

# MOUNTAIN OF IDEAS

A little book to help parents  
put more fun into their days!

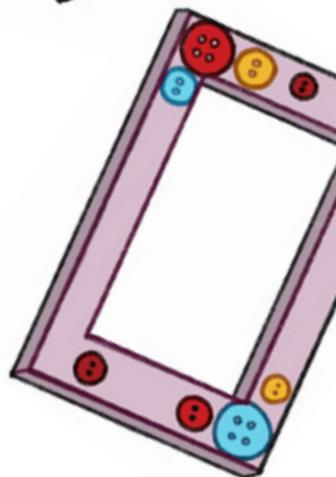
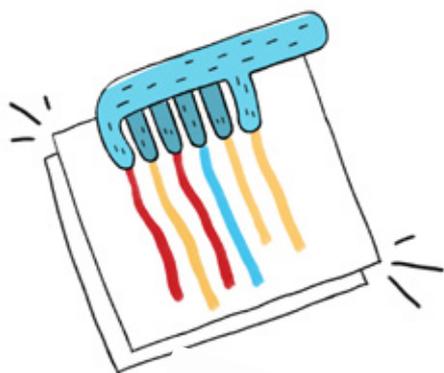
by Elizabeth Verwey

“Are you the adult  
that you want your  
child to grow up to be?”

**Brené Brown**

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**We are sure that you will find many ideas in this book to enjoy more time with your child/ren. Please relax and treasure this time. Take a deep breath and explore things together. Try not to focus on the end result.**

Revel in the process of discovering how the paint colours blend to make brand new colours. Contemplate how you play and investigate with the little people in your life. Let it be an adventure. Re-discover curiosity!

This booklet was written by Elizabeth Verwey in the 80's. It's been updated and is being circulated by Spoken Lives and Sherpa Creative to support families during the pandemic of 2020. We hope it helps you with the children you know and love.

### **Note from Spoken Lives: Stories Women Share**

Thank you for your time and attention. These ideas were discovered by Elizabeth Verwey while playing with her children in the 80's and the virtual world was explored with her grandchildren in the 20's. We are grateful to be able to share them with you.

[www.spokenlives.com](http://www.spokenlives.com)

### **Designed by Sherpa Creative**

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### **Illustrations by Kharisel Nosis**

Kharisel Nosis started illustrating as a hobby, but it sparked her interest to pursue studying graphic design. As a recent graduate from Centennial College, she is now building her professional career as a freelance graphic designer & illustrator. Her work is usually inspired by pop culture, typography, colours, and whimsical illustrations. [www.khariselnosis.design](http://www.khariselnosis.design)



# VIRTUAL VISITS

These tips are great for anyone who wants to visit more often with a child. You could be far away from one another or in the same city, but in isolation from one another. Quality time with a child of your choosing can be found online.

These virtual visits can happen on many free platforms. Choose to visit on Facebook, Google Hangouts, FaceTime or Zoom (45 minutes for free accounts).

## Two basics to keep in mind.

1. Minimize any background sounds for better sound quality.
2. Make sure you have good lighting. A face in shadows can look very strange, indeed!

## A baby focus

I used the same puppet for each virtual visit. The puppet was my side kick. We would talk, laugh together and rub noses. This entertained them.

Choose a couple of songs to sing each time to see your special baby. They like the routine. When they are under one year old, a lullaby is perfect. Then, move along to some baby classics.

I always wear red lipstick and babies often focus on that distinct colour on their screen. A neck scarf or necklace may work well to be your signature piece. This is when they are under a year old and need a focus.

Think of your virtual visits as your own improv class. Mimic the baby's sounds and try new things! Connect with your baby through your virtual visits.

Establish a bag with a few things that you can grab in a moment.

- add a cloth that can be used to play peek-a-boo,
- a rattle or musical instrument,
- a teddy bear or special stuffed toy (or puppet),
- a fun hat (I have a penguin one).

Speak your mother tongue to a baby under 8 months old. It's the perfect time to get them familiar with the sounds of your language. Continue as they get older so they can begin to understand.



This face game is really sweet. It's fun to have a snack to pop into your mouth at the end of the rhyme.

## FACE GAME (POINT TO YOUR FEATURES AS YOU GO)

Two little eyes, to look around,  
Two little ears, to hear each sound,  
One little nose, to smell what's sweet,  
One little mouth, that likes to eat.

## DANCE, DANCE, DANCE

Once your baby is standing and bouncing, they will enjoy moving to music. If they are actually walking, they will love dancing with you on a video visit. At either home, put on some good dancing music, and as the saying goes, dance like nobody's watching. Embrace the foolishness that entertains a child. Let loose! Mimic each other and enjoy the connection.

Sing them a little rhyme related to the weather. There are many versions of the song "You Are My Sunshine" that delight babies. Or, you can sing a song to help the rain go away. Rain, Rain, Go Away is a classic song with many versions. Here's a simple one. I'd substitute your baby's name for 'Little Johnny'.

## RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY

Rain, rain, go away,  
Come again another day.  
Little Johnny wants to play.  
Rain, rain, go to Spain,  
Never show your face again!

