



Fun Things

To Make and Do

Handout #36

Healthy Children, Strong Families, Caring Communities

Are you looking for affordable activities to do with your children? Did you know there are many low-cost learning activities you can do with your children right in your kitchen, backyard or park?

Here are a few suggestions:

Exploring Your Backyard

Treasure Hunt

Children love a buried treasure hunt. Hide a small "treasure" in the backyard. For older children, write down clues for them to follow. For younger children, draw a treasure map showing where to find the hidden treasure.

Nature Walk

Take your children on a nature walk around the neighborhood or to a park. Collect leaves, flowers and rocks for a collage, mobile or leaf imprints. To make a leaf imprint, just brush paint on the back of a leaf and press down on a sheet of paper. Arrange a trip to the local library and help the children identify what flowers, leaves and rocks they find.

Nature Dig

Create your own nature dig with the bugs you find in your backyard. Collect potato bugs and caterpillars from the backyard, and put them in a deep bucket filled with dirt. Have the children dig for the bugs with plastic spoons.

Don't Throw That Away!

Children tend to value the toys they make for themselves because they have the opportunity to use their own imagination and creativity. Parents and child care providers can help by providing a wide variety of common materials. Save your empty 20-oz. plastic soda bottles, toilet paper rolls, buttons or milk cartons. Even odd block and puzzle pieces can lead to creative toys.



Bird Bath

Cut off three-fourths of a soda bottle or milk carton and line it with small rocks, then add water. Put your bird bath next to a tree. Hang your handmade bird feeder nearby.

Bird Feeder

Cut off three-fourths of the container and fill with bird seed or bread crumbs. Or smear a little peanut butter on a toilet paper roll or a pine cone and roll it in some bird seed. Hang the bird feeder on a tree with string.

Miniature Garden

Cut a container in half and partially fill with dirt. Poke holes in the bottom to allow water to drain through. Have the children plant the seeds, water and weed their plant.

Lava Lamp

Fill a 20-oz. plastic soda bottle with water, oil, food coloring, glitter and plastic beads. Put the cap back on and seal with duct tape. Turn the bottle upside down and watch the oil, glitter and beads float to the top.

From the Kitchen

Pull out your flour, water and oil for these creative projects. Your reusable bags are perfect for storage. Cooking teaches children about the chemical reactions when liquids are added to dry ingredients.

Ooblick

Put a whole box of corn starch into a bowl. Add water. Have the children mix it with their hands. After it's mixed, the consistency should feel like mud. Have each child try to pull out a handful of the mixture. Watch their surprise when the mixture turns back into liquid. Be careful not to pour the used Ooblick down the sink drain.

Molding Clay

Mix 2 cups flour and 1 cup salt in a bowl. Add 1 cup water. Mix together. Store in a reusable freezer bag. The sculpted pieces can be air-dried which will take 2–3 days. Or, bake them in the oven at 300 degrees for 1 hour. Covered dough will keep about 5 days.

Silly Putty

Add 1 cup of glue and a couple drops of food coloring in a bowl. Mix thoroughly. Add 3 tablespoons of Borax to the glue mixture. Put 4 cups of water in a separate bowl. Pour the glue mixture into the water. Glue should sink to the bottom. Work mixture until consistency is that of silly putty. Pour out excess water and borax. Store in a reusable freezer bag.

Play Dough

Put 4 cups water, 4 tablespoons oil, 4 cups flour, 2 cups salt and 2 teaspoons cream of tartar into a large pot. Cook on medium heat for a couple of minutes until the consistency is like mashed potatoes. Cool for about 1 hour. Store in a reusable freezer bag.

Clean Mud

Use three bars of Ivory™ soap, 1 gallon of water, and 3 rolls of toilet paper torn into pieces. Grate the Ivory™ soap into a dishpan. Add water. Mix with your hands, then add the toilet paper. This is an activity your children will love to put their hands in.

Tin-Can Telephone

Take two tin cans. Remove one of the ends of each can. Stand the cans on a flat surface with the open ends down. Punch a small hole through the centers of the bottoms of both cans with a nail and a hammer. Make the hole large enough for the end of the string to pass through.

Use 20 feet of string and thread string through the hole in the can. Tie a knot large enough that the string will not pass through. Do the same with the other can. Have a friend hold the open end of one can to his or her ear while you talk into the open end of the other can. The tin can telephone will work best when the string is pulled tight and straight.

Parachute

A parachute can be made from a 16-inch bandana or scrap of fabric, string, and a key ring with five or six old keys for weight. Cut two pieces of string about 24 inches long and thread both pieces of string through the key ring. Tie the ends of the strings to the corners of the bandana. Hold the center of the bandana with the keys hanging down and gently throw in the air.

Humming Flute/Kazoo

Take a cardboard tube from a paper towel or toilet paper roll. Depending on the length of the tube, punch 1 to 4 holes with a pencil about 1 inch apart in the side of the tube. Cover one end with a piece of waxed paper held in place by a rubber band. Hum a tune in the other end while moving your fingers over the holes.

Juice-Can Stilts

Take two empty cans that are 7 inches high and 4 inches in diameter with both ends still on. Use a can opener and make one opening on both sides of the can. Tape the end of a 48-inch long rope on the pointed end of a knitting needle. Carefully push the knitting needle through both holes of the can. Untape the rope, and tie the ends together. Do the same with the other can. While holding the ropes, place one foot on each can. To walk, use the ropes to pull the can against the bottom of your foot as you take a step.