you can count on** by Lois Ehlert

**More than One** by Tana Hoban

**Numbers of Things** by Helen Oxenbury

**One Bear Alone** by Caroline Bucknall

**One Crow** by Jim Aylesworth

**Roll Over** by Mordicai Gerstein

**Six Little Ducks** by Chris Conover

**Ten, Nine, Eight** by Molly Bang

**Y la luna sonrió (When the Moon Smiled)** by Petr Horacek

### Geometry

**Picture Pie** by Ed Emberley

**Shapes and Things** by Tana Hoban

**Shapes, Shapes, Shapes** by Tana Hoban

**Circles, Triangles and Squares** by Tana Hoban

**Square is a Shape** by Sharon Lerner

**Straight as a Line** by Sharon Lerner

**Shapes** by Jan Pienkowski

Children are born scientists. They use their senses to explore, experiment, wonder, guess (hypothesize), and share their findings with others. California Science Content Standards are physical, life, and earth sciences, investigation, and experimentation. Here are some science experiences that align with these standards.

### Cause and Effect

**Domino Trails** Provide your child enough blocks of different sizes for them to line up so they can create a domino effect when knocking the blocks over. Begin by lining up 3-4 blocks close together and 3-4 blocks further apart and asking them what will happen when the first block is knocked into the second one.

Will both sets of blocks knock over in the same way? This example will provide your child the knowledge that blocks being closer together will continue to knock over the next blocks in the trail. Have them try using different sizes of blocks and create different lengths of "trail".

**Note:** You can provide masking tape to create their own length of trail either in a straight line or a slight curve. Your child can measure the length of their "trail". Make a graph of the number of blocks used and/or length of trails. They will gain an understanding of how one action (lining up blocks) and a second action (pushing them into the next block) will create a result.

**How Plants Drink** Provide your child with either a white carnation or stalk of celery (or both). Have them place their celery or flower in a tall clear container that is filled with water. Ask them how they think plants drink water and what would happen if food coloring was added to the water.

Allow them to add drops of food coloring to the water and have them predict what might happen. Document their responses. You can also have them draw/sketch their flower/celery (pre food coloring) and then draw it again once they see what actually happens with the food coloring.

This process will take awhile so revisit the flower on a regular basis until a discovery is made. Each flower/celery will take on the color of the water. Your child will visibly see how plants drink water and also the reaction that takes place when food coloring is added to the water and what effect it has on the plant.

**Popping Popcorn** In this activity, your child will experience what actually happens to corn kernels when they heat up. First, play a game of pretending to be popcorn kernels in a giant corn popper. Ask what happens when corn is heated up. Have them get into a small ball on the floor. Tell them the pan is getting hotter and hotter. What happens to corn as it gets warmer? What sound does

popcorn make? Your child can start jumping around wiggling their arms and legs, gently bumping into each other and making the sounds popcorn makes. If you have the music "popcorn" this could be played during this time. <https://youtu.be/kNjcdfZu3c0>

After a few minutes have your child, "popcorn", gather around a clean bed sheet. Tell them you are going to get to see what really happens to popcorn when it is popped. You will need a clear electric popper with an extension cord that will reach the middle of the sheet. Pour popcorn into the popper without the lid on.

Ask your child what they think will happen when the machine is turned on. How high/far will the popcorn go? They will experience what popping corn looks like as it pops out of the machine onto the sheet. Gather the popcorn in the sheet and eat. Your child will visibly see how heat reacts with the corn kernels and causes them to pop and change.

### Movement of Objects

**Rolling Along** Provide enough materials for your child to create an inclined ramp (blocks, planks, cookie sheets etc.). They may work individually or with other family members to build a ramp as high as they want. Have several round objects that can roll down the ramps (marbles, ping pong balls, small rubber balls, Styrofoam balls, rocks, cars or other small toys).

Ask your child where they have seen ramps and what they are used for? Tell them that we will be making ramps and testing how far they can make something roll/slide down. Let them know they can use whatever they would like to construct the ramp.

Provide masking tape to measure the distance of each object. Have your child make predictions about how far an object will roll down or which objects will roll the fastest. Have them test out their predictions. Possible questions: Why do some objects roll faster than others? What are some of the characteristics of the objects that rolled the furthest?

**Note:** Your child could create ramps out of recycled materials. Encourage them to create different heights of ramps to see if it makes a difference in the rolling of the objects. Find other round objects in the room to roll down the ramp. What about outside? This activity will give your child an opportunity to experience how heavier denser objects may roll faster than lighter ones.



