

## Spotlight on Development

The great outdoors is the best place for preschoolers to practice and master emerging physical skills. They can fully and freely experience motor skills like running, leaping, and jumping. Additionally, being outside is also important because the outdoor light stimulates the part of the brain that regulates the "biological clock," which is vital to the immune system, and makes us feel happier.

### Basic Tips for Outdoor Safety

- Supervision – never leave children alone outside
- Teach children not to play near the street – Explain if a toy rolls into the street – ask an adult for help
- Be aware of electric appliances such as air conditioners in the play area. (If possible, fence the area off)
- Use sunscreen
- Use playground equipment as it is intended

Note: Some children may be overwhelmed by the outside world (no boundary). The need for visual boundaries to help the child narrow their focus can be helpful. A smaller fenced area, a blanket anchoring the child to a certain space, a focus on an outside swing or slide, etc. are all examples of how to help make the outside world less overwhelming.

## What might my child do or say?

Ask the parent if their child does or says any of the “**what might my child do or say**” bullets. Home Visitors should be prepared to encourage and help guide a parent to possible outdoor play opportunities. Example: a nearby park, etc.

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

Go outside and enjoy the great outdoors. “No equipment needed” Start with walks, digging in dirt, touching and examining flowers, trees, etc. Many studies have shown the benefit of spending time outdoors, both for children and adults. Ask Home Visitors if they agree. Do they feel calmer when they go outside for a short walk? Some of the many benefits that are often overlooked are:

- Outdoor play builds confidence – The child can play at their own pace – less structure. The ability for the child to choose their way through nature promotes creativity and imagination.

- Outdoor play reduces stress and fatigue. A natural environment allows the brain to practice an effortless type of attention. In a busy environment where there are many distractions our brains can become exhausted handling all this information.

## **Activity 1: Language and Literacy – Are You My Mother?**

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### **What your child will learn from this activity**

Mother Bird leaves her egg to search for food; baby bird hatches and goes on a search to find his Mother. This story offers a simple adventure and an opportunity to identify common animals. Encourage Home Visitors and Parents to use your "animal voice" to be a kitten, dog, or cow as they read the story.

Note: Be mindful of children who may have not had a loving, caring, stable nurturing environment. "Are you my mother?" may be a question that may be emotional. Use this book to help and support children.

### **What to do**

1. The page numbering begins on "A mother bird sat on her egg..."
3. Book Knowledge – reading the picture (cover) of the book. Home Visitors need to be able to demonstrate understanding of book knowledge. What does it include?
- 6-7. What if the child does not answer the questions? What would a parent do? Have Home Visitors discuss strategies.
  - 1.) Show me where the baby bird lives.
  - 2.) Use guiding questions – Does the baby bird live in the nest or on the ground?
  - 3.) Complete, Confirm, Correct – 3 C's
8. A paper plate (full size) will be used and folded. Sites may choose to provide the paper plate. Home Visitors should show the parent (on their prepared example) how to leave enough of the plate open to hold the "shape" bird.
12. Allow your child the opportunity to create the shape bird, but parents should also guide the child in creating.
13. Tissues, old magazines, colored paper, etc. can be torn into small pieces can be used to add feathers to the "shape" bird. Allow the child to help tear the paper.
14. Add a few tissues into the nest to allow the nest to "fluff" out.
15. Place the bird "stick first" into the opening at the top of the plate.

**Note:** Save the nest and “shape” bird. We will use in activities this week.

## Activity 2: Language and Literacy – Are You My Mother?

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### What to do

5. The child will use the pictures in the book to help answer the questions.
6. You will need the nest and “shape” bird you made from **Activity 1**. Some children may benefit from the parent modeling what the baby bird did in the story. After modeling, repeat the reading and allow the child to use the puppet to model the actions.
- 7- 9. (Just using the baby bird puppet- not the paper plate nest.) The parent may have to model or prompt the child to ask the question “Are you my mother?”

## THINK

Week 25 should be delivered during a time of the year that actual bird nests may be found in nature. Encourage parents to “take notice” and use this as a teachable moment.

