

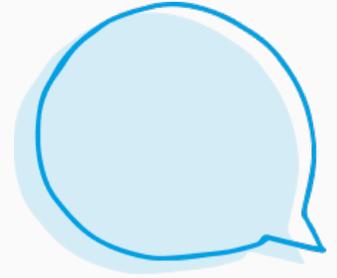
FAMILY ACTIVITIES

PACKET 5





THOUGHT of the WEEK



From Holly Delgado, Early Childhood Specialist at HighScope Educational Research Foundation

There Is No Guidebook

Across the nation, headlines have been dropping the news: *School is officially closed for the remainder of the year.*

In response, school districts are creating virtual learning plans and teachers are attending professional development courses to make the switch to online platforms and other remote teaching options. As parents, we're left to wonder how we are going to juggle it all. Many of us have not been trained as teachers, let alone as a teacher of several children, each one at a different grade level.

Yet, here we are.

Over the past several weeks, I have heard the term homeschooling bandied about. However, I want to make clear what we are doing as parents right now, in this moment, is not homeschooling. Homeschooling is a choice — a conscious decision made by parents to educate their children outside of the traditional school environments. Homeschooling encourages families to enrich learning content with community resources, such as libraries, museums, and nature centers. It involves interactions with other families who also choose to homeschool their children. These are not among the options we have available to us during this time.

This is not something we chose.

What we are living through right now could more aptly be named crisis-schooling. It is a stopgap.

Around the world, teachers are doing amazing work. They are tirelessly attempting to support families and their children. They are endlessly searching for learning resources. They are continuously creating alternative ways to maintain relationships with our children. And they are offering us unrelenting support to help us build the skills we need to become our children's primary educators.

Yet, in spite of all of this encouragement and support, many of us are not okay. We have not adapted to our new normal. Those of us who are still lucky enough to have jobs may have not yet figured out how to juggle all of our new responsibilities. Those of us who have lost our jobs may not have had enough time to process what that means for our families. It's difficult to tack on the role of "teacher" to our role as a parent when we may question or doubt our ability to take on the challenges that come with it.

These questions? This doubt? It's completely normal.

There is no guidebook for navigating COVID-19. So, how do we give the 120 percent we are asked to give as our children's teacher when there is only 10 percent of us left after fulfilling our traditional roles as parents and employees? I'm not sure. I don't have the answers. Instead, I am choosing to remind myself to breathe. To hug my children a little tighter. To build routines that work for my family.

Today, I am exactly where I need to be. I am doing exactly what I need to be doing.

You are exactly where you need to be. You are doing exactly what you need to be doing.

And tomorrow? It will be a new day. Perhaps I will slowly work my way through the overwhelming pile of resources and activities that keep coming in from each of my children's teachers. Maybe I will spend a few additional minutes playing trains with my three-year-old, building Legos with my 5-year-old, or writing a story with my 8-year-old. I am going to give myself the flexibility to remember that a hike in nature or baking cookies in the kitchen counts as science; playing Monopoly and sorting laundry is math; a bike ride or playing soccer in the backyard is physical education; and snuggling on the couch to read is both social-emotional development and literacy.

Whatever I do, I will remind myself:

Every little bit counts. Every interaction we have with our children matters. As parents, we can do this.

INFANTS



Art, Music and Movement: Dancing scarves

To start, you will need some colorful, thin scarves (or bandanas, cloths, or other available fabrics in your household). Pack the material in an empty tissue box or in a shoebox with a rectangle cut out of the top. Let a little of the scarves overflow, peeking out the top of the box to draw your baby's curiosity. If you do not have scarves like this at home, you can also stuff the box with different soft fabrics like bandanas, cloths or thick ribbon. Make sure the opening of the box is wide enough so that your baby can pull them out.

Children experience:

- Object motion
- Rhythm of scarves dancing to the beat
- Hand eye movement and coordination

As your baby pulls them out, you can see which scarves draw their attention, and pick up one that they are not holding and start to move it around in different ways to make the scarf "dance". If your baby is nonmobile, you can pull the scarves out for them and lightly swirl and dangle the scarves for them to grasp onto and play with while they are lying on their back. You can also play music in the background to move the scarf to the beat!



Communication, Language, and Literacy: Be a Narrator!