### Movement of Objects

**Spinners** Provide your child with small plastic lids. For example, margarine or cottage cheese lids, small cardboard circles, and small paper plates. Have them use a push pin to poke a hole in the middle of the circle. Your child can decorate the spinners with crayons or markers. Push a round toothpick through the hole and they are now ready to spin the tops. Notice how your child is spinning them. Some children may need some help getting started.

Your child can also make predictions about how long the top will spin. **Options:** provide square or triangle shapes for your child to use. Provide a thin marker and push through a yogurt lid. Spin on paper to make different designs. Questions to ask: Do the tops spin the same? What might happen if the hole was not in the middle, but to the side of the spinner? Let your child experiment and test out their theories.

### Effect of Water on Objects

**Sink or Float?** This activity requires a bowl, bucket, or tub to provide at least 4–6 inches of water. Your child will have an opportunity to find out if certain objects float or sink. Provide a variety of objects such as corks, pieces of foil, Styrofoam, paper clips, wax paper, shells, buttons, toothpicks, leaves, twigs, small pieces of play dough, fabric, rocks etc.

Have your child predict which of the items will sink or float and then have them try out their predictions. Encourage them to share their discoveries. Now ask them if there is a way to make the items that sank be floaters and if the items that floated can sink.

You could ask your child to share their thoughts about how to accomplish this and then have them try out their ideas. They can also look for other items to try to sink and float. Encourage them to try different combinations of objects to see if they sink or float.

**Mixology** Provide your child with a variety of dry materials. Liquid can be added to (corn starch, flour, baking soda, dirt, sand, etc.). Provide a few different liquids (water, vinegar, club soda).

Place the labeled dry materials in bowls in one area with scoops for your child to access. Labeled liquids can be placed in small pitchers. Ask them what scientists might do with the materials they see on the tables and record your child's responses. Tell them they are going to act just like a scientist and experiment by mixing together some of the solids and liquids that are on the table.

Provide your child with a few plastic bowls and a spoon. Encourage them to explore and find out what happens when they mix certain ingredients together. Your child will discover that adding vinegar to baking soda will create bubbles; adding water to cornstarch will create a different consistency.

As your child starts to see how different liquids have an effect on each other, document their discoveries. Just like a scientist does, your child can write or draw what they discover.

### Scientific Tools

**Magnificent Magnifiers** Go on a walk around your neighborhood with your child and collect a variety of objects (leaves of different sizes and shapes, rocks, flower petals, weeds, tan bark, twigs etc.). You can also have some other objects available to look at such as various shells, bark from trees, flower buds, rocks of various shapes, sizes and colors, fossils etc.

Provide your child with a magnifier, paper, crayons, pencils, and markers. Discuss what magnifiers might be used for and who uses them. Let them know that they will be scientists as they explore their collections with a magnifying glass (as well as what you brought).

Encourage your child to draw what they see under the magnifier. Invite them to label each object they draw with a comparison drawing. Questions to explore: What do you see? How does it look different with the magnifier, without the magnifier?

Your child will understand that magnifiers give more detail and enable them to make discoveries they would not be able to do without magnification.



## Movement of Objects

**Eye Dropper Play** Provide your child with an eye dropper. Ask them if they have ever seen this tool and how it might be used. To practice, your child can dip their dropper in a small cup of water and practice drawing water up into it and squeezing it out. Ask them what they think they would have to do to squeeze out only one or two drops. Demonstrate how to do this if necessary.

Your child can experiment with dropping liquid water colors onto different surfaces to discover what might happen. Provide them with small containers of liquid water colors (primary colors) and one with just water. Have a variety of different surfaces to drop their paint/water onto. Examples: construction paper (wet and dry), tissue paper, foil, wax paper, paper bags etc. Your child will gain experience using the eye dropper and make discoveries about how colors and liquids respond differently to the surfaces.

You can set up challenges such as: How many drops can you get close together without touching each other? What happens to the color when you use four small drops of yellow and one big drop of water? How would using small drops differ from using big drops? What happens when drops are put onto foil or wax paper? Observe how they are using the eye dropper and discoveries are made.

Variation: Give your child a penny or other item with a small surface area. Have them guess how many drops of water will fit onto it. They can practice using a scientific tool, discover how water reacts on different surfaces and experiment with blending of colors using water based paint.

## Measuring/Graphing

**How Far Can You Jump?** Ask your child how far they can jump. Ask them how they might measure how far they can jump. What could they use? Your child may say a ruler. Encourage them to think of other ways to measure how far they jumped.

Help them understand they can measure anything if the object is the same length. Next, ask them to jump and then take off your shoe and use it to show how many shoe lengths it takes to measure the distance. Ask for other ideas of what could be used to measure the length of jumps.

