



# Grow through play

*Fun activities for every day*

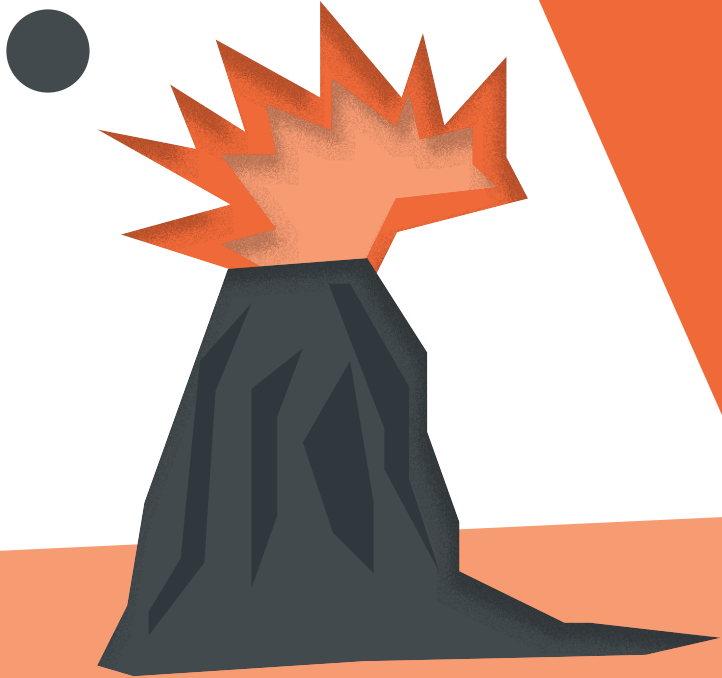
CHILD  
FRIENDLY  
MEDWAY

Medway  
COUNCIL  
Serving You



Play is really important to a child's development; it is how they learn about themselves and the world. In this booklet you will find simple and fun play ideas to do with your pre-schooler. Activities include ideas to try at home and outdoor play inspiration.

Every child is different and will develop in their own way, but most children pass a set of predictable development milestones as they get older. If you are at all concerned about the development of your child turn to the end of this booklet for information on where to get help in Medway.



**Make an  
exploding  
volcano**

**This activity takes a little preparation, but children will love the excitement of waiting for the volcano to erupt.**

It is a great chance to practise colours and numbers with your little one.  
For example, you could ask:



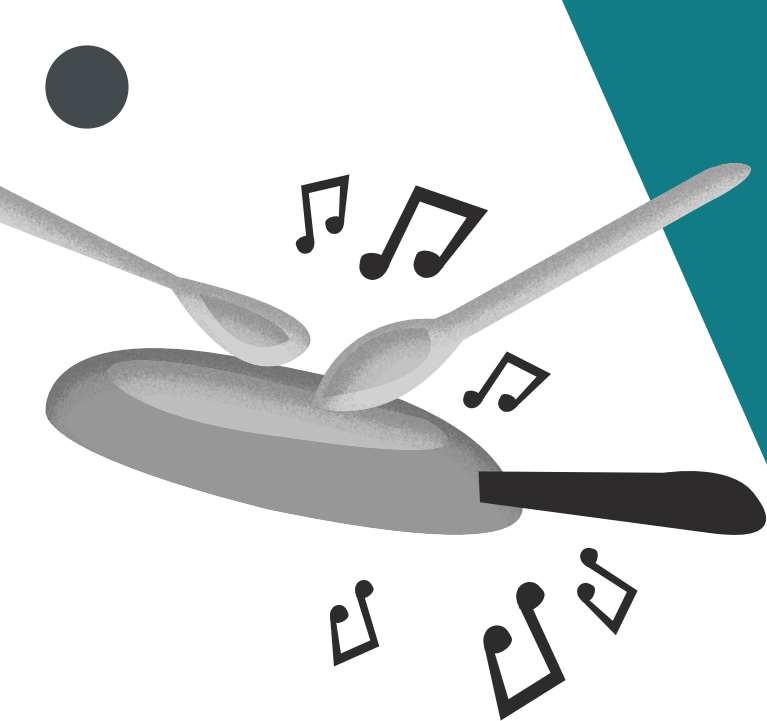
**"What colour  
is the lava?"**

**"Shall we count down  
from 10 and see  
when it explodes?"**

- Place your bottle in a tray and mould your volcano around it using play dough or clay
- Fill the bottle two thirds full with warm water and some drops of food colouring
- Add some spoonfuls of baking soda and give it a stir
- Now for the really fun part. Pour the vinegar into the bottle and get ready for the explosion!

## **What you'll need**

- Play dough
- Food colouring
- Warm water
- Baking soda
- Vinegar
- Plastic bottle, cut in half
- Tray



Drumming  
fun

## This activity is so simple - all you need are pots, pans and spoons.

Drumming is a great way for children to explore sounds and makes listening and counting fun. Encourage them to count the beats, 'How many did we do?' It also gives you the chance to practise different describing words. For example, ask your child 'Can we play quietly?' or 'Can we play faster?'



"Can we play faster?"

"Can we play quietly?"

## Top tips

- Do this activity outside if the noise is too much inside!
- Give your child a couple of minutes to drum however they want
- Start by drumming a simple beat and encourage your child to drum it back
- Tap out words, like names, colours, numbers or favourite nursery rhymes
- Try using tupperware, buckets, wooden and metal spoons to create different sounds



Bark  
rubbing

Children will love exploring the different patterns and textures of bark. This activity is great for encouraging children to use descriptive words.

For example, you could ask your child:



"Is the bark smooth or rough?"

"Can you feel the bumps?"

- Simply take some crayons and paper and find some trees
- Place the paper against the trunk and rub the crayon over the paper to make a print of the bark pattern
- Encourage your child to experiment with different trees, and compare bark rubbings

## What you'll need

- Crayons with their wrapping removed
- Paper

## Top tips

- Don't try this when the bark is wet
- Some children may find it easier if you attach the paper to the tree with string or tape
- If you can, use thick paper so it does not tear
- Experiment with chalk and charcoal





Play dough  
activities





**Get your little one to help you make some playdough by following this simple recipe. This activity is perfect for a rainy day when you're stuck indoors.**

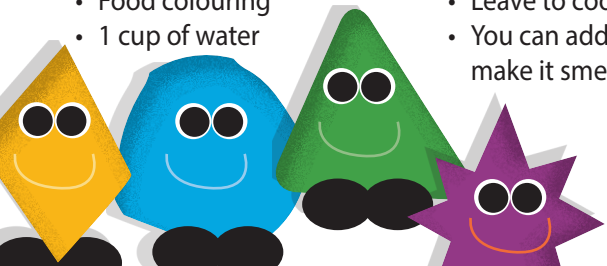
It's quick enough to hold a young child's attention and you only need a few store cupboard ingredients.

#### Playdough recipe

- 1 large cup of plain flour
- Half a large cup of table salt
- 1 tablespoon of oil (any)
- Food colouring
- 1 cup of water

#### Method

- Combine ingredients and cook in a saucepan mixing continually until the ingredients combine and it is no longer wet
- Leave to cool and knead
- You can add herbs/flowers (lavender) to make it smell nice



## 5 fun things to do with play dough

- **Compare lengths / thicknesses / weights**
- **Match and sort by colour**
- **Make something from a favourite nursery rhyme, like *Incy Wincy Spider!***
- **Make playdough letters and spell out words**
- **Make numbers or form 2D and 3D shapes**



Once upon  
a time...

# Story telling puppets



## Paper puppets are easy and so much fun to make.

Puppets encourage children to listen to what is being read to them and join in with story time. They are a great way to help little ones feel more confident about talking aloud.



"Once upon  
a time"

Encourage your child to

- act out what is happening in the story
- repeat what is being said
- stage a puppet show retelling the story to you or their soft toys

### What you'll need

- Thick paper or card
- Straws or lolly sticks
- Scissors
- Tape
- Crayons, pens or coloured pencils

### How to make your puppets

- Get your child to draw their favourite characters on some card or paper
- Cut the figures out and stick them onto the straws or lolly sticks



# Nature scavenger hunt



## Go outside and enjoy nature with your little one.

This is a fun activity to do in your garden, on your next visit to the park or walk in the woods.

Children explore their surroundings and cross off what they see along the way.

### Top tip

If they are finding it hard, offer clues to help, such as 'I see something green under that tree'.



Try and find everything on the list!

|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
|  | A wiggly worm or insect        |
|  | Something that is yellow       |
|  | 2 trees                        |
|  | A feather                      |
|  | Clouds                         |
|  | 4 smooth rocks                 |
|  | A spider web                   |
|  | Some mushrooms                 |
|  | A long stick                   |
|  | 2 birds                        |
|  | 3 different sized green leaves |
|  | A flower                       |





# Outdoor scavenger hunt

It's time for an outdoor adventure! Go outside and try and find all these things.



Car



Dog



Bus



Tree



Bird



Leaf



Flower



Cat



Van



Door



Bike



Gate



Fence



Post Box

MEDWAY STREET

Street Sign



A stylized rainbow graphic on the left side of the image, consisting of several curved bands of color: yellow, pink, green, orange, purple, and blue. A dark grey circle is positioned in the top left corner of the image.

# Rainbow scavenger hunt

● This simple activity works well indoors or outside. Ask your child to find and name something of each colour. If you don't have a garden, take the scavenger hunt to your nearest park or woodland area.



