

“You cannot make people learn. You can only provide the right conditions for learning to happen.”  
*Vince Gowmon*

### Spotlight on Development

There are many wonderful “how the brain works” studies and training that can be accessed for staff development. A child’s brain experiences an incredible period of development from **birth to three**. The brain produces more than a million neural connections each second! When a connection is made it forms a **synapse**. During the preschool years, the number of synapses hits the highest level, but after this period of peak synaptic growth (connections being made), the brain starts to remove synapses that are not used (pruning). Once the brain forms a synapse, it can either be strengthened or weakened. The process follows the “use it or lose it” principle.

#### Consider this metaphor:

Imagine creating a path through the forest. If no one has ever walked before you, there will be no path for you to follow. The first time you walk through the forest it will be very difficult. You may even be unsure which way you should go. You will need to do a little clearing by cutting branches and small trees as you move through the forest. If your path is walked repeatedly, a trail through the forest begins to appear. The result is the path becomes easier to follow. However, you may still get lost sometimes, but at least you’re done with major clearing. Over the course of time, you walk down this path daily and the trail becomes a road.

**Caution:** Once the path has been established you only need to revisit it occasionally to maintain it, but if left unattended, plants and trees will begin to grow back on the trail.

**Compare it to a learner:** Clearing the forest represents the struggle of learning something new, **the struggle of beginner learner**.

Once the noticeable trail begins to appear and the path becomes easier to follow. This is what it’s like to have a **basic understanding of a new idea**.

After the trail is walked many times, the path becomes a road. This is what it’s like to have a **strong understanding of an idea**.

The road fading back into the forest possibly disappearing completely is what it is like to become **rusty**. Without practice, you’ll lose the skills you have already mastered. This principle is usually summarized by neuroscientists as simply, **“Use it or lose it.”**

## What might my child do or say?

The development of the brain is influenced by many factors, including a child's relationships, experiences and environment (nature and nurture). After reviewing and discussing this section with the parent, the home visitor should gain understanding of where the parent feels the HIPPY child is developmentally. What the child is doing or saying?

## What can I do to help my child develop?

Talk with your child a lot. Use different words, some familiar to your child and some that are new.

This is an excellent time to discuss how to give a child friendly definition of new words. Some parents may skip over a new word or substitute an easier word for the child to understand.

**Example:** Tool – What is a tool? Can you show me in the book?

**Definition:** A tool is something we hold in our hands and helps us do a special job. **Show** the child a real tool.

**Read** the text – *We're are ready to work and our tools are ready, too.*

**Use** and reinforce the word throughout the week. **"Use it to own it."**

## Activity 1: Language and Literacy – Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes

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### What your child will learn from this activity

Mem Fox's web site provides a wonderful summary of this book. "As everyone knows, nothing is sweeter than tiny baby fingers and chubby baby toes, here is a celebration of baby fingers, baby toes and the joy they – and the babies they belong to – bring to everyone."

Information about the author: Mem Fox is from Australia. *Possum Magic*, her first book, is still available in hardback after 34 years and has become a favorite for millions of Australian families. She has written over 40 children's books and several non-fiction books for adults. Her books have been translated into twenty-one languages, and many of them have been international best sellers.

### What to do

**Key:** The parent models what they want to see in their child's book walk.

**Note:** You are to find pictures of the child at three stages: a baby, 1 year of age, and as a two-year-old.

6. Home visitors should write or mark the pages in the book that correspond with the script.

7. Newborn picture – wrapped in blanket or toes showing. Either will match the story.

8. One-year old picture used.

13. The 3<sup>rd</sup> picture will be a current photo of the HIPPY child.

**Note:** Many pictures are in digital format (on phones, computer, etc.)

## Activity2: Language and Literacy – Getting Cozy

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### What to do

3. The child will remember, but also use the visual clues to respond – 10 little fingers and 10 little toes.

8. Encourage the parent to share special stories about their child’s delivery. Was it snowing? How long did it take you to get to the hospital? What time of the day was the child born? Encourage the parents to share the events (child friendly) of the special day with your child.

9. An eider is a northern sea duck and the female has soft down feathers that are used to line the nest. The definition of **eiderdown** is a quilt filled with down (originally from the eider) or some other soft material.

11. The “Hey Diddle, Diddle” was referenced earlier in the program year, so the child may be familiar with this very common rhyme. Remind the parent to say the rhyme slowly and in “chunks” and allow the child time to repeat. Encourage the parent to say the rhyme in a rhythmic manner.

**Example:** Hey Diddle Diddle – *Hey Diddle Diddle*

If the child responds only with “diddle, diddle” The parent should respond **Complete, Confirm, Correct** with the full verse.

12. What is a child friendly definition of divine? Child friendly example: very special

If the child does not know what the word means, comprehension is less.

# THINK

Reinforce and guide family to be successful with the **THINK** activities.

Wrapping up in their “eiderdown” helps bring the story into the child’s world (Text to Self).