Much like having a "live" visit, in between questions/comments to the baby or child, you may have an overlapping conversation with the parent. Maintain a connection with the baby while you carry on the conversation with the parent. Wave once in a while or continue playing "peek-a-boo", etc.

On virtual visits, I enjoy sharing family pictures. Hold the photo up close, in front of the camera. If you have amusing pictures, it can lead to much fun and laughter. I shared one of my daughter and me sticking out our tongues at the camera in one of those photo booths, and before long, my grandchild and I were sticking out our tongues at one another. My daughter was amused, yet rolling her eyes.

In follow up visits, if my daughter and I were having an adult conversation and my grandchild got restless, I'd stick out my tongue and she would smile and stick out her tongue at me, and she felt that she had some of my attention. It felt like an inside joke. My daughter ignored our behaviour, and we continued our conversation.

## 2 years old and up

### MARCHING BAND

Shaking rattles or playing simple musical instruments (nothing too high in pitch at this age, as their ears are more sensitive) is fun and can lead to a marching band. We played around with instruments on our virtual visits as she learned how they worked. The harmonica was a favorite!

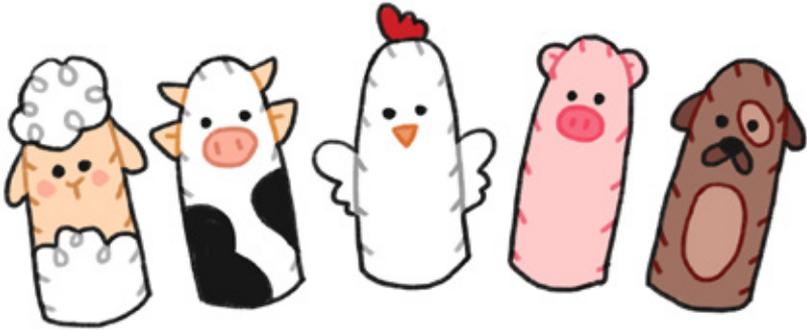
When I visited her, we did a daily marching band throughout the house. Then, on our follow-up virtual visits, we played our instruments and marched around the room. It brought back memories of our earlier visits.

NOTE: Parents, please remember, balloons that have burst are a choking hazard for children. Broken balloons must be disposed of immediately.

## BALLOONS

Mail a balloon, and keep one with you that's the same colour and shape. Blow yours up while you are on the call and ask an adult to blow the other one up at their end. You can both play with your balloons, bouncing them around and the child will have that one to play with after you're finished your playtime. You can bounce a balloon right into the camera and it's pretty dramatic!

Another idea to develop this theme would be to include a copy of *The Red Balloon*, a children's book, or another classic book about balloons.



## FINGER PUPPETS

Does the child already have finger puppets? Sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," and let the child choose the next animal. When they hold up a cow, you sing "With a moo, moo here and a moo, moo there, here a moo, there a moo, everywhere a moo, moo. Old MacDonald had a farm, E, I, E, I, O." Bounce your finger around like you have a puppet on it, or buy or make your own finger puppets. My grandchild has a set of finger puppets and a random pickle finger puppet has been added, so our version of Old MacDonald has a pickle that tickles! Let loose, and have fun with it. The more fun you have, the more fun everyone will have!

You may wish to make or purchase finger puppets and play with them a few times online, before you mail them to the child. It's quite easy to make finger puppets, using felt, sharp scissors, and glue. Begin by making the "blanks" first, and then once the glue has dried, add the features of the animals you want to portray. It's a creative challenge that I found fun and satisfying.

## READING BOOKS

You can buy two books, mail one book and keep the other. Then, you can read that book to the child while the parent holds the other book and the child. Or, you could buy one book, write out the text to support you at your place, and mail the book to them. Then, you won't have to actually see the words.

When a parent or caregiver cuddles the child with their back to the computer camera and you read the book aloud, I'm sure it will feel (to the child) like you're right there, holding them.

I can now read picture (large text) books through the camera lens. My son holds his child and knows just where to hold the book so I can see the text and read it aloud. He coaches me when I miss a word, just like I did for him when he was learning to read. It makes us both giggle.

Books are a part of most of our virtual visits. My grandchild picks them out, and if it's one I know, I'll join in. The other day, she chose one that had the Jack and Jill rhyme as the storybook. I was able to "read" along, even though I could not see the book, because I remembered the rhyme. My grandchild gave me some puzzled looks, trying to understand how I could read this book, without even seeing the pictures or words.

There is another favourite picture book called Baby Beluga. It is based on a song by Raffi, on his Baby Beluga recording. I printed out the lyrics to the song, and sing it to my grandchild while an adult turns the pages. This makes us all happy. I used to sing this song to my children.

## HOKEY POKEY

Have you danced the Hokey Pokey? It's a fun rhyme that helps children learn about their body parts. There are videos on YouTube if you are not familiar with this classic song. Explore this and other classic songs, print out the lyrics and you will be able to sing them with your special child.



