

Ideas to help your child thrive by 5

Babies' brains start developing even before they are born. The building blocks for healthy brains come from every-day activities you can do at home or out and about.

We spoke to parents and are pleased to present to you, 16 fun and simple ideas for you and your little one(s).

All of these ideas can be woven into everyday life with under 5's, little or no preparation is needed, and they use low or no cost items you can easily find at home.

Babies/young children are naturally curious and want to find out and learn. From birth to 5 a child's brain develops more than at any other time in their life. What you do at home can make a big difference to your child's learning and development. By doing these activities together, talking and moving, your child's brain will be developing, they will constantly be learning, and it will and set them up nicely for nursery and school.

Some of the ideas are broken down into an option for Birth - 2 and 2 - school, you can choose the best option for you and your child and change this up as they get older.

As you play and have fun together you will be laying those important foundations that will help your child to be happy, healthy and succeed at school.

Our ideas are a drop in the ocean. You can try our ideas and add your own. You can help your child by encouraging and supporting them to:

- play, explore, experiment, try things out, 'have a go' at new experiences
- keep on trying when things get difficult, find other ways of doing things if things don't always go as planned, make choices and decisions, have that 'can do' attitude, enjoy achievements 'I can do it!'
- pretend, solve problems, come up with their own ideas,

The symbols against each fun idea will help you to know what your child is learning and how it is building their brain



Personal, Social and Emotional Development



Communication and Language



Physical development*

*When we talk about motor skills this involves certain body muscles doing a task. In order to do this it requires baby's brain and muscles to work together for example, walking, picking up an item.

1 Tummy Time

Tummy time will be one of my first exercises. This is when I am awake and placed on my tummy with someone keeping a close eye on me. I will benefit from 2 to 3 times of tummy time each day for 3-5 minutes from being newborn. As I get older, I can spend longer doing this. Tummy time will help me to build my strength for sitting up, rolling over, crawling and walking.



Tummy time helps my neck and shoulder muscles get stronger.

2 Let's pretend to wash up

We can 'wash up' together in the bath, in a bowl of water on the floor or even in the garden! Once I'm a bit bigger I might be able to help wash up properly.



I will be learning to co-ordinate my movements – holding, pouring, wiping' 'Squeezing out the sponge will help me to develop my hand muscles in readiness for writing'



'I will be hearing and learning new words ('splash', 'bubbles', 'clean', 'scrub') and simple clear sentences to help me develop my language'



Introduce new words as we play. Talk out aloud (it might seem strange!) comment on your actions and mine too.



3

Story time!

I love stories! Books are super important to me, not only to learn how to read but develop my problem solving and emotions. When I am little it does not matter about the words, I just like to see the pictures- you can tell me what I am looking at on each page. The more I hear you talk and use different words will help my language and communication skills. If we read a book every day, by the time I get to school I will have read over 1500 stories! A story before bed is a great way for us to relax together and get into a good bedtime routine.



Talking about books and reading with me will help me develop my language. Spotting logos will help me start to make sense of signs and symbols and help my reading skills. These are skills I need to help me communicate too. It builds my vocabulary and tests my memory.



Why not create your own story book? Take photos of an outing even a trip to the park and put it in a book for you to share together.



Your local library has 100's of books available for adults and children to borrow, for free. Find your local library here:

leicestershire.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/libraries



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Going outside

I am interested in the sights, sounds, smells of outdoors. It will help me develop my senses, especially if I get a chance to feel grass, sand, mud with my feet. As I grow older I can start to be more interested in nature it will help me develop curiosity. I can make pictures with the twigs, leaves etc that I find. I can also play games like finding shapes in the clouds or the classic of pooh sticks.



The outside can help me learn about my senses but also help me to relax and calm down by focusing on my surroundings



Listening to what is outside will help me focus my listening but also when we talk about what we hear it will help extend my language.

5

Mirroring

In the first weeks of life, the deepest areas of my brain are developing. I can't focus on a lot but I can see the basic shapes of your face. So, I will watch you and copy your expressions as I learn.

As I get older see what facial expressions I can copy. Why don't we play in the mirror with the facial expressions we can do or take photos of different faces we can pull.



These are the basic skills I need to help me learn how to interact with others.



Learning your expressions will help me to start to recognise emotions and as I grow older to name them.

6 And relax....

There is lots for me to learn and discover, I can be busy playing lots of games. But I also need to learn how to relax and have chill out time too. It is good to have you to share those moments at first so I can learn how to do it on my own when I am older. You can also help me learn to calm down with teddy bear breathing - I can lie down with my teddy on my tummy and watch them go up and down as I breathe in and out...



Believe it or not but having time to cuddle together helps my brain to develop so let's make time to do this every day!



This is a great time to introducing singing and as they grow older why not share your favourite songs to relax too?


7 Rhyme time

We all know the benefits of music for adults, but did you know singing songs can help me learn too? I don't mind if you don't know the words to rhymes, I just like to hear your voice as it comforts me- you can even make up words. In fact, making up rhyming words when I am older is a fun game to do.



I like learning the patterns in songs, this helps my language skills.





8 Dance time!

Dancing is a great way to exercise, have fun and enjoy positive touch. As I grow up we can dance along to our favourite songs and even make our own dance moves together.



I can learn that moving around is fun as well as good for me.

