

Vroom Tips™



These print-at-home tip sheets include a mix of Vroom Brain Building Activities™ for children ages 0-5. Share them, put them up on your fridge, or carry them around—whatever helps remind you that brain-building moments are all around you.

Brain Building Basics™

We've made the science of early learning simple! Remember these 5 actions to help build your child's brain anytime. They're color coded for easy finding.

Look

Children use their eyes to learn. See what catches your child's attention and talk about it. Or connect eye-to-eye, then smile, chat, hug, or make funny faces!

Follow

Young children learn best when you follow their lead. Tune into your child's words, sounds, movements and ideas! Then respond with your own words and actions.

Chat

Children's brains light up when you talk, sing, or make sounds back and forth with them. Chat about your day, food, and what's around you, or string sounds together for a fun conversation!

Take Turns

Children learn from taking turns when you play, talk, or explore. After they go, take your turn. Then repeat: they go, you go, they go, you go!

Stretch

Children's brains grow strong when you help them stretch their learning further. Keep a moment going: ask your child a question that starts with what, when, where, how or why!

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Singing Day

Make today a singing day. Instead of talking, try singing to your child about what you're doing. Make up new words to a familiar tune or create your own! It might feel silly at first, but they love to hear the sound of your voice singing. Respond to any sounds they make.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



When we sing, we slow down our speech and stretch out sounds, pronouncing them more clearly. Singing not only engages your child's attention, it helps them hear the sounds of words more clearly. This is how they learn to speak and communicate with you!

#162

Learn more at vroom.org

Gentle Bath

Help your child get used to the bathwater by sprinkling some warm water on their toes, feet, legs, and tummy. Watch how they react to the water and respond. Let them know with your words where you will sprinkle the water next and name each part of the body as you go.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Reading your child's cues means paying attention to their reactions to the water and responding—like making the same face or the same sound. When you engage in this back and forth conversation—with or without words—you're building the foundation for language and relationships.

#384

Learn more at vroom.org

Follow My Fingers

With your child on their back, fly your hand above their face. Pretend your hand is a plane, a bird, or a car. Talk about what you're doing. Tell a story, make sounds, or sing. Do they grab your fingers, watch your hands move, or kick? Try different ideas to find what they like best.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Your child is learning to pay attention and use self-control as they follow your movements. You're also helping them learn that objects can stand for other things. Your hand can be a plane or a car. This ability is important for learning to read and write later on.

#450

Learn more at vroom.org

Texture Toes

As you help your child dress, put different kinds of fabrics on their bare feet. Talk about how a soft blanket feels on their toes. Then switch to something else, like a scratchy sweater, and describe it. Watch your baby's reactions and then respond. Which textures do they smile at or pull away from?

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Responding to cues like smiles or kicks shows that you're listening. It inspires your baby to keep talking through sounds and actions. Connecting ideas, like how things feel, builds your baby's brain and vocabulary.

#487

Learn more at vroom.org

It's All New

Almost everything is new to your child in their first year. So describe what you see. "There goes the yellow school bus. Beep beep!" Let them see, hear, smell, and even touch things, if possible. Notice what they're interested in and have a back-and-forth chat. "You see the big tree? What else do you see?"

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



When you chat back-and-forth with your child, you help them begin to learn words. They're making connections between words and what they represent. This is an important language skill. By responding to their interests, you're prompting them to learn more.

#876

Learn more at vroom.org

Bouncing Baby

Does your baby love to bounce when you hold them on your lap? Bounce them up and down. Try going fast and slow as well as stopping and starting. How do they respond? Follow their lead and respond to their sounds and movements. Continue doing what they like best.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Giving your baby experiences with different ways of moving helps them learn how their body works and will help develop self-control in the future. By following their lead—watching if they smile or turn away—you're helping them learn to communicate with you.

#993

Learn more at vroom.org

Eye Gazing

Take a few minutes and look into your child's eyes. As they look back, smile and talk with them. Do what they do. If they blink, you blink. If they look left, you look left. Let them see your eyes too, and have fun keeping eye contact.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



When your child looks at you, and you respond, they're making new connections in their brain. Children learn best through loving relationships. When you look at each other and react to each other, the bond you have is growing stronger.