Children experience:

- Connection with their caretakers
- Hearing your voice and knowing you are present
- Hearing language and speaking
- Early literacy engagement

With infants, the most important thing you can do to encourage development in this area starts with being present and close with your baby as often as possible. It is easy to get caught up in the challenges of being a parent or guardian while working and having an infant, but it is also wonderful to cherish this precious time.

Narrate what you are doing as often as you can, whether you are engaging in an activity with your baby or when you need to walk away from where they are for a few moments to do something else. For example, as you are giving them a bath, you can say "Now I'm gonna pour some water on your legs to rinse the bubbles off, it's gonna

be so warm!" and even when you're doing an activity that is outside of a direct interaction with them, narrating what you are doing will maintain that presence and feeling of connection for your baby as you do other tasks, like the dishes. This will let them know you are still there for them and that they can "talk back." You can say, "I hear you, wow, you're really talking!" As they engage with you by making sounds, even from a few feet away.

Your baby's development in this area depends on those moments, and narrating what you are doing will not only let them know you are present with them, but also can help to develop early literacy and speaking skills.

INFANTS



Early Math and Discovery: **Fitting clothespins in a coffee can!**

Open ended objects are key items for exploration, problem solving and also for very early math and discovery skills.

This activity can be replicated with a variety of different materials, but in this example, we use an empty, cleaned out coffee can and wooden clothespins. For a baby that is crawling or sitting up, this is an especially fun activity! You can use clothespins that are open at the bottom, or ones that need to be pinched to open. The ones that require pinching can be a bonus for fine motor development! But also, we recommend keeping a close eye (as with all activities with infants) as the ones that open can pinch fingers, although babies likely will not yet have the dexterity to open them.

To set up this activity, place the empty coffee can tin on the floor with the clothespins laying around it. You may want to clip one on the edge of the coffee can, or lay it across the top to spark some ideas for your baby. You could put a clothespin inside the coffee can to see if your baby can get it out! Watch as they try to figure out how to get the clothespin out and move it different ways to get it to fit, and vice versa with getting it back into the can. If you do not have a can, you could also give them a wide-mouthed cup to see what they do with the clothespins! Maybe they will try to get the clothespins to hang on the edge or to fit inside. Let this be up to them, and talk to them about what you notice them doing as they problem solve with the pins!

Children experience:

- Problem solving
- Fitting objects into a container
- Balancing objects
- Open ended materials for numerous possibilities!

Materials:

- Empty coffee can (alternative: wide mouthed cup or narrow bucket or other tin)
- Wooden clothes pins (alternative: longer objects like lincoln logs)



Myself and Others: **Mirror, mirror on the floor**

Children experience:

- Observing their reflection
- Experiencing objects in space
- Exploring reflections of objects and caretaker in mirror

For this activity you will need something reflective, like a round, hand-held mirror, a large plastic mirror you can put on the floor, or a full length mirror. Whether your baby is mobile, or nonmobile, watching them explore a mirror is such a fun activity! If your baby is nonmobile, you can place one or two hand-held mirrors on the floor during their tummy time, or hold the mirror up for them as they lay on their back. You can say “who’s that?! That’s you!”

For mobile infants, place a large mirror, like a full length mirror with framed edges, on the floor for your baby to explore. If you have a large plastic mirror, you can tape it on the floor with some mailing or duct tape to protect the edges and to keep it in one location. Watch and notice your baby’s reactions as they look in the mirror. See what they are drawn to and how they interact with their image. You can also appear next to them in the mirror and say “There’s mama,” or “there’s dada,” etc. Let your baby play with toys on top of the mirror and watch them notice the reflection of their toys to notice where objects are in space.

INFANTS



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: **Scrub a dub dub, fun in the tub!**

For nonmobile infants: Embrace some fun in the tub for healthy habits! When you are bathing your infant, in the tub or sink, take an empty shampoo bottle and fill it up with water to use as a squirt bottle. Fill the bottle up with water in the sink or tub your baby is being bathed in then squeeze it on their arms, legs and tummy. See if it tickles them or delights them, or how they react in general. If they have curiosity about the bottle and want to hold it or put it in their mouth, let them explore this new toy.

For mobile infants: While taking a bath, provide some different stainless steel or plastic bowls (or cups!) that will float on their bath water. In addition, you can provide them with a washcloth or two and you can cut up a sponge into 2-3 smaller sponges for them to watch float and to “clean” their bowls with. Let them dump water around and use the sponges and cloths in conjunction with the bowls. Watch what they do. Do they see you do dishes? Will they imitate this action? Or will they find something else to explore with these objects?

