

Doña Ana County Head Start
Denver Developmental Activities
4 to 5 Years

These activities are designed to help your child with the following basic skills:

Small muscle and problem-solving skills

Activities to continue:

Encourage play with puzzles, and such activities as drawing, counting, sorting, and cutting and gluing.

Whole/Half Concept – As your child become better at putting together puzzles, cut out shapes such as circle, square, or a house, and then cut the shapes in half. Show your child how to put the two pieces together to make a whole.

Pictures – When your child is drawing suggest that (s)he add more to his or her pictures. (For example, try to get your child to add clothes to people and to put trees, flowers, and the sun in pictures of houses, etc.)

Writing – Help your child print simple letters, his or her name, and other short words. Also show your child how to write numbers, and to copy words and the names of people and places.

Matching and Counting Numbers – When your child has learned to count and knows the low numbers (1,2,3, etc.) make a set of cards with numbers 1 through 10. Lay the cards out on a table, and then have your child count out the number of beans (or buttons or raisins) to match the number shown on each card.

Cutout – When your child has learned to use blunt scissors, show him or her how to cut folded paper to make designs. Help him or her make snowflakes or paper doll chains.

Comparing – Help your child find three things that are similar, but are different in size or weight. An example is cans of food with different sizes or glasses of water filled with different amounts of water. After you have chosen the items, have your child arrange them from smallest to largest (or lightest to heaviest). When your child can easily arrange three things, increase the number to four or more.

Science “Experiments” – Give your child ¼ cut of vinegar and let him or her stir in a teaspoon of baking soda. Or have your child mix together a little flour and water or cornstarch and water. Talk about the changes you see when you do these simple “experiments” together.

Gardening - Have your child plant seeds (such as bean seeds) in an egg carton, in half of a milk carton, or in an outside garden. Help your child water the seeds and watch together each day to see when they grow. Talk about how plants, animals, and children grow.

When I Was a Child – Children love to hear about what parents did when they were children, and love to tell stories about “when they were little”. Tell your child stories from your childhood. In return, have your child tell you stories about when he or she was a baby or young child.

Mistakes – Children feel special when they can “teach” their parents. You can make a “mistake” on purpose and let your child “teach” you. For example, you can “forget” to put out milk for the cereal or give your child a sweater and say, “Here is your hat.”

Kitchen Helper – Tell your child you are making him or her your special “kitchen helper.” Have your child help set the table for meals, tear up lettuce for salad, clear the table after eating, etc. Ask your child to describe what he or she is doing. Talk about how good it feels to help someone else and to do a good job.

Concepts – Use daily activities to teach concepts, such as in and out (of the grocery cart), high and low (on shelves), four corners (sheets), dirty and clean (sorting clothes).

Large muscle strength and coordination

Activities to continue:

Encourage playing different ball games; running, hopping, and jumping over, under, and around an obstacle course; walking “tightropes” and other balancing games; and swinging and climbing.

Miniature Golf – Cut holes in boxes or cut the tops out of milk cartons. Then have your child play “putt-putt” golf by hitting a small ball (like a tennis ball) into the holes with a mop or stick.

Bag Races – Make bags large enough to slip over a child’s lower body from an old sheet or towels (or get a burlap bag from a market). Show your child and his or her friends how to pull the bags up around their waists. Have them hop forward in a race to see who can cross the finish line first.

Hopscotch – Draw squares in the dirt with a stick or on the sidewalk with a piece of chalk. Teach your child how to play hopscotch with his or her friends.

Jump Rope /Leap Frog – Show your child how to jump rope, and how to play “Leap Frog” with another child or adult. Praise your child for trying new activities.

Love, self-care, and socialization

Activities to continue:

- Hug and cuddle your child often.
- Give your child regular chores to do around the house.
- Try to get your child to dress without any help.
- Encourage your child to play games with other children.
- Talk about feeling with your child.
- Let your child help you cook, and include your child at family meals.
- Plan frequent outings with your child.