9 Sensory Play

I need to learn what different things feel like. That's why I often put things in my mouth, it is my way of exploring different objects. Think about what different things I can explore safely.



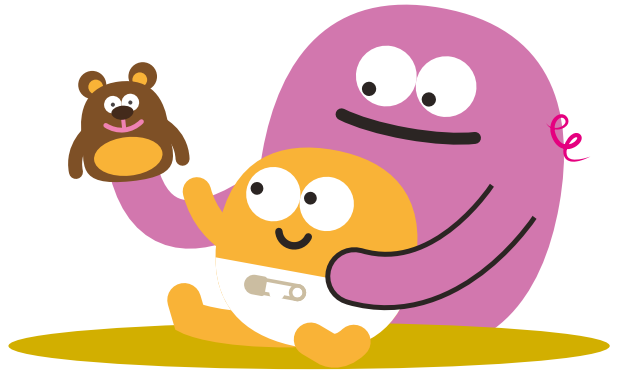
As I learn to pick up things and explore them it helps me improve my motor skills.



This type of play helps me build connections in my brain.



When your child is older- rather than making the playdough, why not make it together- two sensory experiences for the price of one!



10 Imaginative Play

Imagination is great I can pretend play lots of different things with you we could have a tea party with me teddies or play house.



Imaginative play will help my creative thinking and problem-solving skills.



I can get very excited in my imaginative play and want to tell you all about it.



Why not visit a local charity shop to find new things to play with, or even save food packaging to create your own shop at home!

11 Share your heritage

This sounds very grand but really, I just want to know about my family. You can share photos with me, stories about our family, ask other family members to share their memories and stories of my family with me too.



This will help my conversation skills as I listen to you and ask questions.

12 Games

Games will help me with sharing and turn taking but I can also do more active games with you. We can use a tea-towel (for example) as a tail tucked into someone's waistband and try to catch it. We can play sorting games in the kitchen and sort pans from big to small, peek a boo, hide and seek. We can make an obstacle course with cushions... the list is endless. We'd love to hear your favourite games.



I can learn that moving around is fun as well as good for me.

13 Are you hungry?

Being in the kitchen together cooking or baking is so much fun. I can learn about healthy eating, try new foods and make memories by helping you.



Helping to roll, mix and chop all help me with my fine motor skills.



You can help me to follow a recipe and learn about following instructions.



Why not visit your local community fridge to find new foods to cook and bake with?



14

Let's get crafty

Don't just throw that recycling away! Let's first use our imagination- what can we make today? A car, a magic rocket, maybe a castle?



This can help my fine motor skills as I learn to colour, glue, cut and stick!



I can get very excited and want to tell you all about what I have made.



Taking an interest in what I am making and giving me a few minutes to tell you about it can help me develop my confidence and feel good about myself

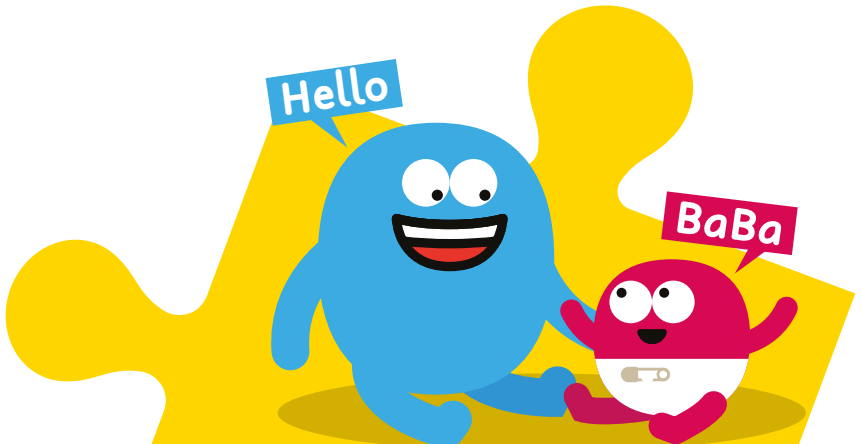
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Blocks

I can learn so much with building blocks, building them up and knocking them down is a fun game but also helping my brain make some more connections. As I grow and my imagination develops, I can start to build the tallest tower, a castle, a boat etc.



As I learn to pick up and put blocks on top of each other it is helping me with my fine motor skills.



16

Community

You are not alone! There are other parents out there too discovering the highs and lows of having a baby. It is important for me to start interacting with others as soon as possible. It helps my emotional development and my problem-solving skills. But I also need parents who are ok and have people to see and chat to, this is important for us human's at whatever age. So please find groups for us to go to together. Raising me can be hard at a times and I need a parent who can ask for help when they need it for both our sakes.



Play with others helps in all aspects of my brain development and wellbeing. It can help start building the connections in my brain I need to make friends and have social skills later in life.



As I watch you and see how you talk to people, I can start to copy this with my friends too!



What a fun way to stay active when I am hanging out with my friends and playing together.



There are lots of opportunities out there, sometimes it is just knowing where to go. Check out local playgroups, parks, libraries, leisure centres, facebook pages. Your local Children and Family Wellbeing Centre will also have groups on but also be able to point you in the right direction if you need further help.

leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/social-care-and-supporting-families/children-and-family-wellbeing-service