#44

Learn more at vroom.org

Sound Conversations

If your child says "Ba," repeat the sound back to them. Then add on to it, "Ba, ba, ba." Do they try to copy your sounds? Add a new sound next, "Ba, ba, MA." Do they notice the change? Do they try to repeat it? Go back and forth repeating each other's sounds and building on them.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Even conversations with only sounds encourage communication by your child, using sounds and actions to talk to you. Changing the sounds helps them pay careful attention to the differences between sounds—an important step in learning to talk.

#157

Learn more at vroom.org

Meal Plan

When feeding your baby, talk about what they're doing and why you think they're doing it. "You're drinking your milk because you're so hungry!" Talk about what will happen next. "After your tummy is full of milk, you'll be sleepy and it will be time for your nap."

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Talking with your baby and labeling their sounds and actions helps them connect words to feelings, and builds vocabulary. When you talk about your baby's daily routine, you help them feel safe throughout the day's changes.

#607

Learn more at vroom.org

Mirror Dance

Put on a song both of you like and watch your child move. As they dance, copy what they're doing. When they stop, you dance around and let them watch you. See if you can create a back and forth dance, taking turns copying each other.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



As your child copies your dance, they're paying attention to your movements, using their short-term memory, and controlling their actions—all important for learning focus and self-control.

#822

Learn more at vroom.org

Power Pointing

When your child points at something, talk back and forth about what they notice like, "You see the big truck!" Then you can take a turn to point something out to them and say what you see. Do they turn to look at it? Do they point or name the object?

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Your child learns to communicate when you respond to their actions and sounds and encourage them to reply. You help them be curious and explore to learn more about the world. These are important qualities for learning.

#100

Learn more at vroom.org

Big Hug, Little Hug

When it's time for a hug, ask your child if they want a big hug or a little hug and then do what they ask. Then you take a turn and say whether you want a big or little hug. You can add other words, like a wiggly hug or a quiet hug.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



The sense of touch is calming and comforting to your child. These hugs not only make your relationship stronger, they also allow you to share new words and concepts with them, like big and little.

#143

Learn more at vroom.org

Bye-Bye Bubbles!

While cleaning up, give your child a soapy sponge and a large container with a little water so they can help wash safe kitchen items. Scrub up lots of bubbles together. When you're ready say, "Bye-bye bubbles!" and show them how to rinse the bubbles away. Encourage them to try it.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



You're helping your child think like a scientist as they explore the water and bubbles. This kind of play will help them with learning math and science later on. Plus, when you include them in daily chores, you help them feel confident and independent.

#410

Learn more at vroom.org

Spin Cycle Challenge

Is there a window on the front of your washing machine? Watch it spin with your child. If there isn't a window, lift them so they can see the water going into the machine. Say things like, "Look, the water is rinsing soap off the clothes." See how they respond and respond back to them.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Your child learns best through their senses, with you as the guide. You're helping build their vocabulary and curiosity about how things work, which is at the heart of learning.

#512

Learn more at vroom.org

Open-Close, In-Out

Working in the kitchen? Give your child some safe plastic containers to open and close. Say "open" and "close" as they play. Show them how to take things, like spoons, in and out of the containers. Say "in" and "out." Make sure to talk to them about what they're doing.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Your child is thinking like a scientist by seeing how things work when they open and close containers, put things in, and pull things out. You can even give them different lids for the containers to see which ones fit and which ones don't.

#603

Learn more at vroom.org

Good Morning, Good Night

Is your child beginning to pretend? Then you can play the “Good Morning, Good Night” game! When you say, “Good night,” they can pretend to sleep by lying down and closing their eyes, and when you say, “Good morning,” they can get up and dance!

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Pretend play helps your child make sense of their world. This game is a good way to help them understand more about going to sleep and getting up. It also encourages them to pay attention, follow the rules of the game, and control their behavior.

#942

Learn more at vroom.org

Watch and Learn

Offer your child something common like a scarf, an empty box, or a pot. Watch to see what they do. Do they try to put the scarf in the box or the lid on the pot? Boost their learning by commenting on what they’re doing, “You put the scarf in the box!”