# HANDS ON FUN

## WITH THE CHILD YOU LOVE

### Painting

#### **PAINT WITH WATER BOOKS**

They're great for the younger siblings (10 months and up) who want to join in the painting fun. Tear a page out of the book and tape the page to a table or high chair tray. Give the child a small amount of water with a Q-tip or paintbrush.

#### **BLOB PAINTING**

Place a blob of paint on paper and fold. Press paper so the paint spreads. Open the paper to admire the blob art! After the paint dries you can add details. If your child traces her/his feet side by side on either side of the fold on the paper and puts some paint on one side of the fold, it will look like a butterfly when squished together!

## TUB PAINTING

The easiest clean-up comes when you let them finger paint in the tub. You can wash it all down the drain and then give them a bubble bath. If they create a picture that they like, they can get a 'print' by pressing paper against the side of the tub.



## BLOW PAINTING

Put a small amount of liquid paint on the paper. Blow on the paint through a straw and watch it move! Try different colours on the same paper. Use only primary (red, blue, yellow) colours and discuss the colours that are produced when they mix.

## SHAPE PAINTING

Put paint in a shallow container and dip cookie cutters into the paint. Use clothes pegs to hold the cookie cutters and print on paper. Experiment with Lego, corks, old toothbrushes, pieces of sponge. You can even drive toy cars through the paint and make tracks across the paper. This makes great wrapping paper.

## FINGER PAINTING

Try music in the background and watch how your fingers move to the music. Try using a comb in the paint-try a mirror or window. A quick alternative to finger paint is some liquid starch to spread around. You can even sprinkle powdered paint on top to be squished in!

## SALAD SPINNER PAINTING

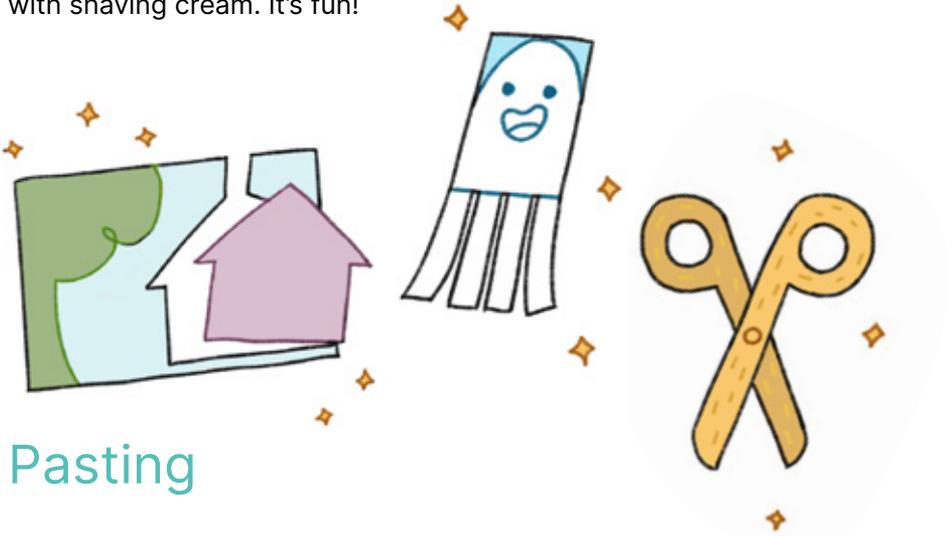
Finally, the real use is revealed! Cut a piece of paper to fit into the spinner. Put a few drops of paint in the center of the paper, close and spin. Explore the different results that come from adding new colours before letting the first paint colour dry. You get some interesting blends.

## STRING PAINTING

Put pieces of string into clothes pegs, dip into liquid paint and drag along a paper.

## SHAVING CREAM

Try spreading it on a balloon for a new tactile sensation! Or, put a large garbage bag or plastic tablecloth on a table and finger paint with shaving cream. It's fun!



## Pasting

### GLUE STICKS

They are great for beginners and come in both liquid and solid forms. Of course, you can glue pictures on paper but try gluing wall-paper bits, small food items (Shreddies, Puffed Wheat, yarn cotton balls and ribbon).

### GLUE DISPENSERS

When they are ready to use white glue, start by putting some in a small container. Use a coffee stir stick as your spreader.

## COLLAGES

Don't forget to glue collages of all sorts of things. You can cut (from magazines) all types of noses and smiles to make up funny faces. Add some animal features to be silly.



## SCISSOR FUN!

When they are first starting out with scissors, making a fringe on a paper the size of a bookmark is very satisfying. Try it, they'll like it! When they are learning to cut, just let them cut out pictures. This is entertaining and you can store these cut out pictures in a box for an upcoming collage.

## AUTUMN KEEPSAKE

Go for a walk to collect small things such as leaves and twigs. Make an arrangement on a piece of clear mac tac. Cover with another piece of mac tac or white paper. You can frame this collage with a piece of coloured paper or light cardboard and 'voila'... a nature picture for a friend.