If there is a place in your house where it's ok for water to be, you could also do this activity outside of the tub with some soapy sponges and bowls. Whether it's over some trays, or in a low bucket or plastic storage container, you can put a tiny bit of water and soap (or no soap and just water and sponges with bowls) to continue this activity in other places!

Children experience:

- Getting clean while having a blast!
- Sensory input
- Early practicing of healthy habits
- Feeling warm, soapy water
- Cleaning objects

Materials:

- Small amount of warm water
- Stainless steel or plastic bowls
- Clean sponge cut into 2-3 pieces
- Empty plastic shampoo or soap bottle
- Towel (for after the activity or during in case water splashes)

TODDLERS



Art, Music and Movement: **Song Cards**

This activity starts with a fun creative project for you! Make a songbook for you and your child that includes songs that she enjoys singing, and make sure to include pictures representing what's going on in the song. Use simple, easily identified illustrations to represent the songs (e.g., a hot dog and a frying pan for "Hot Dogs Frying in a Pan" or a cartoon spider for "Itsy Bitsy Spider"). Try to include up to 10 songs in the book. This could be a fun project to include older siblings or cousins in as well. This will be a wonderful keepsake to have on hand during song time.

Children experience:

- Taking initiative in a shared activity
- Identifying visual images
- Listening and responding to music

When you settle in to have some singing time, give the child the opportunity to look through the song book to select a song for you and her to sing. As you are continuing with song time, maybe ask your child why they want to sing a particular song, or what the pictures on the page represent.

If you have a family song time with a few other family members, rotate the option to choose a song so everyone has the opportunity to pick a song they'd like to sing. This is a great way for your child to learn about sharing and taking turns. And it's always more fun to sing in a group!



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Choose a Toy Planning**

Children experience:

- Taking initiative in their play
- Developing their relationships with adults

In this activity your child will develop his planning skills. Before the planning activity begins, select an item that is representative of each area of your house in which your child can play, and put them all together on the table. For the child's bedroom, you can choose one of their toys they usually keep there. Then for the kitchen you can pick a wooden spoon, and so on.

Bring your child to the table and explain the activity. Take them through the room that each item represents, and make sure that they remember. Now start modeling planning language as you hold up each of the items. You might say: "Here's the ball that we play with in the backyard. If you choose the ball, then we can put on our outside shoes, go out to the backyard, and when we get there we can play tag together." Once you have done a few examples, ask your child to choose an object that represents where he wants to play next. Encourage the child to think about what they might do in that area.

Once your child chooses the object and announces their plan, go with them to play in the area of their choice. When you get there, prompt your child to say again what activity they want to engage in now that they're there. When the child starts to lose interest in the activity, you can take them back to the table to choose a new area of play.

TODDLERS



Early Math and Discovery: **Photo Matching**

For this activity, you will need to provide doubles of pictures or photos of familiar people, animals, and objects in each child's basket. You could do this with double photo prints, or cuttings from two copies of the same magazine, or you can draw them yourself! Put all of the doubles together in a basket or other shallow container, which you should set before your child.

As your child looks through the pictures, and selects one out, encourage them to find another one just like the one they have. Throughout the process, acknowledge what the child talks about by repeating and restating their comments and by making your own comments and observations. Some things you might want to encourage your child to think about:

Children experience:

- Identifying visual images
- Exploring things that are the same and different

- Similarities between different photos: "These two photos aren't the same, but in both the person is wearing a hat."
- Details that will help with identification: "What colors are in this picture that we should be looking for?"
- Open-ended questions that will prompt your child to make observations: "How are these two pictures different?"
- Open-ended questions that prompt your child to think about others: "Does this man look happy? Why do you think he's happy?"

By the end of this your child will have all of the matches--make sure to celebrate this accomplishment! As your child begins to lose interest in the activity, let them know that you are going to look for one more match and then transition to the next activity, alerting them to what comes next.



Myself and Others: **Watering Plants and Flowers**

Children experience:

- Developing their relationships with adults
- Exploring nature and the natural world
- Engaging with cause and effect

To start, provide tools for your child to pour and carry water. A watering can is great for this activity, but a cup or water bottle will also do perfectly well! Now you'll need to find some plants. This is a wonderful activity to do outside in a yard or garden area, but can also be fun in a park, and can also be done inside with houseplants.