You could go on a measurement hunt in the house (or outside) and have your child find objects to use (block, crayon, toothpick, Popsicle stick, pencil etc.). This will help them understand that measuring can happen in many ways. Give them a piece of paper and have them draw what they used to measure their jump (could be more than one jump) and how many times they used the object (7 blocks, 20 toothpicks etc.). Another option would be to have several objects of measurement drawn on a piece of paper for your child to document how many lengths were used to measure their jumps.

**Variation:** They could also try measuring different objects (i.e. arms/ legs or another distance) and using different tools to measure with. Your child will learn that measuring can be done using a variety of objects as long as they are the same length.

## Prediction

**Sprouting Seeds** Ask your child what seeds need in order to sprout (begin to grow). What happens if a seed has water, but no sun? What happens if a seed has no water, but has sun? Create a chart with these questions and document your child's predictions.

Provide your child with a fast growing seed (sunflower or bean). For the first experiment, have them place a seed on a damp paper towel. Place it in a zip lock baggie that they have labeled Sun and Water (picture or dictation is ok if your child doesn't yet write). Place in a warm, sunny place. Have your child help figure out where that will be (inside or out).

In the second experiment, place a seed on a dry paper towel and place in a plastic zip lock baggie. Have your child label with Sun and no water. Predictions: What seeds will sprout first? Last? Encourage them to also think of other experiments, could the seeds go in a closet? What would happen if it is placed in the refrigerator?

Have your child check seeds daily. When seeds have sprouted you can help them plant it in soil to continue growing. They can predict how long it will take for their plant to "pop out" above the soil.





Many of the traditional games children play support the acquisition of self regulation skills. They require children to wait for turns, be aware of their own and other's actions, and practice moving at varied speeds. You may need a few family or friends to join in some of these activities.

**Red Light, Green Light** Children and other family members move in a variety of ways (walk, hop, jump, skip, crawl, etc.) when a green symbol is shown and stop for the red light symbol. The speed of the movements can also be varied. A yellow light can be used as a slowing down transition. A variation on this would be to set up a roadway for your child to follow with traffic sign symbols and left, right and U-turns added.

**Simon Says** Participants need to listen closely to hear if the leader says "Simon Says" before the instruction.

**Mother May I?** A family participant plays the mother (the group can also decide on a name for the leader). The other participants line up about 10 feet away and facing the mother.

Mother starts at one end of the line and says something like, "Sarah, you may take three big steps forward." Sarah must respond with, "Mother, may I?" Mother then says "Yes, you may" and the child follows the instruction. If Mother says only "Yes" the participant cannot proceed. The play continues down the line.

Mother can vary the number and kinds of steps each time. The game continues until one person finally reaches and touches Mother and then becomes the Mother for the next round.

#### **Freeze**

**Variation 1:** Play music and instruct the participants to freeze in whatever position they are in when the music stops.

**Variation 2:** Play as in variation 1, but when the music stops hold up a picture or stick drawing of a body position for the participants to copy.

**Variation 3:** Play as in variation 1, but when the music stops call out a body position for the participants to assume such as "Place one arm straight above your head, place the other hand on your stomach and bend both knees".

**Musical Chairs** Place chairs in a circle with one chair for each participant. Place a card with a number, alphabet letter, name card or shape on each chair and have a matching set of cards you hold. Play music and when it stops participants find a seat. Draw a card from your set and have participants look to see who has a matching card. That person becomes the leader in the next round.

**What's Missing?** Gather a group of objects and spread them out on a tray and have your child identify each object. Cover the tray with a piece of fabric or hold up something that blocks your child's view and remove an item. Ask them to name the missing object.





# Preschool Kindergarten Readiness At Home Activities for Families: Mealtime Conversations

Meals give families a chance to initiate conversations that encourage children to notice, describe and share things. These discussions should be natural and relaxed and begin once everyone is served and ready to eat.

## Literacy Focused Conversations

**Alphabet or Phoneme** Initiate an "I Spy" game that starts like, "I spy something that starts with the letter "b" or the sound "br". If your child has difficulty guessing give them additional clues. Encourage each family member including your child to be the leader.

**Name Recognitions** Describe your child's letter symbol (a symbol that connects with the sound and letter of your child's first name) and ask your family to guess such as "This person's symbol is an animal." "This animal has sharp teeth." "The animal starts with a /b/." After the family understands the game they may want to give the clues.

**Segmentation** Give your child practice in dividing words into parts by calling names in syllables in a "sing-song" inflection such as "Gab-ri-ele, please pass me the juice"

**Alliteration** Give your child practice in finding words that begin with the same letter by adding an alliterative word to something you are asking for such as "Gabriele, please pass me the jungle juice". Encourage your child to find alliterations for other things they see.