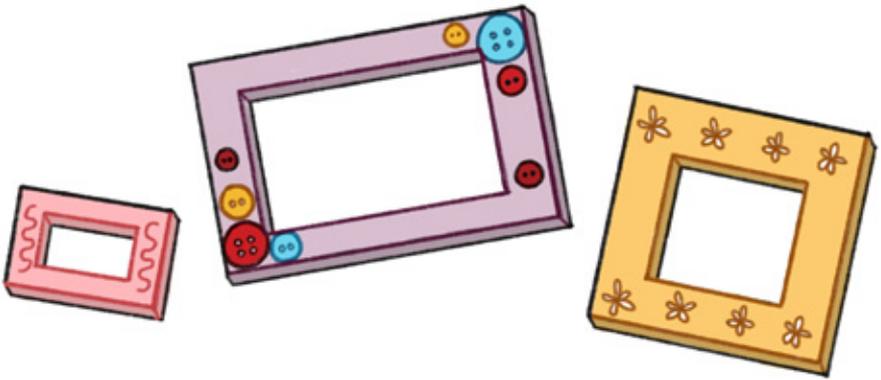


## SUPER STORAGE IDEA

If you can get an old spice rack, it's a great way to store all those small craft supplies which need to be kept on hand for special projects (ie. Sparkles, small beads, buttons, etc.)

## PICTURE FRAME

Cut out an appropriate sized frame from cardboard or fun foam. Kids can decorate with button, stickers, sparkles, etc. Make a cardboard backing and glue to frame on three sides. Slide your child's picture inside. This makes a wonderful gift for grandparents.



## BUILD A PERSON

Children can cut out parts of people from magazines (or you can prepare some ahead of time). They can then 'build' a new person on a piece of construction paper.

## MAKE A STICKY PICTURE

Buy some contact or shelf paper. Cut out a piece, peel the backing off and tape it, sticky side up, on the table. Supply a variety of materials (fabric, yarn, feathers, ribbon curls, etc.) to have them make a collage. It can be easily re-arranged, so it is wise to display it low enough for them to 're-work' it.



# WHAT TO DO WITH A BOX!

There is no limit to what a box can become. If you ever see a big box that a fridge or stove comes in, grab it! It can be a castle or a house. Don't forget to 'install' the skylight and mail slot! Paint flowers around the bottom of the house. You could even ask the children to design a flag.

## LET YOUR IMAGINATION FLY! A BOX CAN BE...

A train, car, or boat... A special seat or table...

A garage, a fort... Doll house furniture...

Shoe boxes make nice refrigerators, or rocket ships!

Cardboard tubes complement boxes wonderfully! You can make a 'push through' for small things or a nifty peephole. A toilet paper roll makes a great telescope or you can design binoculars for boats.

Strawberry (plastic) boxes make perfect bubble blowers. Try dipping one in bubble solution (in a pie tray) and wave it about to make clusters of bubbles.

You can use the strawberry box to make a special basket to hold treasures by teaching the child how to weave in and out of the berry box with ribbon or yarn. You can make an easy handle with pipe cleaners.





# PLANNING A PARTY

Pick a theme-any theme-then expand on it. Work with your child to brainstorm ideas and plan the fun! Write down all the ideas. This lets everyone feel that she/he are contributing.

## THE WATER PARTY COULD...

- Take place around a wading pool or sprinkler.
- Have games that use water to make water bombs for a water fight.
- Give out party favours that are used in or with water.
- Have blue icing on the cake (with a plastic dolphin on top)

## THE CLOWN PARTY COULD...

- Have a helper paint faces-take pictures quickly!
- Have some dress up clothes to 'clown' around in.
- Let them play with balls, hula-hoops, wagons and boxes.
- Give red sponge noses as party favours.

## THE MAKE YOUR OWN PARTY

- Children decorate their own place mats when they arrive.
- Decorate a crown using stickers or rubber stamps.

- Make their own lunch! (just provide a selection of crackers and toppings)
- Decorate a cupcake with icing, sprinkles, candies and raisins.

The 'brave' can have the children decorate their own piñatas! Prepare the personal piñatas before the party. You simply put goodies in a paper lunch bag and secure the top of the bag with tape. Have the children decorate with various craft supplies. Everyone will love a turn to break their very own piñata. Be sure to have extra bags available for when they break and the contents go flying!

## BRAINSTORM AROUND A COUPLE OF THESE OTHER IDEAS...

A Sticker Party? A Skating Party?  
A Karaoke Party? A Swimming Party?



## PARTY FOOD

Nothing too fancy or they won't eat.

Some variations on favourite tastes...

- triple decker PB and J (peanut butter and jam)
- pizza on English muffins or pita bread (great at the make your own party)
- crackers and tuna, peanut butter or cream cheese
- make an octopus from a hot dog (cut bottom one third of dog into quarters and boil. The legs will curl up to make great dipping).

## CAKES

Make a caterpillar from cupcakes. Just line them up and decorate with flat licorice 'legs' and Smartie 'eyes'.

Arrange cupcakes on a board to look like balloons. Place a piece of yarn at the bottom of each 'balloon' and knot all the strings together.

Animal crackers can march across the icing for a farm or zoo cake. Many places now rent 'shaped' pans. They are fun to use and also easy if you use a cake mix.