Encourage your child to carefully water the plants or flowers using the containers provided. You'll want to talk to your child about the fact that the plants need water to live and grow, just like them! Also make sure to explain that they don't need too much. If these are your plants, let your child know how often you water them. This will help your child understand your routines. If these are outdoor plants, perhaps talk about how the rain helps the plants grow, to

TODDLERS

inspire their curiosity about the natural world. As your child performs this task, talk to them about what they are doing. You might say, "Look, the water is going into the soil!" or, "You are doing such a good job of being careful."

Give children a 5-minute warning before cleaning up. Transition children back into the classroom with a fun way of moving such as hopping like a bunny.



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: **Body Stories**

Read a story about the parts of the body. If you don't have one on hand, you can watch a brief video, like this one: www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5bhknelmyU

As you progress through the story or video, point to and name body parts along with your child. After a few examples, watch and listen for children to point to and name their own body parts. See if they can point to the same body part on you, (i.e. "That is your nose! Where is mine?").

You can also play games that involve body parts. try inventing a new game or adapt existing games such as "The Hokey Pokey" or peek-a-boo. Instead of directing children to put their left or right foot in, they can say, "Put your feet in." While playing peek-a-boo with your child, you can ask, "Where's your foot hiding?"

Children experience:

- Distinguishing self and others
- Exploring things that are same and different

PRESCHOOL



Art, Music and Movement: **Frozen Statues**

For this activity you will want music that is lively and will get children moving (music without words usually works best). If music isn't available, simply clap your hands or jingle a set of car keys.

Begin this activity by introducing the word statue and asking children if they have ever seen one or know what that is. Talk with them about statues by describing how statues look (they are usually made out of rock or stone, are hard, represent people or animals) and by listening to what they think a statue is. Say "Let's pretend I turn you into a statue! Make a pose and stand still!" Next, tell them you are going to play a "frozen statue" game. Explain that they will move while the music plays and then freeze like a statue when the music stops.

Play the music on the CD player and encourage children to move to the music. They will really enjoy this activity if you get on the dance floor, too! Stop the music and have children freeze their body in a pose. Make sure you talk about the position of their body. You might say, "You have one foot on the ground and one foot off the ground!" Continue to play and stop the music as long as children seem interested in the activity. Remember to make a comment about what they are doing with their body each time the music stops, or encourage them to describe their statue poses.

When you see that children aren't as interested, give a warning like "OK, this will be our last pose, and then it will be time to stop."

Children experience:

- Learning new words
- Taking turns
- Exercise
- Learning about time (starting and stopping on a signal)
- Self-control
- Moving to music



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Hickory Dickory Dock**

Children experience:

- New words
- Learning how to rhyme
- Pretending

For this activity we will be using the rhyme "Hickory Dickory Dock":

*Hickory dickory dock,
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,
Hickory dickory dock.*

Tell children that you know a funny little rhyme about a mouse. Ask them to pretend their hands are mice, and show how they think mice look and act. Read the rhyme "Hickory Dickory Dock" to the children. When you say "the mouse ran up the clock," have them wiggle their fingers toward the ceiling. When you say the line "The clock struck one," have them hold up one finger or make a chiming sound. When you say "The mouse ran down," have the children wiggle their fingers back down to their lap.

PRESCHOOL

After saying the rhyme and doing the finger motions a few times, tell the children that you are going to change the title of “Hickory Dickory Dock” so the words all start with the “B” sound, as in Bat. Say the rhyme the the new way, like this:

*Bickory Bickory Bock
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,
Bickory, Bickory Bock.*

You or the children can suggest other letters and letter sounds. If you say, “The next sound we are going to use is the sound the letter L makes,” the rhyme would become “Lickory Lickory Lock.” If you say, “Let’s try the first sound in the word pumpkin,” the rhyme would become “Pickory Pickory Pock.”

Rhyming sounds and even nonsense words are an important part of your child’s language and literacy development, so if you notice your child making up words or rhymes, encourage them and play along!



Math, Science, and Technology: **Bird Seed Box**

Set the box outside and ask children to help you pour in the bag of bird seed. Then let them put the containers and spoons in too.

