



A Year of Playing Skillfully





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Welcome to A Year of Playing Skillfully.

We are excited to take the concepts we've developed in *The Homegrown Preschooler* even further with our monthly curriculum! Thank you for joining us on this journey. We hope to leave you encouraged and inspired to pour into your youngest blessings. We want you to grow learners who look at the world with a sense of wonder. We have created a curriculum that allows your child to discover and experience learning that will develop them socially, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually, while keeping you organized and sane! Each month includes a visually appealing overview, which can be placed in a frame, on a refrigerator or pinned to a family bulletin board. In addition to the overview, we have included step-by-step instructions, beautiful photographs, and a shopping list to help you implement our age-appropriate, theme-based plan.

We have given you the freedom to take our monthly plan and break it down further, according to the needs of your teaching style and family schedule. The beautiful thing about this flexible plan is that you can adjust it according to your life. If you are running around with older children, you can choose activities that can be done in the car or while waiting at the dentist office (i.e.- math matching game, book to read, etc…). If you have extra time because a grandparent has the baby, choose the activities that require some set up time or more involve-

ment from you. Keep in mind that young children thrive on routine. Ultimately, it is best to create a routine that provides enough time to accomplish 2-4 activities a day. These do not have to be done all at the same time, you can plan a field trip for the morning and a book activity for the afternoon. The most helpful thing for your child is to get into the habit of doing the same things about the same time everyday.

Your child will repeat some of these activities several times throughout the month, reinforcing the concept of the activity. How will you know what activities you should repeat? You will know by taking the time to observe your children. If you observe that your child is particularly enjoying a certain activity or topic, pursue it further. If you see that your child is frustrated with an activity, investigate it. Are they tired? Is it too difficult? Do they need encouragement? When asking your child about a certain topic, we recommend using open ended questions such as, "Tell me about that? I wonder what scientist invented this? If you were a scientist, what would you invent? I see you are frustrated, how can I help?" Asking open ended questions will help you get a clear answer. This type of observation will help you decide what activities to repeat and what activities can be packed away for next year.

This curriculum has been written from the perspective of two mothers who have many children of different ages and a lot to juggle! We've tried to make it as easy as possible to deliver the wonder and fun of early learning to your youngest with the same sense of delight you had with your firstborn children. We want to encourage you to let your older children participate in these activities along with your younger children. As a matter of fact, older children can be wonderful facilitators of activities. Many older children are in need of sensory input and we find that participating in sensory activities helps them come to their work with additional focus and concentration.

We have written this curriculum primarily for children between the ages of 3-7. We know that children's brains develop on their own timetable and that we can't rush this anymore than we can rush them growing taller. What we *can* do is provide a steady diet of sensory stimulation, good literature and conversation as we watch for cues that show they are ready for more. There are many recent studies that indicate that the shortening of a child's early play life and a heavy focus on academics in the early years also contributes to deficits in brain development and leading to problems with higher level academics later on. As your child matures and gives you cues that he is ready for more (between 5 - 7), you may choose to begin a gentle phonics program and some hands-on math. Please keep in mind that early vs. late in reading is no indicator of future success or intelligence. Physical connections in the brain form on their own timetable, just like growth in stature. The timing of those growth spurts are wonderful surprises unique to each child.

> The world is rated R, and no one is checking IDs. Do not try to make it G by imagining the shadows away. Do not try to hide your children from the world forever, but do not try to pretend there is no danger. Train them. Give them sharp eyes and bellies full of laughter. Make them dangerous. Make them yeast, and when they've grown, they will pollute the shadows.
>
> -N.D. Wilson, Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl

You can find articles about how we observe and handle adding in materials with our different children on our blog. For most children, what we provide will be plenty! Our main goal in designing this flexible program is that lessons for your child be developmentally appropriate for *your* child, and that their love of learning not be squelched by moving too quickly. It is a delicate balance which *you*, (not the state, not your neighbor, not your mother-in-law, bless her heart) as the primary expert on *your* child are well equipped to discern. So be confident and observant as you teach!

We want to give you the freedom to enjoy your children during these precious years when they are fresh from God. Live a rich life with them. Explore the world. Read great books. Laugh. A lot. Sing joy over them. Nurture your relationship. Create beautiful art together. Take jubilance in numbers and language, for they are a gift. Serve others shoulder to shoulder. These are truly precious years that you will always look back on longingly. Enjoy the days and don't wish them away by rushing or worrying. Cultivate wonder which will fuel and inspire your child to pursue a life overflowing with worship, work and wisdom.

Each month we will explore the following Central Themes and Character Traits:

Month	Theme	Character Trait
September	The World I Live In	Wonder
October	Autumn & Apples	Orderliness
November	Leaves & Pumpkins	Thankfulness
December	Christmas	Kindness
January	Winter & Hibernation	Peacefulness
February	Hearts & Valentine's Day	Love
March	Rhythm & Rainbows	Patience
April	Spring, Baby Animals, & New Life	Forgiveness
May	Flowers, Birds, & Bugs	Helpfulness

You will find having your own copy of *The Homegrown Preschooler* a valuable tool as you implement our curriculum. If you have any questions about our activities, we are just an email away! For more ideas or to contact us, visit www.thehomegrownpreschooler.com. For more ideas check out www.thehomegrownpreschooler.com and our social media links listed below. We hope you and your children have a memorable and wonder-filled year!

Blessings,

Kathy and Lesli

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SEPTEMBER

Theme: The World I Live In
Character Trait: Wonder

SEPTEMBER

Theme The World I Live In

Character Trait: Wonder

Home Life / Social-Emotional

- ☐ hot air balloon
- ☐ say please and thank you
- ☐ manners books
- ☐ clearing dishes
- ☐ exit plan

Art / Music

- ☐ diy weaving loom
- ☐ big painting
- ☐ clay tree faces
- ☐ chihuly art study
- ☐ salt mirror art
- ☐ he's got the whole world in his hands

Language / Literacy

- ☐ name letter museum
- ☐ how does your story begin
- ☐ my world book
- ☐ print rich environment
- ☐ tactile letter practice

Math / Manipulatives

- ☐ count and swing
- ☐ diy spindlebox
- ☐ shape making
- ☐ nature math book
- ☐ water bottle marble game

Gracious words are a *honeycomb*

sweet to the soul and healing to the bones

Proverbs 16:24



Science / Sensory

- ☐ science and nature study basket
- ☐ diy pendulum
- ☐ herbal tea play dough
- ☐ pond play
- ☐ my world nesting set

Field Trips

- ☐ news station
- ☐ grocery store

Outdoor / Gross Motor

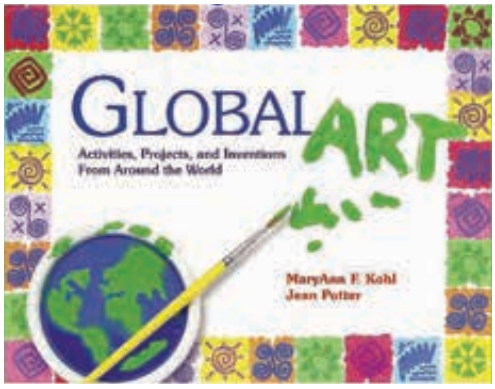
- ☐ ball skills
- ☐ outdoor obstacle course
- ☐ spin-a-thon
- ☐ doggy doggy where's your bone?
- ☐ movement co-op day

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

–Proverbs 16:24

Mom's Toolbox

The Private Eye: We came across a wonderful tool for nature exploration recently. It is a jeweler's loupe that you hold to your eye and allows for greater magnification than a magnifying glass. Visit www.the-private-eye.com to learn more about this very cool tool! Consider adding it to your nature basket for your young naturalist. Try looking at pond water through the private eye! It is a window into an amazing world and a sure way to build wonder in your homeschool.



As we learn about the world we live in, *Global Art* by MaryAnn Kohl will provide you with fabulous hands on processes that will help you introduce your child to the different ways people express themselves through art across the world. This book will give you interesting art projects to pull out on a moment's notice, making it easier to say "Yes!" to art more often. To purchase this wonderful book, check out www.brightring.com.

A balloon ride starts the year off right!