## Activity 3: Think and Explore – Counting and Marking

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### What your child will learn from this activity

What is the difference in rote counting and one-to-one correspondence? It is important for home visitors to understand the difference and share this knowledge with parents. Rote counting and counting with one-to-one are very different. Rote counting is just **reciting (saying)** the numeral names in order, “One, two, three, four, five...” But counting with one-to-one involves **actually touching** each object and saying the numeral name aloud. Have home visitors identify this skill in Week 19, Activity 3.

**Note:** Have you had a parent say, “My child knows his numbers. He can count to 20.” This statement is similar to a parent thinking; my child can sing the ABC song, so they know their letters.

### What to do

3. The activity requires the child to allow their hands to be traced. Some children just need to see a parent trace their own hand first. Once they see what is meant by “tracing your hand” they usually are excited to have their own hand traced. However, some children have sensory issues. One possible alternative is to allow the child to get their hand wet and place on a piece of paper. The parent can trace the outline of the child’s “wet print.”

5. One-to-one correspondence as the child **touches and counts** each finger.

## Activity 4: Think and Explore – Counting and Marking

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### What to do

5. The activity requires the child to allow their feet and toes to be traced. If a child has sensory issues and will not allow the parent to trace think of alternatives. One possible alternative is to allow the child to get their foot wet and place on a piece of paper. The parent can trace the outline of the child’s “wet print.”

# THINK

Using guided discussion talk with parents to see how their child is progressing with counting, one-to one correspondence. Include specific ways to incorporate the tips into their daily activities and stress how the activities reinforce and extends number literacy.

## Activity 5: Motor – Moving – Hitting a Moving Target

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### What your child will learn from this activity

Define visual tracking. **Visual tracking** is defined as efficiently focusing on an object as it moves across a person's visual field. This skill is important for daily activities, including reading, writing, drawing, and playing.

The “why” behind the activity is explained in depth to allow you the opportunity to increase awareness in home visitors.

### You will need

- The site may choose to provide a balloon for the activity. An alternative is a plastic shopping sack stuffed with other plastic bags. The completed bag needs to be lightweight.
- Rolled up activity sheets, newspaper or part of a magazine taped could be used if a paper towel tube is not available.

### What to do

1. Define an area with string or if outside you could use sidewalk chalk. The size of the circle should be large enough to allow the child to stand and move comfortably without “getting out” of the special spot (a hula hoop size circle). The instructions say to stand next to your child. Instruct the parent to stand (beside) where the child can “hit” the balloon and the parent is not in the way. Remember, the balloon needs to be held chest level and two (2) feet away from the child.

**Why?** The balloon is tied to a string to allow the parent to control the balloon. A special spot secures the child and helps control the activity level. Notice the instruction is to hold the balloon at chest level (not eye level). We want the child’s arms to go straight out as they connect with the balloon.

2. Hit the balloon and parents can also add “tap” or “pat” as an extension to the activity.

**Why?** Some parents may be hesitant to use the word “hit”, but children need to know language. It is “ok” to hit a ball or balloon (or the right objects) but it is **not ok** to hit the dog. Children need to learn vocabulary behind their graded movements. Hit is much stronger force (graded movement) than tap or pat. We want our child to “pat” be gentle with their baby brother. Using the balloon, we can practice these graded movements.

3. When hitting the balloon watch how the child hits the balloon. From the front (balloon moves away) from the child or from the side the balloon moves side to side.

**Why?** Think about the eye movements used when the balloon is hit from the front – the eyes are watching the balloon move in and out. When the balloon is hit from the side the eyes are

watching the balloon move sideways. As you roleplay the activity, notice the difference in the eye movements.

4. The parent will move the balloon side to side, like a clock pendulum moving. The balloon now becomes a moving target.

**Why?** Timing and judging distance are necessary to connect with the balloon.

5. The parent will be counting, and the child can join in.

6-7. The child will be using an object to make contact with the balloon. (A few pieces of paper taped together will also work for the cardboard tube bat.)

**Note:** We are tracking in many different ways. Think about a child looking at a paper and drawing. How many times does the child look up at mom for affirmation and then look back down? How about in reading or looking at pictures in the book? Which way do the eyes move (side to side). One additional step – dropping the balloon from above the child would be tracking vertically. This is necessary for solving vertical math problems.

## THINK

Try hitting the balloon when dropping from above or practice the graded movements. How far will the balloon travel if I tap it? Pat it? Hit It? Explore and have fun with the balloon but remind parents a deflated balloon is a possible hazard. **Supervision is key.**

## **Family Feedback**

This feedback will be reviewed when the lesson is picked up and should be reviewed each week to help parents know what to look for as they complete the activities throughout the week. It is important to have the home visitors review the questions during staff development. Have each home visitor write an answer to each question on a separate piece of paper. After all have completed, have each one share their answers with the group.

### **What did you like best about the activities this week?**

The balloon activity.

### **What did you and your child enjoy about the new book *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes*?**

Didn't really like counting his toes but loved marking the fingers on the hand print and the toes on the foot print.

### **What are the things that your child is able to do alone?**

He is able to dress himself now. I still give him a few choices, but he can dress alone.

### **How often does your child use crayons or markers?**

ALL the time! Even on my walls 😊