Your child will experience many things during this activity. Here are some things you might see, and some suggestions on how to respond:

Pouring seeds from one container to another:

“This smaller cup only filled up the big one to halfway.”

“Wow, you are pouring fast (or slow).”

“I wonder how many seeds are in this cup?”

Covering up their toys:

“I wonder how you can find him?”

“Why is it hiding?”

“We had four blocks, but I only see three now. Four, take away three, is one!”

Pouring into different containers to hear a sound:

“When you pour into that cup it makes a funny sound!”

“What does it sound like to you?”

“What sound would it make if you poured into this cup?”

Encourage your child to make observations as well, and if they do, then be receptive and engage with your child’s thoughts. If children begin to lose interest, bring out something totally new, like a pair of knee-high panty hose. Ask children how many scoops they think will fill it up. The panty hose will s-t-r-e-t-c-h a lot, so get ready for an interesting experiment!

Children experience:

- Measuring
- Comparing amounts
- Building fine-motor skills
- Making predictions

Materials:

- Large bag of bird seed or any kind of similar material--think lentils, rice, sand, etc.
- A wide, low box or container
- Empty yogurt or plastic food containers
- Spoons and other kinds of scoopers
- Knee-high panty hose or a thin sock
- Little things for children to play with, such as dollhouse people, small blocks

PRESCHOOL



Myself and Others: **Choice Cards**

Children experience:

- Taking initiative; making plans and following through on them

Before you sit down with children, write the names of three toys on separate pieces of paper. Then write three different locations in your home on another three pieces of paper. Finally, write down three different kinds of open-ended materials on another three pieces of paper. (Open-ended means the materials can be used in many different ways; for example, a paper bag, a cardboard box, and yarn are all things children can use in many different ways!)

You should have nine pieces of paper when you are done. First, say to children something like “I have three cards that list some of your toys. Pick one toy that you really want to play with. Now, pick another card that tells about another kind of item (this will be the open-ended item, such as play dough, water, newspaper, chalk, a bed sheet, a box, yarn...). Make a choice and pick one of these items.” Then you will offer the final card, which indicates where in the house the child will play! So a child might end up playing with a baby doll with water in the kitchen. So that child can give the baby a bath! Another child might end up with cars and chalk outside. He or she might try drawing a road for the cars to zoom around on!

Once they have their cards, ask the children what they would like to do! Say something specific, like “Tell me your plan for using these” or “How do you plan to play with these together?” Helping children think about what they are going to do builds their planning skills. Listen to what they say and, if the plans are safe, follow children to the new location to play.



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: **Washing and Hanging Clothes**

When children’s play has been focused on dolls for several days, introduce the idea of washing the dolls’ clothing. Ask children if they ever help with laundry at home. Ask them about the importance of washing clothes, and compare it to other parts of a child’s personal care routine.

Children experience:

- Fine-motor skills
- Personal care and healthy behavior

Set up a washing station indoors at the sand and water table, or outdoors with washtubs filled with sudsy water. Demonstrate how children might scrub the clothes, and work alongside them, listening to their conversations and observing their actions.

Help children to wring out and hang the wet clothes on a clothesline in a sunny spot. When the activity is finished, have the children help to put the baskets and washtubs away, and check periodically to see if the clothes are dry.



MORE RESOURCES



Week of the Young Child

Celebrate this special week with your child! There are some wonderful activities provided by NAEYC:

www.naeyc.org/events/woyc/plan-your-event



What if World

In this weekly podcast for kids, Mr. Eric takes a “What if?” question from a kid and spins it into a story for all of you! Check it out here:

www.whatifworldpodcast.com/



KiwiCo

Find fun and engaging STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics) for you to do with your child on this website:

www.kiwico.com/blog/2020/03/14/activities-for-2-4-year-olds-at-home/



Learn about Easter Traditions

Google Arts and Culture has a visually-dynamic walk through of Easter traditions around the world--some you and your child might be familiar with, and others that are new and interesting to learn about!

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/OwVRJb9v6QngqQ>



#CareNotCOVID

A wonderful thing to do with your young child is to help him or her learn about empathy by putting together a video or card for an elderly person. Learn more about the project here:

<https://carenotcovid.com/>



Any Time Can be Storytime

There are bright and engaging stories, appropriate for a variety of ages at Brightly Storytime:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCvQagFNHMrGgQpYunk4rHXg