

Grow through play parent pack

Fun activities for every day

Play is really important to a child's development; it is how they learn about themselves and the world. In these pages 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?" or "Shall we count down from 10 and see when it explodes?"

What you'll need

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

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!

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?"

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 rough or smooth?” “Can you feel the bumps?”

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

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.

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.

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

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
- Tree
- Flower
- Door
- Fence
- Dog
- Bird
- Cat
- Bike
- Post box
- Bus
- Leaf
- Van
- Gate
- Street sign

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
- Yellow
- Pink
- Green
- Orange
- Purple
- 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

Method:

- 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 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