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Helping your child explore what they can do with an object supports curiosity and creativity. They’re also building thinking skills to understand the concepts of size and shape.

#999

Learn more at vroom.org

Delicious Descriptions

When shopping with your child, point out what you see. Use lots of different words to talk about the taste of different foods. Maybe you could say, “There are some juicy, sweet oranges,” or “I bet those yellow lemons are sour!” Follow their lead and talk about what they point and look at.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



You’re building skills when you guide your child’s attention and make connections between words and what they mean. They are learning important skills like focus and self-control. When you respond to a word, sound, point, or even a look, you’re showing them what they “say” is important.

#288

Learn more at vroom.org

No Words?

Are you teaching your child to use words to express their feelings? As you're out and about, ask them to notice animals, which don't use words, and see how they express what they want. Does the dog bark or stare at you? Ask them what they think the dog is trying to say.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



You can help your child learn to communicate with words and in other ways by noticing how animals communicate without words. Use what they notice to ask questions and help them think like a scientist, applying what they see to their own life.

#153

Learn more at vroom.org

Up and Over

Ask your child to find an object like a stick or rock and place it on the ground near you. Encourage them to explore different ways of moving over it: Can they jump? Hop over on just one foot? Run and then jump? Take turns jumping with them and talk together about how far you both go.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



It takes focus and self-control for your child to manage how their body moves, as well as flexible thinking to come up with different ideas. Fun experiences with math ideas like space and distance help them develop a foundation for learning now and in the future.

#204

Learn more at vroom.org

Toothy Twosome

When brushing your teeth, have your child be your partner. Let them brush their own teeth first, then give them your toothbrush so they can help brush yours. Ask, "Can you help me brush my teeth? Can you brush the ones in the front, and then the ones on the sides?" Take turns!

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Sharing a moment and taking turns is one of the most important ways you can promote your child's learning today and in the future.

#357

Learn more at vroom.org

Proud Potty

Potty training can be really tough. Try celebrating your child's successful potty trips. Tell them about what they did in a proud tone: "You went to the bathroom in the potty." Invite them to tell you what they did too. Be matter-of-fact about accidents.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



It's hard work to put together the signals that your body is telling you ("I have to go potty") with the actions of sitting in the right place, the potty, and going. When you praise your child's effort, "You did it!", they'll be more willing to take on the challenge.

#433

Learn more at vroom.org

Clothing Choices

Does your child want to choose their clothes? Help them by giving them two choices: "Do you want to wear your blue pants or your green pants?" When they choose, congratulate them by saying, "Great choice, I like those too."

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Limiting choices in the early years sets your child up for success as a decision-maker, a skill they'll use their whole life. You're giving them the control they want and need without letting them get overwhelmed. This lets them focus on thinking.

#466

Learn more at vroom.org

Little Independence

Does your child want to do everything themselves? Whether it's eating with fingers or trying to use a fork, give them ways to be more independent. Talk to them about what they're doing. If they need, help them a little. When they're done, notice how they respond with a smile or an "I did it!" Celebrate with them!

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



It may take longer and be messier, but you're helping your child to feel good and develop new skills. This will give them a sense they can try something new and succeed.

#554

Learn more at vroom.org

One, Two Foods

Pick two food words, such as banana and apple, to make a word pattern two times. Repeat with your child, “Banana, apple, banana, apple.” Have them pick two food words and make a pattern two times: “fork, spoon, fork, spoon.” Talk about which word comes first and second.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



When your child is choosing words, listening to words, and making patterns with you, they’re creating and then using a rule. Understanding and applying rules in patterns helps them learn math concepts.

#576

Learn more at vroom.org

Be a Fixer

Pretend to fix things with your child. With a plastic spoon, pretend to fix a hinge on a kitchen cabinet. “I’m fixing this broken hinge on the cabinet door. Now it’s your turn.” After their turn, hold out your hand saying, “My turn!” Keep taking turns, smiling while you work.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Pretending is an important way that children make sense of their world. When children pretend, they learn that one thing (a plastic spoon) can stand for something else (a tool to fix a broken hinge). That is the basis of understanding symbols, which is important to literacy and math.