Developing Independence – Let your child visit close neighbors, friends, or relatives without you. Try to get him or her to talk about the visit when (s)he comes home.

Family Scrapbook – Help your child make a scrapbook with pictures of family members. Put the name of each person under the pictures.

Body Posters – Show your child how to make body pictures with a friend. Help them trace around each other as each lies on a large piece of paper. Have them draw in eyes, nose, mouth, and clothes.

Puppets – Show your child how to make puppets by drawing faces on small paper bags and using sticks to move the puppets around. Or make puppets from old socks and put faces on them with yarn or marking pens. Show your child how to pretend the puppets are talking to each other. Have your child play the game with other children, as well as by him or herself.

Following Directions – Help your child learn to follow directions by teaching him or her to play “May I?” In this game, give your child an “order” (such as taking three giant steps or taking five steps on tip-toe). The child should ask, “May I?” each time.

Creative Play with Friends – Invite one or two children your child’s age over to play. Teach them such singing games as “Itsy Bitsy Spider” or “London Bridges.” Help them make puppets and put on puppet shows. Try to get them to act out the animals seen in “going to the zoo.”

Playing Store – Gather things from around your home for your child to “sell” at a play store. This might include canned food, shoes, books, and toys. Put prices on the items with masking tape. Make play money from pieces of paper and use buttons, bottle caps, or other small objects as coins. Then have your child be the storekeeper and you or another child pretend to buy things at the store using play money. Take turns being the shopper and the shopkeeper.

Sharing – Encourage your child to share and cooperate with other family members and friends. This includes sharing toys and taking turns in games and activities. Praise your child when (s)he shares.

Speech and Language

Activities to continue:

- Try to get your child to ask questions and to tell you about what (s)he see and hears.
- Encourage your child to look at books often. Be sure your child sees you reading books.
- Read fairy tales and short adventure stories to your child and then talk about the stories.
- Help select TV programs and limit watching to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day. Watch some programs together. Remember that many things shown on TV can frighten a small child (even news programs). Watch your child and be ready to talk about what is real and what is not real.

Memory Game – Put some small toys or household items into a bag. While your child is watching, take three or four items from the bag. Put them on a table and ask your child to name them. Tell your child to close his or her eyes, take one item away, and ask your child to tell you which item is missing. As your child gets better at this game, increase the number of items you put on the table.

Word Recognition – Print names of objects in your child’s room on small cards and tape them on the objects (table, door, etc.). Ask your child to name the things on the cards. Also try to get your child to know signs along the street (“STOP, Coca-Cola, etc.).

Number Games – To help your child count and know numbers, teach your child how to play games with cards and dice.

Magazines – If you can, order a children’s magazine (such as “Jack and Jill”). This will provide your child with something to read and activities to do each month.

Sentence Completion – Start a sentence and ask your child to finish it. The sentence can be about things you and the child can see (“in the back yard, I see...”), about things the child likes (“Jimmy likes to eat...”), or about places you have been together (“Yesterday we went to...”).

Family News Book – Help your child put together a “family news book”, with pictures of family members, drawings made by the child about the family, things you collected from places you have been together, and so on. News books also can be made about a family vacation or some other special event.

Library – Take your child to the local library. Get a library card in your child’s name, and check out books that interest your child. Read the books to your child, and go back to the library often for more books.

Songs – Sing songs with your child. Let your child know you are proud that (s)he has memorized the words to the songs.

Four Seasons – Help your child learn about winter, spring, summer, and fall. For example, go on a spring walk and look at spring flowers and the buds on bushes. Or go on a walk in the fall and collect colored leaves that have fallen from trees. Talk about what happens to the earth, to animals, and to people during the different seasons. Ask questions like, “What does a bear do in the winter?”

REMEMBER:

Talk with your child. Play with your child. Enjoy your child!