**Rhyming** Give your child practice in finding words that end with the same sound such as "Gabriele, please pass me the loose juice". Encourage your child to find rhymes for other things they see.

**Sound Discrimination** begin by commenting on a sound you hear in the room, then encourage your child to talk about the sounds they notice.

**Vocabulary** Use and discuss words for foods and kitchen tools that may not be familiar to your child.

## Math Focused Conversations

**Number** Initiate a conversation about the number or quantity of food your child is eating or serving themselves. If your child wants another serving of something, involve them in figuring out how to divide what's left so everyone could have seconds if they want.

**Shapes and Colors** Play an "I Spy" game where you say something like, "I spy something round (or red)". If your child have difficulty guessing give them additional clues. Encourage your child to be the leader of the game.

**Position Words** Begin to describe the positions of meal items and people by saying, "You put your cheese on top of your bread." or "You're sitting between Misha and Victor." Encourage the children to continue the game.



Emotional and social intelligence has been shown in studies to be a strong predictor of success in school and beyond. These experiences help children develop relationships, learn to work collaboratively and identify and express feelings. You may need a few family or friends to join in some of these activities.

#### Cooperation

**Sharks in the Water** This game operates on the same premise as Cooperative Musical Chairs. Outline a large square on the floor with either masking tape or chalk. This area is the safe island and the area surrounding the square is the ocean.

When the music begins participants "swim" around the island. The stopping of the music indicates that sharks are coming and all players must retreat to the safety of the island.

With each round the lines are altered making the island smaller and smaller. Players work together to make sure everyone has a safe place to get away from the sharks.

**Mirror, Mirror** This is a game that can be played with partners or with a larger group. A leader is chosen to initiate movements the others are to mimic as quickly as possible so that it appears they are a mirror image of the leader.

**Balloons** The goal is to work together to keep the balloon in the air while standing or sitting in a circle. To make it more challenging change the play from using hands to elbows, shoulders, knees, etc.

**Webs** Using a big ball of yarn hold the end and toss the rest to a person seated in the circle. This participant decides who to toss the ball to and says something they appreciate about that person. This continues until everyone in the group has a piece of the web. Talk with your child about the threads of the web being links between them.

#### Feelings

**Feeling Photos** Talk with your child about the words we use to describe feelings related to things they have experienced. Encourage them to share their stories. Give photos/cut outs/ internet pictures of a diverse group of people demonstrating various feelings and lead a discussion about how these people may be feeling and what the possible causes might be. A possible extension would be to have your child draw feeling pictures.

**Feeling Books** Select a children's book that deals with a particular feeling and read to your child (there are many book lists online, see <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>). As situations involving feelings arise in the book, ask your child thought provoking questions to encourage them to try to understand, empathize and connect. A possible extension is to have them re-enact the story in a dramatic play scenario or puppet show.

**Puppet Shows** Tell a story using puppets to enact common childhood experiences and ask your child questions at intervals about the feelings of the characters, their possible motivations and what might be done to problem solve for a more mutually beneficial outcome.

**Feelings in Motion** In a large group space ask participants to use their whole bodies to show emotions. An extension would be to have participants guess the emotion being enacted.

**Beanbag Share** Talk about what it means to share ideas. Pass the beanbag around the circle to music or a chant. The participant who has the beanbag when the music stops shares an idea such as a story they like, an interest, a place they enjoy going, something they want to do later in the day etc.





## Preschool Kindergarten Readiness At Home Activities for Families: Pre-Writing Skills

Writing requires small muscle strength and learning to grasp the pencil in a dynamic tripod grasp (the pencil is held between the thumb and index finger, with the pencil resting on the middle finger). Engaging your child in activities that give them the opportunities to use the pincer grasp (thumb and forefinger gripping) and hand/finger muscle dexterity will help them to develop writing ability.

**Wheelbarrow Walking** Your child places their hands on the floor. Family member picks up their feet and child "walks" forward on their hands.

**Slinky** The child shifts the slinky back and forth with their palms up.

**Volleyball Type Games** Using hands, paddles or rackets in a palm-up position, your child "bats" objects such as balloons or light balls.

**Working on a Slant** Your child paints, draws, writes or works with pegboards that are mounted on a clip board, easel/chalkboard or other tilted surface.

**Chopsticks** Your child uses chopsticks on a tray with sand to write letters or draw using the chopsticks.

**Squirrel Game** Tell your child to pretend to be a squirrel storing nuts for the winter. Encourage your child to "squirrel" nuts or other small objects by picking them up with their index finger and thumb and moving them into their palm without using their other hand.