# GAMES, GAMES, GAMES. AND WHERE TO PLAY THEM

You can play games with children everywhere! Talk to them as you wait in doctors' offices, banks and even on subway trains and buses.

## IN LINE-UPS

I spy with my little eye, something that is...

- green (or any other colour)
- square (or any other shape)
- glass (or wood... )
- big (no, bigger than that) begins with the letter M (sounds like mmmmm)

## SIMPLE GAMES

- Tic, Tac, Toe.
- Cat's Cradle (do you remember how?) is a string game
- Stand on one foot-how high can you count while on one foot? Can you close your eyes and do it? How high can you count now?

## LETTER GAMES

I'm thinking of an animal that begins with the letter 'T'.

One person writes a letter and the other makes the letter into a drawing of something that begins with that letter. ie. the letter 'C' could be part of a drawing of a cat or a candy.

## DOUBLE NUMBER MAZE

Have the child write the numbers 1–5 randomly on a piece of paper. Choose a pen of a different colour and write 1–5 again. Make sure the number 1's are not too close together. Draw a line to connect the first set of numbers (easy). Now, without touching or crossing a line, join the second set. When the child is comfortable with this, try to go to 10, then 15.

## GAMES TO PLAY AT HOME

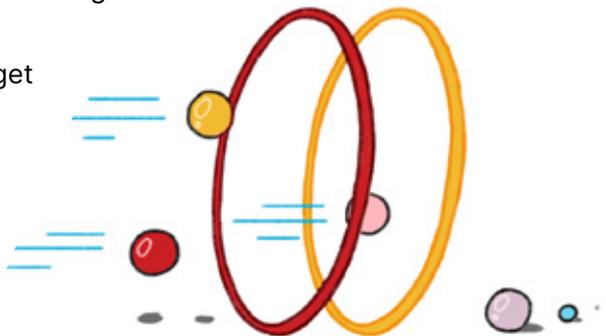
Can you close your eyes, spin around and come back to the same spot? Try that in front of a mirror.

Hide and seek a teddy bear. They hide it, you find it. Then you hide it and they look... and look...

Give your child a ride on a blanket or towel around a tiled or wooden floor. Then have them give teddy a ride on a towel. They know how much fun it is!

Take a shape walk. Look for squares, triangles, etc. Or take an ABC walk. Just look for things starting with the letters.

Hang a hula hoop for target practice! They can throw balls through it or even make paper airplanes to fly through.



## FISHING GAME

It's easy to make! Cut out some paper fish with your child and attach a paper clip to each one. Tie or tape a magnet on a string attached to a fishing 'pole'. The fish can be put into a container or behind the sofa and the children can fish away!

Don't forget the board games-all the old favourites like Checkers, Snakes and Ladders...

## AND TRY MAKING YOUR OWN

Just draw on cardboard, maybe a box? Use a penny or favourite Lego person or a car as a marker. Then use your imagination-a railroad track with a train drawn off to one side or a map of familiar areas with dogs and favourite places drawn around the board spaces. Then, every few squares, write instructions-go back two spaces, jump over your teddy, sing a song, miss a turn, tell a joke.

One of the easiest board games is just to glue down a 'path' of shapes (circles, squares, triangles) and write the easiest to follow instructions down and write out the child's name in bold letters on the side of the game. Everyone loves having their very own game!





# TRAVELLING WITH A CHILD

Travelling with children requires advanced planning. You can also use most of the ideas on the games sheet while travelling. Try to wrap as many surprises as you can. You can wrap up old toys as well. The unwrapping is fun! Wrap their treats—you can even label them for the little ones.

## CAR TRAVEL IDEAS

You can show your child (5 and older) how to work a combination lock and she/he can practice in the car.

Joke and riddle books are great car reading and are available at the library.

Sing all the action songs and camp songs that you know and then make some up.

## AIR TRAVEL

Take a small photo album on trips with pictures of home and important people, pets and themselves as babies.

**Storytime** With older children, you can play a story game called 'switch'. One person starts the story and, at an exciting moment, says 'switch' and passes the story to the next person.

With a younger child, the same game works with a limited number of objects. Have the child suggest three objects and make up a story about these things. You can work together on the story to give them the idea.

**Newspaper Search** Using a newspaper or magazine, circle an 'A' and have the child search that page for all of the other 'A's.

**Alphabet Names** Go through the alphabet calling out all the names that you know that begin with the letter A (Anna, Alan, Alison) B (Beth, Bob, Barb) C...

**Memory Game** Put three objects on the fold down tray. Have the child close her/his eyes while you say "going, going, gone" and remove one of the objects. Increase the number of objects on the tray or just change the objects around as they catch on to the game.





# ENTERTAINING A SICK CHILD

## BOXES AND MIRRORS

To make staying in bed more appealing for your child, use a box and cut out space for the child's legs to make a lap worktable. She/he may want to stay in bed longer and to decorate it too. Providing a flat surface allows for more opportunity to play in bed.

Place mirrors at different angles so they can see out the window or into the hallway. They may even like to watch themselves for a while.

## PLAY CARDS

Concentration, Fish, Which is Higher (War).

