

PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Children of different ages have different needs. These needs are based on each child's stage of growth and development. Remember that two children of the same age can be similar in some ways but different in other ways. Try to understand the unique aspects of each child. This helps children feel good about themselves. This will also help you plan activities that are developmentally appropriate for each child. Appropriate activities help children learn and are lots of fun.

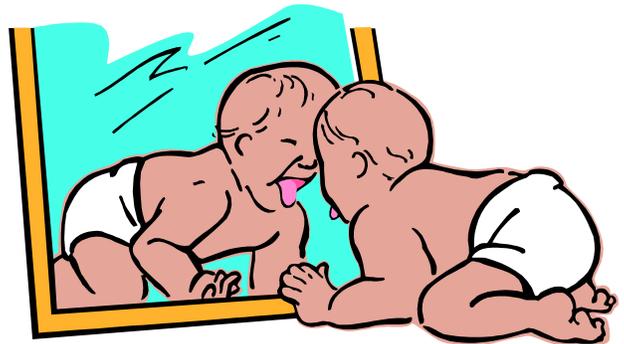
Most children need consistency in their schedules. Planned routines tend to work best. Try to develop a routine so that children in your day care program know what to expect each day.

The lists of activities and the sample schedule included in this fact sheet will help you:

- plan activities that are fun for all the children in your child care program.
- feel good about your own skills.
- help children of different ages play and learn together.

ACTIVITIES FOR INFANTS

- Hold, rock, and sing to young babies.
- Take them outside on nice days.
- Explain what you are doing throughout the day when you change or feed them.
- Let young babies lie on a big piece of paper and hear the crunching noise when they move.
- Play different kinds of music on the radio.
- Put bright toys near babies.
- Give them soft toys (like a stuffed animal or a clean sock) to hold and feel.
- Give babies toys they can move and make noise with (like a rattle).
- Hang up big pictures of people and animals on the wall at their eye level to look at.
- Hang up toys you make yourself for babies to see and hear. Hang aluminum pie plates on a string. Let a breeze blow them, or move them with your hand.
- Have a clean space for babies to crawl. Put bright toys near babies so they can reach out or move toward them. Put a big cardboard box on the floor so the babies can crawl inside and play.
- Put some chair cushions on the floor. Babies can bounce and roll on them.
- Read aloud books that have colorful pictures.
- Have small blankets and scarves for infants to play peekaboo.



Remember that infants put everything in their mouths. Wash toys, and be sure they cannot be swallowed.

ACTIVITIES FOR TODDLERS

- Toddlers like to put things inside of other things and dump them out. Cut a hole in the middle of the lid of a clean coffee can or plastic margarine tub. Let the toddlers put clothespins, thread spools, and big hair curlers through the hole.
- Make play dough. Mix 3 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 3 tablespoons oil, and 1 cup water together. Add food coloring for color. Let the toddlers use jar lids, clothespins, and popsicle sticks to cut and shape the play dough.
- Children love to play with water. Fill big buckets or tubs with water. Give the children soap chips, measuring spoons and cups, plastic bottles, butter tubs, and sponges to play with in the water. Put towels or newspaper on the floor so the children will not slip on the wet floor.
- Toddlers like goop. Mix cornstarch and water together. Let toddlers play with it in a bucket or in bowls with cups and spoons. Make the goop thick or thin.
- Ask your local appliance shop for a free refrigerator (or other large appliance) cardboard box. Cut doors and windows in the box to make a playhouse. Toddlers can draw on it with crayons or "paint" it with water and big brushes or sponges.
- Toddlers like to draw with short, fat, unwrapped crayons. Give them paper bags (you can tear them open to make large sheets of brown paper) or large pieces of heavy paper to draw on. To help them draw, tape the paper down so it does not move.
- Let toddlers tear old wrapping paper. Then have them paste the pieces to make a collage.
- Have toddlers finger paint with shaving cream mixed with food coloring. Messy but fun!
- Toddlers like to jump. Put pillows, cushions, or a mattress on the floor.
- They can use some swings and low slides at the playground.
- Most toddlers are just learning how to walk and run. Go for lots of walks.
- Let the toddlers practice climbing stairs with your help.
- Toddlers also like to play house with dolls and housekeeping props such as plastic dishes and spoons.



ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

- Preschool children like to jump, ride tricycles, play ball, use crayons, and do puzzles.
- When these children play with water or sand, give them toys like egg beaters, watering cans, squeeze bottles, and funnels.
- Make soap bubbles. Add 3/4 cup of liquid dish soap to 2 quarts of water. Have the children blow bubbles with small plastic (frozen juice) containers open at both ends. They can also use straws or green plastic berry baskets. Also, let the children wash dishes.
- Poke holes in the bottoms of plastic margarine tubs. Have the children fill them with water and watch it dribble out.
- Let the children play with sand in buckets. Give them scoops, muffin tins, funnels, rolling pins, and salt shakers to use. Almost any containers and utensils are fun to play with in the sand.
- Preschoolers like to pretend. They learn how to share, and it helps their imaginations grow. Set up a corner of your room like an ice cream store. You will need a table, clean ice cream containers, ice cream scoops, and cones made from paper. To make a pretend beach, you will need bathing suits, towels, sunglasses, a radio, and beach toys. To make a supermarket, gather empty food boxes and containers, play money, and shopping carts. You can also get ideas from the children for pretend playing.
- Hygiene routines (washing hands and brushing teeth) should be a regular part of each day.
- Preschoolers like to make things with blocks and Legos(TM). Check to make sure the wood is smooth and free of splinters.



ACTIVITIES FOR SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

- These children like many of the same activities toddlers and preschoolers like. These activities include playing with water, cooking, and dancing. Make activities more fun for older children by adding more toys and by letting them do more things by themselves.
- Most school-aged children are very active and like competitive games like kickball or basketball.
- Some school-aged children like to play alone.
- Girls tend to like to play with girls, and boys tend to like to play with boys most of the time.
- Help the children make water wave jars. In a jar, mix one part water with food coloring to two parts oil. Tightly screw on the lid. Hold the jar sideways. Rock it back and forth to make waves.
- Help them make water clocks. Collect five or six cans of different sizes. Punch a small hole in the side of each can near the bottom. Stuff the hole with paper. Fill the cans with water. Have the children see which will empty first and which will empty last. Before they try this, ask them to predict which will empty first.



ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

- Take a trip to the playground, park, or basketball court. Do errands together, or plan field trips to the library, bank, or newspaper office.
- Music is fun for everyone. You can make and play instruments with preschoolers and elementary school-aged children. To make shakers, gather some cans with plastic lids. Fill the cans with buttons, bells, and beads. Glue on the lids. Decorate (or have the children decorate) the cans if you like. Make drums from old coffee cans with plastic lids. To make a shoe box guitar, cut a hole in a shoe box lid. Tape the lid on the box. Stretch three or four rubber bands across the hole on the lid. The children can pluck the rubber bands. Have the children play their instruments for the younger children and infants.
- Reading is an activity that all can enjoy. Infants love to look at picture books. Older children can read to younger children.



TV WATCHING

In family day care homes, the TV should not be on all day. The TV should never be on if no children are watching. Good shows for all ages can be found on Public Television. Children will learn the most from TV if you talk about the shows with them. The TV should be used only as a learning aid. It should not be used for adult entertainment while children are in your day care program.

ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

Most children are much happier when they know what to expect. They like and need daily routines. They also need a balance between active and quiet time. You can meet these needs by establishing a routine that is designed to have the balance your day care children need.