Home Life and Social/Emotional

Hot Air Balloon Ride: Start your preschool out with a bang! We love to roll out the "shock and awe" at the beginning of the year for preschoolers. Usually it is just the big kids that get the fun new stuff in September, meanwhile fun mommy disappears along with summer. Splurge on a dozen balloons for your little one and tie them to a laundry basket. Let them imagine where they might go on their balloon ride! Show them Google Earth over your house and imagine together what it might look like to be so high! If you are really lucky, you might get the chance (as the Lees did) to say hello to friends as they float by your house. Don't be discouraged if you don't have a fancy basket like the one we had in the picture. Our rectangle plastic one from Target actually works great, too!



After their hot air balloon ride, our little travelers enjoyed making a hot-air balloon snack!

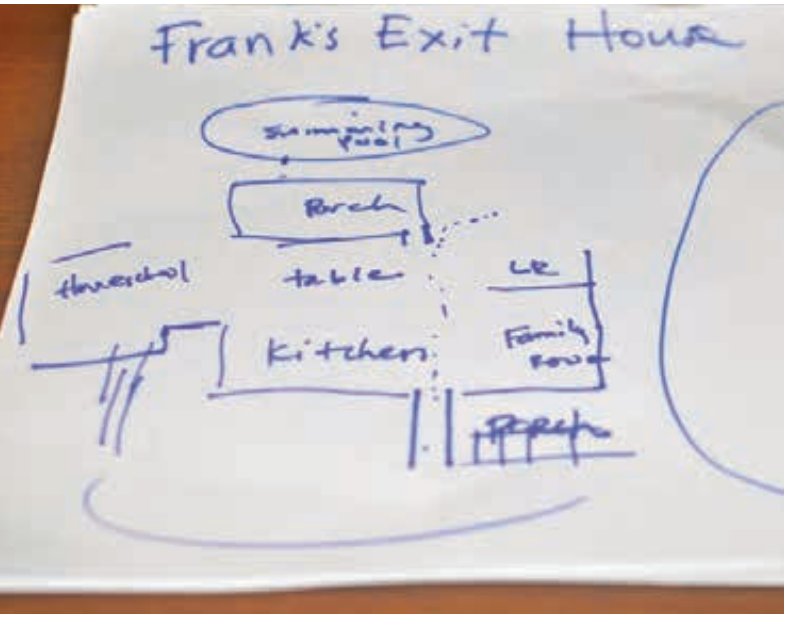
Say Please and Thank You: Manners, manners, manners. Teaching them at a young age is key. This is an instance where modeling helps tremendously. A fun way to teach manners is to over exaggerate when speaking to your family. PLEASE put your shoes away. THANK YOU for your help today. If you have ever read *The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners*, you know what we are talking about!



Make up a tray of what ever fruits and veggies you have handy to let your kids decorate a paper plate for their own balloon snack!







Manners Book: You can take the concept of manners even further by making a manners book with your child. As a family, decide which manners you feel are the most important. Allow your preschooler to decide how the manners book should be illustrated. Should you use photos or drawings? Write the manners in your book! Some good ideas for preschool manners are:

Always say please and thank you.

Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze.

Chew with your mouth closed.

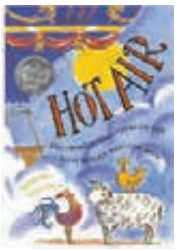
Use your inside voice.

Say excuse me.

Clearing dishes after mealtimes: Young children need to eat frequent small meals, therefore there are many opportunities to teach preschoolers to take the dirty dishes to the sink. After each meal time, encourage your child to clean up his or her own place setting. Throw the napkin away, place utensils and dinnerware safely in the sink. Some children might be ready to rinse these items and place them in the dishwasher. Consistency is the key to helping a child remember to do this chore. If your child forgets, we encourage you to resist the temptation to do it for them. Simply call them back to the table and remind them of their responsibility.

Exit Plan: We pray that your family never experiences an emergency that requires a quick exit from your home, but it is best to be prepared. With your children, draw a map of your house and decide on an exit plan from every room. Practice the "stop, drop and roll" method with your children in case of a fire. Kathy's home has burned down twice so she feels strongly that children (and adults) should have an exit plan. You might want to make copies of your mapped-out exit plan and post them around your home.

Books



Hot Air by Marjorie Priceman is a great book to pull out when you make your hot air balloon! Have your child pack along their favorite stuffed animals and imagine what they would be saying if they went for such a crazy ride!