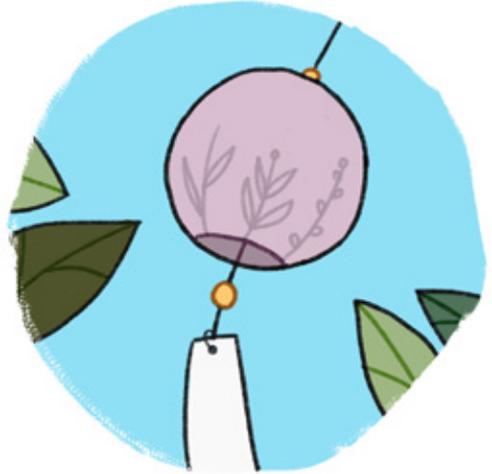
## STUFF TO LOOK AT

Kaleidoscopes are nice and don't forget Viewmasters, as well.

Hang a mobile or wind chimes for the child to daydream.

A box of interesting stuff can be collected and delivered to the child with a magnifying glass (sponge/fabric/bread/pinecone).

Is it possible to place a windmill, streamer or balloon near an open window or fan?



## PUZZLES AND GAMES ARE FUN

Don't forget that you can simply cut up an ad from a magazine to make an easy temporary puzzle.

Don't forget to call friends to borrow games if you need to keep the child still or quiet for a long time.

For any dice game, place dice in a clear glass jar. It's easy to use and harder to lose!

## GUESSING GAME

When you have some time to spend in your child's bedroom, give her/him a back rub and trace letters/numbers on her/his back and guess what it is.

## ANIMALS

Borrow a small pet to watch, a fish in a bowl or maybe install (with suction cups) a bird feeder near the window.

## SHADOW GAMES

Shadow games are fun on the bedroom wall—do you remember how to make bunnies or wolves?

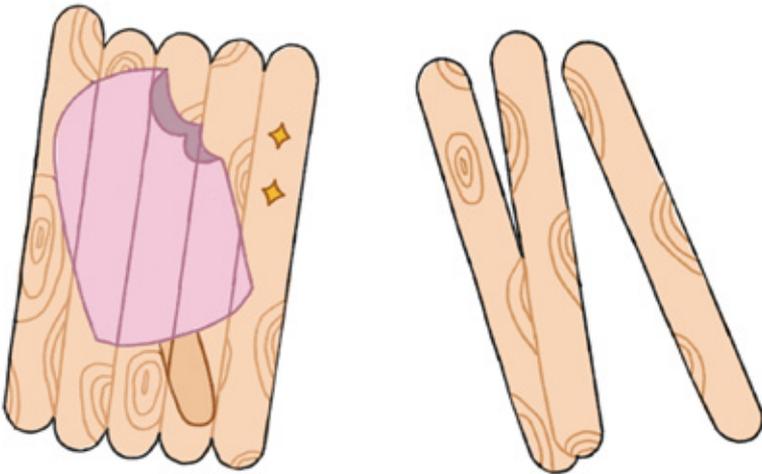
Shine a lamp towards a blank wall and use your hands to create shadows in the shape of different animals.

## FOOD

**Toast** When they are feeling a little better, and they can eat toast, try serving a 'log cabin'. Cut the toast into 'logs' (fingers). Build a cabin and put some jam in the middle for dipping.

**Muffin Tin** When they start to recover, serve a 'muffin meal'. Use a muffin tin and put a paper liner into each cup. A little bit of food in each looks more appealing than a full meal.

**Cinnamon Teddy** Use a cookie cutter to cut out a teddy shape. Glue a 1" x 1" square of sandpaper on the bear's tummy. Rub the sandpaper with a cinnamon stick. Hang it on the wall or, to make a necklace, punch a hole in the top and thread some wool through.



**Popsicle Puzzles** Line up 5 or 6 Popsicle sticks, and draw a simple picture while they are together. When you separate them, presto—you have a puzzle.



# RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES

If it's a warm day with a light rain, have a blast by making a bubble pool! Fill a kiddie pool with water and add some bubble bath. Let the kids get in and start kicking—they will be thrilled to see the water foam and froth!

It's best to throw together a box on a sunny day, so you'll be ready. If you do, add:

- popsicle sticks, tracing paper
- chalk, to use on wet construction paper
- yarn, if there's a little, make a line or circle for a toddler to walk on, if there's lots, weave a room!
- an elastic band around crayons makes a crayon 'machine'
- a new book or toy
- streamers and balloons that are recycled from a party

- any comic strips that have no words, mount them on a cardboard and cut apart. They are a great way to expand vocabulary as you 'switch' the story around and talk about it.

## ZANY & RAINY

If it's possible, and your schedule permits it, have a 'mixed up or backwards day'. The kids love zany days and rainy ones are the best for these. You could bathe them in the morning, wear P.J.'s or dress up clothes all day, and have a picnic on a blanket in the living room! It's fun to eat with big utensils, trust me! You could even try serving dessert before lunch. Let your imagination soar... and let the kids suggest the fun!

Don't forget tents. Use clothes pegs and lots of sheets. You can make a tepee out of an easel with a blanket or sheet over it.



