

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!

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!

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!

© 2019 Vroom is a program of the Bezos Family Foundation

Sharing the Story

When you're reading with your child, let them explore it with all of their senses. Allow them to touch, pat, hold, and even taste (if it's clean) what you're reading. Describe their actions like, "You're patting the picture of the bunny."

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Children learn through touching, feeling, and putting everything into their mouths. As you talk about their world and senses, you help connect words, pictures, and objects. Plus, you're not only sharing the story, you're sharing your joy of reading with them.

#82

Learn more at vroom.org

Face-to-Face

Make eye contact with your child, quickly look away, and then look back and smile. Do they smile back? Next, look at them, close your eyes and open them again, making a big surprised face. Change the speed of what you do and have fun connecting.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Making eye contact is an important part of learning to pay attention to and interact with others. If your child responds when you make a face, you can build on their response. As you do this, you're helping them learn the back and forth of communication and relationships.

#168

Learn more at vroom.org

Bathtime ABCs

Is your child starting to babble? Use bathtime as an opportunity to babble about the letter B. If they say, "ba," you can say, "Baby takes a bath with bubbles! Ba-ba-ba!" If they respond with more babbles, copy them right back! What other words can you make from their babbling sounds?

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



You're helping your child develop communication skills when you respond to their sounds with sounds of your own, building on their babbling to create words. They're also learning to engage in the back and forth conversations that are basic to relationships and learning.

#386

Learn more at vroom.org

Sightseeing at Home

Go sightseeing in your home! Walk with your baby and point out different objects. Describe an item and if safe, let them touch it. Say, “Do you feel the lamp shade? It is rough. Watch what happens when I turn on the light.” Pay attention to where they point or look and respond.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Your child learns by watching and listening to you. When you sightsee at home, you’re developing the skill of focus—paying careful attention to details—while also making connections between words and actions. They’re learning that what interests them matters!

#899

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

Nightly Routine

As you get your child ready for bed, talk to them about what you’re doing—taking off their daytime clothes (“night night clothes”) turning the lights down (“night night lights”), closing the shades (“night night outside”).

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Regular routines help children learn to go to sleep more easily. When you name the activities, you’re helping them learn words for these activities—even before they can say those words themselves.

#317

Learn more at vroom.org

A Changing Conversation

When you're changing your child, make a funny sound. How do they respond? By smiling? Kicking their legs? Making a sound? Try a new sound and see what they do. Keep adding new ones to the mix!

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Back and forth conversations can happen even without words. You're teaching your child how conversations work. First one person speaks, then the other. This is an early lesson about communication—a skill that's important in school and in life.

#429

Learn more at vroom.org

Lip Lesson

As you dress your child, copy the sounds you hear them make, like "ah, eee, ooo, bee, dee." How do they respond? As you make a sound, place their fingers on your lips so they can feel the vibrations and movements of your lips. Try different sounds as you do!

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Touching and listening to sounds fosters your child's interest in listening and communicating. It won't be long before you're having back-and-forth conversations with real words.

#470

Learn more at vroom.org

Gab and Go

When you're getting ready to go out, talk about what you're doing and how your child might be feeling. Maybe you could say, "We're getting ready to go to the store. You're wriggling and have a smile on your face. You seem excited. Let's go and see what we find there." How do they respond? Follow their lead!

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



When you talk about their world, your child learns to connect what they're doing with words. When you talk about their feelings, it helps them understand their emotions and who they are. Following their lead helps them learn best.

#689

Learn more at vroom.org

Sound Searchers

Pay attention to the sounds you're hearing and talk about them with your child. "I hear a bird tweeting. Do you?" Try to find the bird. Do this with fire trucks or cars going "vroom!" Pay attention to what they are listening to and ask them, "What do you hear?"

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Children learn through their senses and through games like "Sound Searchers." Using words about the sounds you're hearing helps your child begin to listen to the differences in sounds and the words that describe them.

#36

Learn more at vroom.org

What's That?

Does your child point and say "dat"? Ask them, "What do you want?" Have them lead you to what they're pointing at. When you find it, you can say, "That's a spoon!" or "That's the light switch!"

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



From infancy on, children pay attention to the intentions of other people and want to tell you theirs. Pointing and saying "dat" is a first step toward learning how to communicate. You can help children learn this by finding what they want and naming it.

#62

Learn more at vroom.org

Mirror Play

Brushing your child's teeth? As you look in the mirror, talk about how your faces are the same and different. You both have two eyes and a nose, but yours are bigger. You both can make funny faces. Make a funny face and see if you can make them laugh!

