

Naturally Occurring Child Learning

The ordinary activities that make up families' everyday lives provide young children many different kinds of learning opportunities. Young children learn best when they have many chances to participate in everyday activities they find interesting where adults respond to their children's behavior in ways that help them practice things they can do and try doing new things.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Learning Guide: Everyday Child Learning Activities

- Watch your child while in everyday family activities to find out his or her special interests—your child's favorite things, things that your child chooses to do most often, or things that make your child smile or laugh, get your child excited, or get your child to stick to an activity.
- Think about all the different activities that your family does and identify the ones that best match your child's interests or that your child would find most interesting. You might be surprised at the number of activities your child does.
- Think about the family routines that involve your child on a regular basis such as having a bath, eating dinner, getting ready for bed, or getting dressed. Think about the activities you and your child do together like looking at books or playing lap games. Consider any activity that encourages your child's physical play or that entertains your child like playing with a ball or "dancing" to music. Don't overlook other play activities your child does like drawing or playing with a doll, and activities that get your child involved with other people like having friends over to play.
- Select everyday activities that provide lots of opportunities for learning. Bath time, for example, gives your child chances to make waves in the water, splash with hands or feet, pour water from one container to another, squeeze water from a sponge or washcloth, count toes, feel hot and cold, ask for bubbles, see what floats, and so forth.
- Pay attention to what your child does while involved in the activities he or she enjoys. When you notice your child doing or trying to do something, respond in a positive way. Join in your child's play and take turns with him or her. Comment on what your child is doing.
- While your child is participating in the everyday activities, respond to her behavior to encourage her to try to do something different. Show your child how to do something new, praise her for trying to do new things, or encourage her to do something a little bit different.

A Quick Peek

Larry regularly took his daughter, Alice, with him when he went to their backyard greenhouse to take care of the vegetables because he knew how much she loved it. She would toddle along behind him as he checked the plants and often stopped to dig in the dirt, point to a bug, or pick up a rock. She liked to help hold the watering can as Larry watered the plants. Today Larry noticed that Alice seemed especially interested in their crop of kale as she squatted to get a good look. "That's kale," said Larry. "It's growing big!" Alice exclaimed, "Big!" Larry steadied Alice as she reached out to touch the plant. "Shall we pick some?" asked Larry. He showed Alice how to pick a leaf and then gave it to her to feel. Then he helped her pick another leaf and put it in their basket. Alice was excited, exclaiming, "I do!" She continued to pick kale with Larry's help. When they were finished, she jumped up, shouting, "Kale!"



You'll know the practice is working if ...

- Your child stays involved in the activities for longer periods of time.
- Your child has fun and enjoys the everyday activities.
- Your child tries to do new things as part of participation in everyday activities.

For more ideas, ask an early interventionist, teacher, therapist, home visitor, or another experienced parent. [Click here to download a handout filled with ideas for everyday learning opportunities to enjoy with your young child.](#)