A House is a House for Me by Mary Ann Hoberman is a wonderful book with delightful illustrations! All the types of houses are examined and the places children love to hide our celebrated. Children will love the rhythmic poetic quality of this book.



Can You Hear It by William Lach

In this book, young readers are introduced to great music through great works of art. From "The Flight of the Bumblebee" to "The Four Seasons" to "Night on Bald Mountain," beloved music is illustrated by great works of art, and the text and accompanying CD urge young readers to listen for certain instruments. Can you hear the car horns honking, played by clarinets? Can you hear the horses' hooves, played by castanets? When each CD track is played, young readers will stop, look, and listen as never before. Classical music *is* filled with unforgettable images. In this book, great examples of pictorial music are matched to masterpieces from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for an introduction to both music and art appreciation for young listeners. Included is a CD featuring 12 short works and an introduction to the orchestra and the instruments.



The Frog and Toad Storybook Treasury by Arnold Lobel is very special to Lesli's heart. Her grandmother used to read these stories aloud to her when she was a preschooler. They are wonderful stories that your child will come back to again and again. These were some of the first books her children learned to read on their own. Combine this reading with a pond sensory bin to expand your preschooler's experience!



He's Got the Whole World In His Hands by Kadir Nelson is a beautiful book about the world from a child's perspective! Use it along with our art/music activity!

Every day, every hour, the parents are either passively or actively forming those habits in their children upon which, more than upon anything else, future character and conduct depend.

-Charlotte Mason

Language and Literacy

Children need experiences that link to language. For example, if you want to teach your preschooler the word apple, you need to give them an apple. When they touch, smell and taste the apple, their brain links the experience to the word. They now attach the word apple to the actual item and knowledge is achieved. Whenever possible, provide language linking activities for your preschoolers.

Name Letter Museum: People often ask us which letters are best to teach a child first. Should they be in ABC order? Or should we teach them based on their formation styles? We believe that the most important first letters to a child are the letters in their name. They see and experience these every day, and they MEAN SOMETHING to the even the youngest preschooler. This month, purchase cardboard letters from your local hobby or craft store. You can leave them natural, or paint them in colors that match your home. Use a foam brush to paint them with Modge Podge for extra protection. Throughout the month bring out these large letters for your child to manipulate. You can hide them in a room and let your child gather them and put them in order. Help your child to identify each letter throughout the month, telling them the name of the letter and the sound it makes. After your child has become comfortable and competent with this activity, focus on one letter at a time and help them gather items that start with that letter. It would be best to choose small items that can sit in front of the letter, creating a "letter museum" for your child's name. Make sure to take pictures of these for your child's scrapbook!

This activity takes the abstract concept of letters and turns it into something that your child can hold in their hand and manipulate. They can incorporate real things that they love in their environment to create their letter museum. THIS is the best way for preschoolers to learn!

Tactile Letter Practice: Pour about a 1/4 cup of your child's favorite color of finger paint into a gallon-sized baggie. Squeeze the air out and close the bag securely. Place the baggie on a light table (if you have one) or tape it to a sunny window. Encourage your child to use their finger to practice writing their favorite letters.





How Does Your Story Begin? Providing your preschooler the opportunity to share open ended stories gives them power over words and their feelings about situations. Here is an example of a story written by Kathy's son Henry:

"Once upon a time, there was a little boy named Henry who turned 6 on his birthday. He had a birthday and a lot of people came over. At his party he was having a lot of fun. And so, they went outside and everyone at the party went outside and they played tag and a year later he had a party when he was 7 and it was a whatchamacallit party and it was on Easter and it was really fun and he had a lego cake. And a year later he had a medium party and some of his friends came over and they went outside and played all different types of stuff. Henry and his mom went to Legoland and his mom was nice like she always is. When he came home, he played games with Sarah. The End."

You will learn about the things your children hold in by giving them permission to let it out. Storytelling develops your child's language and literacy skills and can also be a helpful emotional tool. This is not the time to worry about grammar, or even the story making sense. Just write down the story as your child tells it.

Today, ask your child to tell you a story. Tell them one back! Telling stories outloud is a precurser to developing a life long habit of keeping a journal.