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Comparing how your faces are the same and different helps your child learn to sort objects and experiences into categories. Sorting information into categories is important for reading, math, and science. And this game builds the connection between you!

#311

Learn more at vroom.org

What Are YOU Thinking?

What is your child looking at? Follow their lead and chat about what they see. “Yes, those are my shoes. And that is my hat. Do you want to try on my shoes and hat? I’ll help you!” Take turns! “Can you put my hat on my head? Now try your head. Look it is too big!”

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Your child is learning about which clothes belong to you, and which belong to them, and they’re learning the concepts of small and big. When you laugh about putting your hat on their head, you’re also promoting their sense of humor.

#478

Learn more at vroom.org

Laundry Ins and Outs

Invite your child to help you gather dirty clothes. Put them IN the laundry basket, pull them OUT. Then put them IN the machine, and pull them OUT. Use the words IN and OUT to describe your actions and see how they learn these ideas!

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Children this age like putting things in and out of stuff. Use this interest to help you get a chore done! It also helps them learn the concepts of IN and OUT and organize their world.

#503

Learn more at vroom.org

Read to Me

Share a picture in a book, magazine, or news article with your child. Be sure to point at what you’re looking at and chat about it. For example, “Look at the blue shirt the lady is wearing—I have one too!” Or, “This is a picture of diapers, like the ones you wear.” Let them pick the next picture and talk about what you see together.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Around age one or later, babies start to understand that pictures represent real things. As you connect pictures and real things—especially things they know—you help them understand symbols. These chats are a critical step in learning to read later.

#848

Learn more at vroom.org

Sing, Read, Repeat

Your child probably enjoys listening to their favorite stories and songs over and over again. After singing or telling stories with them, ask if they want more. How do they respond? Do they nod or squirm away? Talk about their actions like, "You said yes!" or "You look like you're all done."

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Children learn through repetition and shared back-and-forth conversations. Repeating stories and songs helps your child understand the meaning behind words. It sets the stage for talking, and eventually reading. They're learning the basics of communication!

#88

Learn more at vroom.org

Bathtime Stories

Make up a story about someone who takes a bath just like your child. You can say things like, "First, they washed their hair," while you wash their hair. Then add twist by saying, "Then they splashed in the water," and see if they splash too.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Making up stories shows your child creative ways of thinking. You are also sharing new words with them. They're learning focus and self-control as they listen closely and make connections between their body and your words.

#371

Learn more at vroom.org

Hand to Hand

While washing dishes, give your child a spoon to hold. Say, "You have a spoon!" Then hold your hand open and say, "My turn!" See if they will hand the spoon back to you. If they do, say, "Thank you!" If they don't, give them another utensil and see if you can trade them back-and-forth.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



When you and your child play this game of give-and-take, you're helping them understand the back-and-forth of communication. They're using their skills of focus and self-control as they listen, watch, and follow your directions.

#413

Learn more at vroom.org

What's Next?

Boost your child's independence by asking them questions instead of telling them what to do. If you're getting ready to leave the house, instead of telling them to put shoes on, try saying something like, "I see your socks are on. What comes next"?

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Asking questions helps your child think before acting. This takes focus and self-control. Your child must stop what they might want to do so they can reach their goal. This is true for even something as simple as putting on shoes.

#147

Learn more at vroom.org

Use Your Words

Does your child get upset and start to cry or whine? Gently remind them to use their words to say what is bothering them or what they want. If they're too upset to talk, try to guess what they want to say until they let you know you got it.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Helping your child learn to use words to share upset feelings is one of the best tools you can give them. This helps your child managing these feelings and express them in ways that others can understand and responded to.

#152

Learn more at vroom.org

Animal Game

Here is a fun guessing game while waiting. Start with, "I'm thinking of an animal." Then give your child clues to help guess what animal it is. For example, "I'm thinking of an animal who lives in our house and is black."

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Playing games like this help develop what scientists call "working memory." They are using working memory to remember names and details. It also turns waiting-time into a fun time for learning!

#698

Learn more at vroom.org

Pretend Play

Here's a fun and easy way to add something new to your child's favorite song or story. Use a few familiar objects as you tell the story or sing the song. If you are outside, they can be leaves or rocks, or household items like a spoon or toy if you are inside. Pretend these things are part of your song or story. Ask your child for ideas too!

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Using pretend play helps your child learn that one thing can stand for another. Making connections and thinking creatively are part of learning to read and communicate. What else can you do to build these skills?