## Find something

|        |  |        |
|--------|--|--------|
| RED    |  | RED    |
| YELLOW |  | YELLOW |
| PINK   |  | PINK   |
| GREEN  |  | GREEN  |
| ORANGE |  | ORANGE |
| PURPLE |  | PURPLE |
| BLUE   |  | BLUE   |

Make it more fun by timing the scavenger hunt, making it a race or seeing who can find the most things.





Bath time  
for baby  
doll!



**Kids love water play and washing their favourite doll is a great way to practise important skills.**



### **Introduce new words**

Name parts of dolly's body as you wash them.

Use plenty of action words to describe what's going on as your child plays, like '**wash**', '**splash**' and '**dry**'.

### **Reinforce good hygiene habits**

Children love playing the adult and they will really enjoy getting to act out the good hygiene habits you've been teaching them.

For example, you could ask your child 'Baby's got dirty hands, do they need a wash?' or 'Baby has been to the loo, what do they need to do next?'

### **Practise taking turns**

Take turns doing the actions. For example, you could say 'Mummy's turn to wash baby's legs' / Piper's turn to wash baby's legs'.



Cook as  
a family



**Cooking with your child is a nice way to spend time together and a fun way to learn new words and skills.**

All of these recipes serve two and are simple enough to make with your child.

## **Fruit skewers**

- Here are some of the fruits you can use: apple, banana, grapes, melon, strawberries, kiwi, blueberries, papaya – just choose which fruits you like the best
- Cut the fruit into chunks and help your little one to thread them onto skewers or straws

## **Easy omelette**

### **Ingredients**

2 eggs, spring onions, mushrooms, peppers, tuna, ham, cheddar cheese, herbs

### **Recipe**

- Crack the eggs
- Snip the spring onion
- Tear the herbs
- Cut the vegetables
- Grate the cheese
- Mix in a bowl and cook over a medium heat in a frying pan



# **Help and advice**

Medway Community Healthcare offers advice and support to families, from pregnancy to when your child is 4 years old. They can help if you have concerns about:

- potty training
- oral health
- physical development
- speech and language
- eating and diet
- sleep
- behaviour.

Visit **[www.medwaycommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.medwaycommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk)** or  
call **0300 123 3444**

# Dental care for children

## Don't miss out on a Medway Smiles passport for your child

All parents are given a Medway Smiles passport, toothbrush and toothpaste for their child shortly after giving birth. Each time a child visits the dentist they can collect a Harvey Bear sticker to add to their Medway Smiles passport.

Dental treatment is free for children aged under 18, or for children in full time education aged under 19. Pregnant women and mothers with a child 12 months or younger also receive free NHS dental treatment.

Here are some simple tips to help you look after your family's teeth

- Brush twice daily with a small amount of fluoride toothpaste
- Spit, don't rinse! Don't wash away the fluoride in your toothpaste as it strengthens teeth
- Avoid tooth decay by cutting down on sugary drinks and snacks
- Visit the dentist every 6 months from when a tooth appears or as often as they advise

To find a dentist in Medway call **0300 123 4412** or visit **[medway.gov.uk/oralhealth](https://www.medway.gov.uk/oralhealth)**





# How to know your child is developing as expected

## 2 and a half year old review

Every child in the UK is invited to a development review when they are around 2 and half years old. These checks aren't a sign that anything is wrong and they are absolutely nothing to worry about.

They are a chance to meet someone from the health visiting team and check if everything is OK and that your child is developing as expected.

The check doesn't take long and won't hurt or distress your child. During the review the health visitor will ask you about the general development of your little one, such as how they see, speak, hear and move. If there are any problems, then your health visitor will be able to advise on further steps and possible treatment.

You will also get advice on dental care, safety, and how to manage behaviour and help your child to sleep well.

## Preparing your child for school

When you apply for your reception year place don't forget to complete the school readiness questionnaire. If your child needs some help to get them ready for school, Medway Community Healthcare will get in touch. The questionnaire is completely confidential and what you say in it isn't shared with schools.

Visit **[www.medwaycommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.medwaycommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk)** or call **0300 123 3444**

Sign up to FREE family cooking sessions run by A Better Medway to learn new skills and try new ingredients. Little Chefs is aimed at pre-schoolers and their families while Tri Cookery welcomes school aged children.

# Family Cooking Sessions

To find out more visit  
**[medway.gov.uk/familycooking](https://medway.gov.uk/familycooking)**





The Grow through play campaign would not have been possible without the fantastic direction, input and support of the Medway Early Years Partnership Forum who are:

Cliffe Woods Preschool, Home Start Medway, Luton Primary School, Medway Community Healthcare, Medway Early Years Ltd, Medway NHS Foundation Trust, Medway Parent Carer Forum, Sprites Woodland Nursery, The Westbrook Trust, Thinking Schools Academy Trust, White Road Preschool.

We'd like to pass on our sincere thanks to all of the organisations involved.

# *Grow* *through play*