The object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful. -Socrates









My World Book: Most young children know how to work a smartphone camera even if these items are off limits in your home. For this activity, allow your child to use the camera on your phone to take pictures of the world as they see it. Print these pictures off on a color printer or at a local photo shop. Invite your child to create a book from these pictures and include a title and a story to compliment the photos. Making a book like this would be a wonderful "First Month of School" tradition. You can save these keepsakes and marvel at the changes in your child and their world.

You can purchase pre-made blank books from The Homegrown Preschooler or make your own from construction paper or cardstock.

Print Rich Environment: Creating a print rich environment in your home is a great way to connect real item with the written word. Label everything. Some items you might consider labeling are the window, door, light, table, and mirror. We suggest using sentence strip to print the name of the item. It is important that preschoolers see properly formed letters. Your preschooler can decide where to place the sentence strip and help you secure the label to the item. This will ensure that the label is at your child's eye level. Label 10 things in your child's world this month.

Math and Manipulatives

For preschoolers, there are several dimensions of math we want to focus on and these include more than just numbers!

1. One to One correspondence - the number "2" represents two objects which is more than one and less than three.
2. Geometry - unique features of patterns and shapes
3. Measurement - size, distance, amount
4. Quantity Relationships - more than, less than, equal to
5. Spatial Relationships - near, far, in front of, behind, on top of
6. Basic Computation - 3 + 2 = 5 and 4+1 = 5

Preschoolers learn math by doing. Watch them, and see how often they use and express mathematical concepts. Point these concepts out whenever you can. COUNT EVERYTHING! Our children have enjoyed counting everything from steps, to carrots on their plate, to cars driving by. Lesli remembers being frustrated by her first preschooler wanting to stop and count bricks when they were in a hurry. She wishes she had slowed down and encouraged the counting instead of constantly rushing. Something interesting that researchers have recently discovered is that preschoolers learn math skills in a non-linear fashion. Unlike reading and literacy skills which are formed in a block upon block fashion, math skills are learned in more of a jigsaw puzzle fashion, with preschoolers putting in the pieces as they acquire them, in no particular order, but putting together a complete set of skills over a period of time.

Count and Swing: Make a point of going outside and swinging on a swing. Swinging is a valuable activity that benefits the vestibular system and helps the brain to process all types of input. When Lesli's special needs child was recovering, he engaged in all kinds of learning activities on a large platform swing, because it gave his brain an added boost. Swinging is equally beneficial for the typical child. As you swing your child, count with them. Older children can even learn to start skip counting by 2's! Since we are talking about swinging, we often get asked how to teach children to get the concept of swinging themselves. At the Lee house, they always sing a made up song called, *Out and Under* that is helpful in accomplishing that goal.

> Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone. -Fred Rogers







DIY Spindlebox: Glue tin cans to a piece of scrap wood. Number the cans from 1-10. Present this to your child and help them count out the right number of objects to put into the cans. We started with sticks so they could see them sticking out. You can switch this activity up by using rocks. Children love the clanging sound as they drop the rocks in.

Shape Making: Make popsicle stick shapes by offering 4 sticks of the same color for a square, 3 shapes of the same color for a triangle, and so on. By just giving them the proper number of sides, they can make their own shapes. You can write the names on the sticks with a sharpie if you like. Throughout the day, point out shapes everywhere.

3 sides = triangle
4 sides = square
5 sides = pentagon
6 sides = hexagon
7 sides = heptagon
8 sides = octagon









Nature Math Book: Go out into the yard and collect some natural materials. Look for things like leaves, flowers, sticks and sweet gum balls. Make a book and either take a picture and print a photo of the object, or have your child draw it. You can rub leaves with a crayon. Then ask your child some math questions.....

How many leaves does it have?

How big is it?

What shape do you see?

How many petals does it have?

For each object, record a math fact under the picture of that object.

Here we've used our homemade books that you can purchase on our website, but you can easily make your own!

Arithmetic is being able to count to twenty without taking off your shoes.

-Mickey Mouse

Water Bottle Marble Game: We used mini water bottles to make a DIY fine motor activity. Let your child move marbles into the bottles with a spoon. You can also let them use large beans with tweezers.





SCIENCE AND SENSORY

We are often asked the purpose of sensory/science for young children. The minute a child engages in a sensory activity, neurons in the brain fire up and form synapsis. As the brain pathways open, more complex learning can take place. In addition, sensory encourages children to explore, investigate and create. It is often the one thing that will calm a frustrated or angry child. Sensory is one of the most important experiences for any preschooler.