#703

Learn more at vroom.org

Mail Time

Talk to your child about getting mail and what it means. Then write them a note or give them a piece of junk mail or store flyer and say, "Mail Time!" After they look at it, take turns talking about the letters, pictures, colors, and designs.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



This game sets the stage for a back-and-forth conversation. As you talk about mail, your child's vocabulary grows. As you point at the letters, they begin to understand that the lines on paper stand for sounds, words, and objects. This is a big step in becoming a reader.

#820

Learn more at vroom.org

Hand Games

Use hand actions for your favorite rhyme or song, or make up your own. Face your child and hold their hands so they mirror you. Vary your tone of voice from high to low and use a big, expressive way of speaking or singing.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Rhymes and songs are great for early reading skills. Plus, the mirrored actions teach left to right tracking, also an important part of reading. This kind of speaking is extra engaging for your child. It can add brain-building to any chat in an interesting and fun way!

#844

Learn more at vroom.org

Imaginary Flower

Does your child like to pretend? Tell them there is an imaginary flower growing on their nose. Describe what it looks like. Then pretend to grab it! Now say there is a flower on their ear and grab it too. Have them describe and grab the flowers on you and enjoy the joke.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Although pretending is lots of fun, it also teaches your child that one thing can stand for something else. These symbols are the basis of reading and writing, with words standing for objects and ideas. This game also develops children's creative thinking.

#165

Learn more at vroom.org

Can You Find It?

Draw or use your cell phone to take pictures of things in your room like a chair, a table, or the refrigerator. Ask your child to look at your cell phone picture and say, "Can you find it in the room?" As they get good at this, you can make it a little harder.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



This game helps your child make connections between pictures (symbols) and real objects. This skill is a basic for reading (where written marks stand for words) and math (where numbers stand for quantities of things), and is essential for learning.

#886

Learn more at vroom.org

Mealtime Message

At mealtime, put a message next to your child's plate. It may be a picture you tear out of a magazine, a quick note, or a drawing. As you sit down to eat, invite them to share the message. Take turns talking about the colors, letters, and pictures you both see.

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



A "Mealtime Message" is unexpected and fun. As you take turns talking about it, your child is learning to pay attention to details. They're also learning that marks and pictures stand for words and ideas, which is important when learning to read in the future.

#560

Learn more at vroom.org

Finger Marker

While waiting, draw a shape (like a circle or a wiggly line), using your fingertip on your child's open palm. Can they name it? Repeat the same shape until they can guess what it is. Take turns back and forth, drawing and guessing shapes.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When you play "Finger Marker," you give your child a chance to put together what they know about how shapes look with how shapes feel. It's a new and fun way to learn shapes through the sense of touch!

#220

Learn more at vroom.org

Letter Shapes

Encourage your child to point out letters on signs. Chat about the shapes of the letters. Is the letter A pointy like a triangle? What about the letter O? How many letters of the alphabet can you find? Enjoy describing their Letter Shapes.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Having fun with language and shapes helps your child enjoy learning. It's not just fun though. This game builds focus, self-control, and memory. Your child stretches what they know about letters and shapes to make new connections at the same time!

#253

Learn more at vroom.org

Laundry Delivery

After folding the laundry, ask your child to help you with "Laundry Delivery." Ask them, "Where do the towels go? That's right, in the bathroom! What about your pajamas? Yes! In your room. Which drawer?" Switch and let them pick the items and ask you where they go.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When children learn to group things into categories, they learn how to organize and make sense of their world. Just think about how important matching is to reading, math, science, and many other subjects.

#524

Learn more at vroom.org

Spice Rack Smells

While working in the kitchen, open up different spices. Smell the differences and even touch them with your child. You can describe these smells (using dramatic words) and talk back and forth with them about some of the foods that you eat with them.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Your child learns from their senses—from looking, listening, touching, and smelling. “Spice Rack Smells” uses all of these ways of learning. Making a meal together is a memorable way for them to have fun and to learn.

#574

Learn more at vroom.org

Silly Song

Turn a familiar tune into a “Silly Song.” Change a word in a song your child knows well and see if they notice. Stretch the moment by asking why that doesn’t work. Can they take a turn to add a silly twist to the song?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Your child must listen closely and use their memory to recall the words to songs when you play this game. They’re also playing with what’s real and what isn’t—important concepts for understanding how the world works.