## SIMPLE GAMES

- Let them mimic your claps. Try fast and slow rhythms or certain songs.
- Can you balance a book on your head and walk?
- Put on some dancing music and dance, dance, dance...
- You could try make believe or do mime together. Try miming a race, baking a cake, building a snowman (get snowsuits on first!)

## MYSTERY BAG

Put a few objects in a bag-very different ones to begin with. Let them feel and guess which object they are holding. Have the child remove the object from the bag to confirm what it is that they are holding.

## DANCING WANDS

Tape a length of streamer onto the end of a Popsicle stick. Decorate the streamer with marker, stamps or stickers. Hold onto the stick and dance with your streamers to the music!

Give your child a flashlight to explore a dim room (pull the drapes). You can even hide a few treats in the room first and call it a treasure hunt!

## FLAPPING BUTTERFLIES

Cut out a butterfly shape that your child can decorate. Cut a strip (to go around a wrist) from a separate piece of paper. After the butterfly is decorated, staple to the wrist band. When this 'bracelet' is on, the butterfly will fly when you move your wrist.





# WHILE YOU'RE ON THE PHONE

## BOX OF CRAFTS

Keep a box of crafts supplies and 'surprises' on hand for when you take an important call.

- Pass little ones pieces of masking tape from your box
- Pass older one Velcro, balloons or bubbles
- Help a child string a Cheerio (or Fruit Loops) necklace. It's fun to do and you store extras in a plastic bag (if you're fast!). It makes a great snack for your next outing.
- Use pipe cleaners to make sculptures
- You can even turn your kitchen table or floor into a 'town' with masking tape, blocks, cars, animals (whatever they can bring to you or you can reach)

## BACK AND FORTH

You can bat a balloon back and forth with a child, very quietly...

## WATER FUN

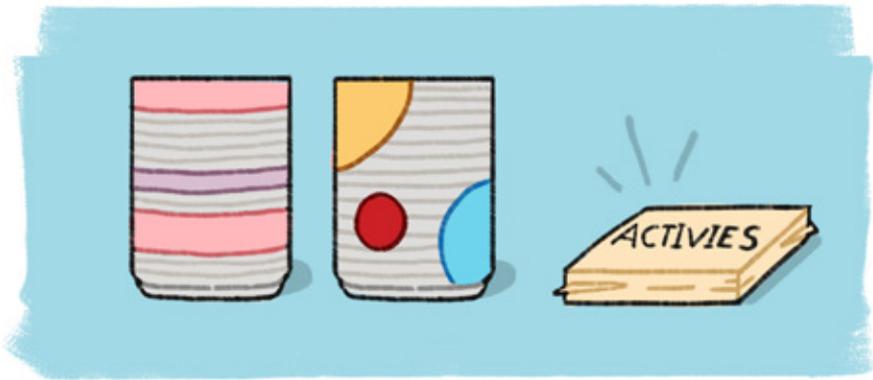
My all-time favourite, when they finally know how to blow through a straw, is to get a flat bottomed container (solid, so it won't spill). Add water and a bit of dish detergent. Start the child off and, once they catch on, they'll be thrilled!

If the dishes are done and you feel like supervising a little, you could set up some water play at the sink. Maybe they could wash the salad vegetables for supper?

## CUDDLE CONNECTION

If you're willing to interact (cuddle, make faces, tickle, or play quietly with toys) they might not object to your phone call.





# MAKE A DULL DAY SHINE

## CRAZY CAN

Cover an empty coffee can with colourful contact paper. On small cards write ideas for some 'on the spot' activities that your child can do on their own. Choose ideas that require little or no special materials or preparation. Somehow, even the most boring ideas seem to appeal when they come out of the crazy can!

Give your child a small length of link chain-show them how to fit it into different containers-through small necks and into bowls.

## BALLOONS

Hang a balloon on a string from a cup hook (or tape) in the doorway and give a child a paddle or racket (to jazz it up, add cornstarch before blowing up the balloon).

Do you have a child proofed fan? Place it on the floor, angled straight up. Give each child an empty paper towel tube and have them try to hit a round balloon that's blowing up in the air (because of the fan's current). You could even try to organize an inside baseball game.

## ODD THINGS

Rubber band stretch-have a child hammer nails in a board randomly, then they can stretch colourful hair bands over the nails to make designs.

Old calendar gives perfect chance to practice numbers in the squares provided.

Old coupons in a wallet are really special to your children.

## PROTECTIVE SHEETS OF PLASTIC

You can put anything under them and wipe it clean after use-match-up sheets, mazes, number fun...

## BLANKET TOSS

Have the child hold on to one end of a towel, you hold the other end. Work together to give teddy the ride of his life! It's much like teddy jumping on a trampoline.