**Squirt Bottles** Child uses squirt bottles to wash windows, tricycles, spray plants, outside walls etc.

**Tongs/Tweezers** Encourage your child to use tongs and when they perfect tongs, use tweezers to move objects from the table into containers. Start with bigger and easier items such as moving cotton balls into an egg carton and later use smaller objects and containers such as ice cube trays.

**Slot Machine** Child places pennies or poker chips in slotted containers.

**Lid Game** Child matches and screw/unscrews lids onto and off containers.

**Bubble Wrap** Child tries to pop as many bubbles as they can on a sheet of bubble wrap.

**Turkey Baster Race** Child blows corks or ping pong balls across a race line.



Music and Movement activities gives your child the opportunity to engage in experiences that relate to the content standard areas and gives your child practice in being part of your family community. Waiting for a turn to respond, listening for and following instructions from other family members and gaining confidence in speaking and participating in a family group prepares children for the kindergarten experience. You may need a few family or friends to join in some of these activities.

**Marching Ants** Sing the song "The Ants Go Marching One by One" [https://youtu.be/2S\\_fbCGwOM](https://youtu.be/2S_fbCGwOM) using the numbers 1 through 10 in order. As you are singing, have participants hold up their fingers (1-10) to show the number they are singing about. After the first few verses, invite participants to make up new rhymes by asking, for example, "What else can we rhyme with two?" such as "The ants go marching two by two, the little one stops to squeeze out glue". Your child will practice counting and phonological awareness.

**Shape Dance** Cut out enough felt shapes for the participants (squares, triangles, circles, diamonds, hearts, rectangles, ovals). Play music and when the music stops each participant finds a shape to stand on. The leader can call out directions such as, "the person on the triangle jump"; "the square wiggles". Encourage your child to help call out the directions for the designated color/shape.

**Ribbon Dancing** Cut out enough ribbon streamers for all of the participants. Guide the participants through some movements i.e.: spiral the ribbon, bring ribbon high and then low, make a zigzag on the floor, draw a circle in the air, starting and stopping etc. Encourage your child to help create new ideas to follow. Your child will practice body control and creativity.

**Marching Band** Have enough musical instruments for all of the participants (store bought/hand made). The marching band follows in a line and then alternates playing in the band free style/creatively (everyone dancing and playing on their own) and then lining up and walking in a line around the room like a real marching band. They will also be moving to a steady beat, a skill that has been shown to support reading.

**Throwing Scarves** Have enough colored scarves for all participants (an inexpensive alternative is to purchase tulle netting at a fabric store in various colors and cut up in squares). Encourage participants to throw the scarves in the air and catch them, throw them back and forth to each other. Call out various directions with the colors: red scarves throw in the air, put the blue scarves on your head etc. Encourage your child to help think of a creative action for the next color called out. Children will practice body control and hand-eye coordination.

**Freeze Game** Have your child move to music and freeze in position when the music randomly stops. This supports body control and auditory awareness.



**Block Balancing Beam** Have a pre-set path of blocks that lead to the kitchen table or couch (anywhere in your home). Have your child follow in a line as they practice balancing on the block line.

**Air Brush Imagination** Give your child a paint brush and practice drawing invisible shapes in the air with the paint brush (circle, triangle, square). Encourage your child to think of new things to 'draw' in the air. This could also be done with letters to support writing letters.

**Feather Fun** Give your child two feathers (for their wings). Your child can pretend that they are birds flying high/low, flapping wings fast/slow, flying in a circle, flying in a straight line etc. Encourage your child to help think of creative ways to 'fly'. Your child will practice body control.

**Elastic Bands** Cut out strips of elastic and tie the ends creating a big elastic band. Guide your child to create different shapes using the large bands (sitting down put the elastic on two feet spread apart and then hold back with one hand creating a big triangle). Encourage your child to figure out different shapes to create using the bands.

**Pretend Bubbles** Set the stage by having your child pretend to blow up a bubble that's big enough for them to fit inside of. They then step inside the bubble and carefully pretends to feel the dimensions of the bubble. Ask them what would happen if they push too hard or move too fast. Music may be added. Tell your child to move inside the bubble but they must not bump into anyone else's bubble or it will pop. Vary the tempo of the music. This will give your child practice in body boundaries, spatial awareness and movement control.

**Rowing Boats** Sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" <https://youtu.be/tux1jDUeMD4> and have children rock back and forth to the beat as they hold hands with you. You can vary the tempo pretending to be in calm to choppy water. You can extend this by adding more family members to form groups of 3 and figure out how to make the boat move. Your child will practice body control and listening and moving to a steady beat.