#846

Learn more at vroom.org

Sweep Together

Include your child in common chores. For example, start with, “It’s time to sweep! Can you hold the dustpan for me?” Then, let them dump the dirt into the trash. Don’t be surprised when they ask you to hold the dustpan for them. Go back and forth. Taking turns is how they learn best and makes them feel included.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Not only is your child learning by copying you, but they’re also learning by doing. They’re also figuring out how things work—that things get dirty and need to be cleaned up. More importantly, they’re learning to be helpful and considerate.

#847

Learn more at vroom.org

Wink Watcher

Smile at your child and wink at them. Then encourage them to try to copy you. When they can do this, change the order—wink first and then smile. You can step it up the challenge by smiling and winking two times.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Playing this game helps your child learn to pay attention to what you're doing, remember the rules, and copy what you're doing. These are important skills for school and life.

#55

Learn more at vroom.org

Still as a Statue

Ask your child to pretend to be a statue and freeze in a pose, like standing on one foot. Try to have them hold this pose as long as possible while you do everything you can to make them laugh and move. Then you can take a turn as the statue and see if they can make you laugh and move!

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



This game is all about focus and self-control. Your child is concentrating to stay in the statue pose, and learning to tune out distractions so they can achieve a goal. This kind of playful learning helps them develop skills for life.

#198

Learn more at vroom.org

Hot Potato

You and your child can play this game anywhere you are. Find a small item to pass back and forth and sing a song as you do. As the song ends, whoever has the object does something special or silly, like blink three times or jump up and down. Take turns.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Playing "Hot Potato" gives your child practice in following rules and taking turns. It also gives them practice at self-control, a skill that helps them to stick with something long enough to meet their goals.

#222

Learn more at vroom.org

Comparison Shopping

A store can be a great place to build your child's brain on the go. Give them something like a banana and an apple to hold. "Which is heavier? Which is larger? Which is softer?" You can do this with any items, in any aisle, in any store!

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Games like these help your child to think like a scientist. They're taking in the world around them and guessing how things compare or fit together. Repeat the game a few times with different objects for them to compare. Remember, repetition is how we learn!

#257

Learn more at vroom.org

Unpack Your Bags

After shopping, invite your child to help take items out of the bags. Give them some small, safe items to put away, giving hints for where things go, like, "Are there other cans in the cupboard that look like this one?" or "An apple is a fruit. Where do we keep the other fruit?"

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Grouping things and being able to see similarities and differences helps your child make connections, which is at the heart of learning. You're also building their memory in fun ways while encouraging them to help out!

#415

Learn more at vroom.org

Truck Talk

When you're out for a walk or drive, point out all the different trucks for your child. See if they can guess what's inside by the pictures on the outside of the truck. Try to imagine together where the contents come from. Do the veggies come from a farm? Or the fish from the sea?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



This kind of game helps your child think like a scientist by looking for clues in pictures. If they make a mistake, point them to a picture with a better clue. "See the apple on the truck? Does that help?"

#614

Learn more at vroom.org

Color Walk

Going for a walk? Grab a paint brush, put a little water in an empty container, and take a color walk outdoors! Paint the flowers, leaves, or other colorful things as you go. Talk with your child about what they see. Enjoy the textures, colors, and shapes in your world and share your own joy and wonder.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



A color walk helps your child focus on the world around them. They are building their brain by observing and describing their world. It also a wonderful way for you to slowdown and enjoy a walk together.

#696

Learn more at vroom.org

Turn Tower

Take turns stacking things with your child to build a tower. Say, "My turn," as you stack one and then, "Your turn," as they do. Eventually, stop using words. Do they keep taking turns? Try to playfully break the rules and take two turns. What do they do?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



You're showing your child the importance of working together as you build, while also asking them to focus to make sure the tower stays up. They're also using thier memory to keep track of whose turn it is, without your words to guide them.