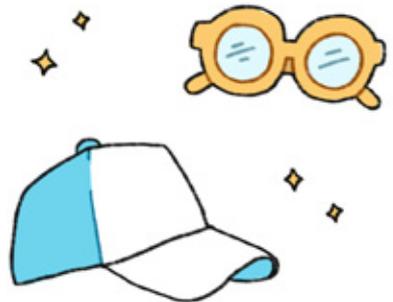
## DRESS UP BOX

Don't forget to add sunglasses, a wig, a vest, old coupons in a wallet, keys, scarves, capes (or a towel with Velcro), purses, hats and most importantly, the mirror at the kids level. They have to be able to admire themselves! Try to take a few pictures.



## OBSTACLE COURSE

Make an obstacle course by threading yarn where you want the children to go-you can talk about over-under-through.



## TIMED FUN

When the child is resisting brushing his/her teeth, try using an egg timer to expand the time. They enjoy watching the sand fall and they will brush longer.

Use an egg timer or stopwatch and see how long it takes to tidy up your toys. It's a beat the clock game!

## SPAGHETTI PRINTS

When you have some leftover noodles after dinner, let them 'decorate' a cupboard door while you have your coffee/tea. The starch lets the noodles stick by themselves. If you prefer, you can give the children cardboard instead of using a cupboard door.

## MAKE A BOOK

Let the child dictate a story into a recording device and then you can write it up for them later. If you wanted to take it a step further, you can make a book. They can illustrate the story.

## FOOD FUN

Let your child make dessert one night by building each person a sculpture out of mini marshmallows and toothpicks. For dieters, use styrofoam pieces.

## MAKE A 'THING' PUZZLE'

Trace 7 small items on a piece of paper-put the items on a tray and then let the child put the 'puzzle' together. To make it harder for an older child, put the objects away around the room.

## YEAR BOXES

It's easier than keeping a scrap book! Just collect a few things in a shirt box for each child and label it accordingly (ie. Michael 1994). Seal it up and have fun looking through it in a couple of years.



# EVERYDAY IDEAS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

## SHADOW GAMES

Do you remember how to make a duck, a rabbit (with your hands in front of a light with the shadow on a flat surface). Set the children up with the lamp shining on the wall, show them a few and let them try to make up their own. Suggest that they put together a 'shadow show', and you will be back in 30 minutes.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

Subway travel goes faster if you sit in the first car so that the children can count how many people are waiting on each station platform. You can also talk about the lights in the tunnel and what they mean. Save a transfer and use it to teach them how to make a whistle to play while waiting. Fold it end to end, fold the sides back to the middle fold line. If you blow into the middle while holding the 'whistle' in between your first two fingers, you should get a high pitched sound.

## TREASURE HUNT/SCAVENGER HUNT

They're catching! You make one game, they make the rest. Start by writing a clue on a piece of paper (ie. "You will find your next clue in a cold place") which leads them to the next clue. A trail of eight to ten of these can finish with a snack, note or prize.

## IT'S MAGIC

Fill a plastic bag (make sure it's a new one with NO holes) 2/3 full of water. Hold the bag tightly closed at the top. Stick a sharp pencil straight through both sides of the bag and leave it there. Not a single drop of water should leak out.

## JEWELLED ANIMAL

Hang a favourite stuffed animal in their room and pin or hang the jewellery on it.

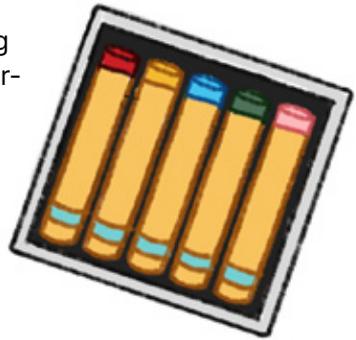
## CRAFT IDEAS

**Drawing** Let them have experiences using different types of drawing materials—charcoal, oil pastels, chalk—on construction paper. When you are going to introduce a particular type of drawing material, it's really fun to get some books from the library to see what the potential is. Canadian children's books have some of the best illustrations in the world. You can then try to figure out how some of the techniques were done.

**Storage Boxes** Use the clear storage boxes to store the junk. It's easier to find things when you can peek. It's a great way to store toys as well as craft materials.

**Finger Puppets** You can sew a felt base to be decorated with scraps of fabric and craft materials. An older child can have a lot of fun putting together a puppet show for you. Paper puppets can make for short term fun.

**Drying Clay and Other Things** At an older age, they are ready for the challenge of air drying clay. Then they can make all sorts of items to air dry and then be painted and displayed.





# WORD FUN

## FIND A WORD SCRAPBOOK

Start a photo book for your new baby with familiar pictures (Mom, Dad, Grandmom, big sister, big brother). Use masking tape and a permanent marker to label these pictures. Add animals, objects, colours and foods and ask the older child to 'read' a personal book to baby.

## KID LIBS

Write a one page story leaving several blanks for names, places and foods/colours. Use a real life or silly made up stories. The next step is to ask the child for appropriate word to put into these blanks (ie. "give me a name of a food"). The fun begins when you read back the completed story and listen to the results, even a real life story gets to be silly.

## FUN THINGS TO SAY

Say the word “ace” aloud very quickly for about 30 seconds. What word are you saying when the time is up?

You’re probably saying the word “say”!

Don’t forget to try some tongue twisters.

“Street sweepers sweep streets clean”

“How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?”