## Activity 3: Think and Explore: Opposites, Over and Under

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### What your child will learn from this activity

Have Home Visitors identify where the skill is contained in the Activity.

- Where is an example of spatial concepts? How is the child demonstrating knowledge?
- Where is the child following directions? What if the child has trouble following directions? What would be the strategy offered to parents? Examples: repeat the instruction, model, etc.
- Where is gross motor in this activity? Why is it important?

**Note:** The skills are covered in Activity 3 and Activity 4.

### What to do

2. The parent will model each action for the child.

**6-7.** Using the small toy move the toy under and over the table. After modeling, the child may want to hold the toy over and under the table.

**8.** Home Visitors should guide the parent to use pillows or other items for the obstacle course that will allow the child to crawl over or under safely.

**12.** The child will begin to verbally respond using the word over and under. The parent may need to prompt the child to use their word (language.)

**12.** The toy will become a prop and the child will verbally express to the toy to go over or under the item. Encourage to observe how the child will go over or under an object taking their toy. The child may not help on “how” to hold the toy and go through the course. Parents may need to help the child problem solve how to “take their toy with them.”

## **Activity 4: Think and Explore: Opposites- Over/Under**

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### **What to do**

**2-3.** The child will demonstrate understanding by using the bird puppet to fly over and under. Some children may need the instruction repeated.

**5.** The tune “The Bear Went Over the Mountain” works well for this song.

**7.** The child will be outside and observing nature.

**9.** The blanket can help define (visual boundary) the outdoor area as well as make the ground comfortable.

# **TH!NK**

Ask Home Visitor to share feedback from parents about the Th!nk activities. Are parents completing the activities?

## **Activity 5: Motor – Fine Motor**

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### **What your child will learn from this activity**

Discuss with staff. Pre-writing means getting children ready to write. What skills are necessary to develop writing readiness (pre-writing)?

- **Hand and finger strength**

- **Crossing the mid-line**
- **Pencil grasp**
- **Hand eye coordination**
- **Bilateral integration:** Using two hands together (e.g. holding and moving the pencil with the dominant hand while the other hand helps by holding the writing paper).
- **Upper body strength:** The strength and stability provided by the shoulder to allow controlled hand movement for good pencil control.
- **Object manipulation:** The ability to skillfully manipulate tools (including holding and moving pencils and scissors) and controlled use of everyday tools (such as a toothbrush, hairbrush, cutlery).
- **Visual perception:** The brain's ability to interpret and make sense of visual images seen by the eyes, such as letters and numbers.
- **Hand dominance:** The consistent use of one (usually the same) hand for task performance, which allows refined skills to develop.
- **Hand division:** Using just the thumb, index and middle finger for manipulation, leaving the fourth and little finger tucked into the palm stabilizing the other fingers but not participating.

### You will need

Sites may choose to give a bag of small snacks. A large bag of cheerios can be purchased, and baggies made for parents. One large box of cereal will make 20 or more one cup baggies.

Note: Sites should be mindful that the child may enjoy sweetened and colorful snack items (fruit cereal, rainbow crackers, etc.), but there are many children allergic to red dye.

### What to do

1. The line is vertical. This activity is focused on standing and lying down lines not column and rows. Begin the standing line at the top and work column down. Why? Reinforce letter formation - begin at the **top and go down**.

Top to bottom for standing line.

Left to right for lying down line.

**4-5. Parent modeling the lines. Top to bottom**

6. If the child has trouble with the fine motor step of using the crayon, try these steps:
  1. Have the child make a standing line with their hand (no crayon) on a wall or their own leg.
  2. Next have the child use their finger and make a standing line on the paper.
  3. Use the crayon. If needed the parent can use the hand over hand to help guide the child.

## TH!NK

Review with Home Visitors what you expect to see regarding roleplay/guided discussion of a Th!nk activity. Reminder: Guided discussion is a two-way conversation.

## **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. Have each one share their answers with the group.

**How well is your child doing using small objects and coloring with crayons? Are they getting better? Do they like using crayons and markers?**

**What activity did you both like the most this week?**

**What changes have you noticed in your child's language and vocabulary?**