#596

Learn more at vroom.org

Listening Game

When you’re out with your child, talk about sounds. When you hear a sound, tell them what you hear and chat about where you think it is. “I hear a bird and I think it is in that tree.” Ask what they hear, and where they think the sound is coming from. Take turns being the leader.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When your child listens and names what they’re hearing, they’re paying attention and learning to connect words with sounds. This promotes language skills. By going back and forth together, you’re reinforcing their learning.

#657

Learn more at vroom.org

Follow Me

Ask your child, "Can you do what I do?" Walk forward or backward, bend down, or reach up high. Talk with them about what you're doing like, "Touch your toes and touch the sky!" Then give them a turn to lead. Change the game and see if they can do the opposite of what you do.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When your child follows your actions, they learn ideas like up and down by doing them with their body. When you change the game, you challenge them to use self-control to stay focused and not go on autopilot. These are important skills for learning now and in the future.

#715

Learn more at vroom.org

Wheel Watch

Encourage your child to point out the different kinds of wheels they see. Talk with them about what you both notice. Do they see big wheels on a truck or thin wheels on a bike? What else can they think of that has wheels?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



By listening and responding to your child, you're helping build their vocabulary and ability to focus. Grouping things, like finding what is the same and what is different, also helps them become better at making connections.

#737

Learn more at vroom.org

Snack Sorters

Give your child three different snacks. Talk about what's the same and what's different. Ask them if they can group one type of snack together (like all the fruit). Then ask if they can find another way to sort the snacks, like by size, shape, or color.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Making connections is an essential skill for learning. When your child groups things, they're learning things like size, color, and shape. They're also learning to think flexibly by seeing how things can go together in different ways.

#1032

Learn more at vroom.org

Face Off

Make a face that expresses a feeling. Ask your child to make a face that shows the opposite feeling. If you make a happy face, they should make a sad face. Chat about when they remember people making these faces. Take a selfie or draw a picture together with your goofiest faces to stretch the moment!

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Mirroring the emotions of others helps your child learn empathy. It can also help them express their own feelings. These are essential skills that we use every day as adults!

#11

Learn more at vroom.org

Tomorrow Talk

Today's the perfect time to talk to your child about tomorrow. Find out what they hope tomorrow has in store for them: "If you could do anything tomorrow, what would you most want to do?" Ask follow-up questions to stretch the moment. It's a good way to learn about their hopes for the future.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Asking your child to think about the future helps them think ahead. These kinds of questions help them think flexibly to make up their own answers and be creative.

#24

Learn more at vroom.org

Acting Out

Every child sometimes does something they should NOT do. Use this time to talk to them about WHY they should not have done it. Then ask them to draw a picture of what happened on a piece of paper. On the other side of the paper, have them draw what they could have done in a better way. Ask them why this new idea would be a better choice.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Using this strategy changes your approach from dealing with misbehavior to growing and learning. Coming up with new solutions helps your child learn ways to avoid going on autopilot. Instead they can think of better ways to deal with problems.

#60

Learn more at vroom.org

Hand Letters

While waiting, draw a letter using your fingertip on your child's open palm. Can they name it? Repeat the same letter until they can "read" it. Take turns back and forth, drawing and guessing hand letters.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing "Hand Letters" lets your child read and write using their sense of touch. Their body and mind are learning about letters in a new way.

#221

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

Same Letter Sentence

Start this game by choosing a letter. See if you and your child can think of a sentence that uses as many words as possible that begin with that letter. If you chose the letter M you might say, "My mother made meatballs." What other M words can you both come up with?

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing with letters and sounds is not just fun, it's also the building blocks of your child's language and reading skills. They're using what they already know, paying attention and thinking flexibly. These skills also help them to come up with new, creative ideas.

#131

Learn more at vroom.org

Sense Scape

Outside with your child? Name one of the senses like “see” or “hear.” Encourage them to share everything they notice with that sense, like the sun shining or birds chirping. Then it’s their turn to say one of the senses and your turn to share what you notice. Take turns using all your senses.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When your child takes the time to slow down and notice what is going on around them, they’re using skills like focus and self-control. Being able to pay attention, manage behavior, and follow rules are important skills for learning in school and in life.

#206

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

Shopping Stories

Going shopping? Make a shopping list and create a story together about the items on the list to remember them: “Once there was a dragon who ... loved to eat carrots and slept on a can of soup.” At the store, encourage your child to retell the story and hunt for each item, checking it off the list. Take turns adding new items to the story.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When you and your child make up stories together, you’re encouraging them to think creatively. When you ask them to retell the story to find the items on the shopping list, you’re building their memory and making learning fun.

#299

Learn more at vroom.org