#861

Learn more at vroom.org

Balancing Feat

Take turns with your child standing on one foot and then the other, trying to balance. You can say, "Your turn," and "My turn." See if you can do it with your eyes closed. What else can you do?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



You and your child are having a conversation with actions as you take turns standing on one foot, then the other. When they practice doing this, they're learning about balance—what it takes to stay steady and not fall down.

#869

Learn more at vroom.org

Color Countdown

Challenge your child to find as many things as they can that are blue. Get creative by limiting the game to a specific time (three minutes or so) or place (the grocery store.) Have them count how many they find. Switch it up by looking for letters or objects instead.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child is practicing focusing in this game. They are also using their memory to remember the color and the number of times they have seen it. Playing this game with different rules helps your child learn to think flexibly and make new connections.

#68

Learn more at vroom.org

Word of the Day

Come up with a word of the day, like "play." As you and your child go through your day, point out moments or things you see that remind you of the word of the day. You might say, "Look, those dogs are playing!" Encourage them to find their own examples of the word of the day.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child must use their memory to remember the special word all day, and use focus and self-control to play the game. They're also exposed to new words and learn about the different ways that words can be used. These are important parts of learning to read and write.

#105

Learn more at vroom.org

Air Draw

Ask your child to watch your finger as you draw a shape in the air. Start with something simple, like a circle. Can they guess what it is? Make it harder and draw more complicated shapes, like a heart or a star. Then have them take a turn drawing and you take a turn guessing.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child has to use self-control to focus only on your finger drawing in the air. Being able to use focus is critical to learning and staying motivated to reach a goal. Everyday use of shapes and symbols supports math skills too.

#127

Learn more at vroom.org

One Letter at a Time

Is your child curious about spelling? Take turns going back and forth spelling a simple word like “cat.” You say “C,” they say “A,” and you say “T.” Add a twist and help them spell the word backward with you!

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing games like this helps your child connect letters and sounds. Spelling backward helps them to think flexibly and not just go on autopilot. Spelling games like this one also help prepare them for later reading and writing.

#146

Learn more at vroom.org

Tell Me a Tale

Look for something you see that could start a story. It could be a picture or an object. Begin with “Once upon a time, there was a” Encourage your child to continue the story. Take turns adding to it. It doesn’t matter if the story makes sense, as long as you’re having fun!

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Having fun with stories is a great way for your child to learn and use many different words. When you make up the story together, your child is practicing working together creatively. They’re also using their memory to remember what has already happened in the story.

#240

Learn more at vroom.org

Switchable Words

Play a word game with your child. Choose a word like “stop.” Ask them, “What happens if you take the ‘s’ away? It’s top.” Then add an “s” at the end—it’s tops. What other words can be switched around like this? Talk together about the different words, real and made-up. Have fun and take turns.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



This game uses memory to remember letters and flexible thinking to make new words. It also takes focus and self-control for your child to keep playing the game. Having fun with words builds their love of learning.

#254

Learn more at vroom.org

Same or Different

While in the store, hold up different pairs of things and ask your child how they're the same or different. You can model this kind of thinking and say, "This pepper is green and this pepper is red, but they're the same vegetable!" Encourage them to describe what they see.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Exploring what's the same and what's different helps your child learn the skill of making connections—grouping things in different ways. They're also using communication skills as they explain their thinking.

#281

Learn more at vroom.org

Water Wonders

Encourage your child to learn by playing with safe objects in the bath. Do you have a washcloth and a plastic cup? They can explore different ways they each hold water. Ask questions, like: "What happens when the washcloth gets wet? What happens when you squeeze it? Can you squeeze water out of a cup?"

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



You and your child are thinking like scientists! Learning how things work through play boosts your child's curiosity and their passion for finding answers.

#387

Learn more at vroom.org

Under the Towel

Turn some bowls upside down and cover them with a towel. Reach under the towel and hide something—like a spoon—under one of the bowls. Then pull off the cover. Can your child figure out which bowl is the hiding bowl from having watched your hand move under the towel?

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child has to watch your hand under the towel carefully—paying close attention to try to figure out where you hid the spoon. This game calls on their focus, self-control, and working memory.

#582

Learn more at vroom.org