There are children playing in the streets who could solve some of my top problems in physics, because they have modes of sensory perception that I lost long ago. -J. Robert Oppenheimer

The Tools are Telling: Give your child nature journals, binoculars, collection boxes, magnifying glasses and oodles of crayons and colored pencils. Their experience with beauty needs to be very concrete at this age. Everything needs to be items that they can hold and touch. Start in your backyard. When God wanted Adam to take dominion over the living things in the garden, what did He ask him to do first? Name them. For your preschooler, the grammar of his science education at this stage comes from naming things. After a child has named things, he/she has started down the path of orderly thinking about things.

Even preschoolers can use a little taste of Aristotle's Five Common Topics. We need to teach them to ask good questions from an early age.

The Five Common Topics for Preschoolers

Definition	• What is it? • What are its parts?
Comparison	• How is this flower different than that one?
Circumstances	• What is happening around it?
Relationship	• How did it get there? • What do you think about it?
Authority	• My grandmother says geraniums smell like summer.

Science and Nature Study Basket: Give your child a sense of wonder about the natural world by encouraging them to explore outside. Keep a basket near your door packed with the essentials for your budding naturalist. Children's binoculars and nature guides are great! Magnifying glasses and bug boxes are fun, too. Give your child nature journals and colored pencils or even just a clipboard and paper. Help them get to know the world that God made, and take dominion over it, by naming all of the plants and animals in your yard.



DIY Pendulum: Use wood or PVC pipe to make your own pendulum and let your child build block towers and knock them down. Using a pendulum is a fun process of trial and error and experimentation for preschoolers. The process is not nearly as obvious to them as it is to us, yet they will still delight in using it to knock down their creations.





Invitation to Play: Herbal Tea Play Dough

Day 1: Set out some plastic animals and bugs with some of our herbal play dough.

Day 2: Set out some interesting natural items from your child's world along with some of our wonderful herbal play dough. Some ideas might be sweet gum balls, shells, sticks, leaves, rocks, and pinecones.

Day 3: Set out the play dough flattened into a circle shape in a cake pan.

Give an assortment of colored glass beads and let them make a design.

Show them some pictures of mandalas for inspiration.

Herbal Tea Play Dough

4 herbal tea bags
2 cups of water
2 cups white flour
1/2 cup salt
4 tablespoons cream of tartar
1 tablespoon oil

To Make Dough: Boil 2 cups of water and steep tea bags for 10 minutes. Remove tea bags. Add flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil to the pan. Cook and stir over medium heat for about 2-3 minutes. When it forms a ball in the center of the pot, turn out and knead on lightly floured surface. Tear open tea bags, and knead tea leaves into dough.

Note: Depending on the tea bags you choose, your tea will have a lovely color. We used Vanilla Chai for ours, which smells delicious and homey and has a natural color for our invitation to play with things outside.



















Pond Play: In one of our sensory tubs, we made a pond with green and blue water beads. We added some lily pads cut from craft foam and some turtles and frogs. In the second sensory tub, we added ice and blue watercolor. We invited the children to experience and discover in our pond. To extend this activity, try moving the materials to a light table. A light table is a wonderful tool for preschoolers. We made our own at home, and you can find the instructions in our book, The Homegrown Preschooler.

My World Nesting Set: Using tin cans graduated in size, make a nesting set from your child's world. We spray painted our cans for fun, and then added pictures of the earth, our country, our state, our city, our house, and our child's room.

ART AND MUSIC

Art for the preschooler should be a time of self-expression. One of our favorite sayings when referring to art for a preschooler is, "It is the **process**, not the **product**". We know your preschooler will enjoy these process oriented art experiences.

DIY Outdoor Weaving Loom: Use an old picture frame with chicken wire to make a loom outdoors. Let your preschoolers weave natural materials or give them a basket of fabric scraps. This is a great invitation to play to leave under a tree to be explored.

















BIG Painting: Take a long piece of butcher or wrapping paper and tape it to your driveway or sidewalk. Squirt some washable tempera paint into a disposable aluminum pan. Let your child be creative and see what he can use to paint. Rolling different kinds of textured balls is fun! Giant Duplo blocks, trucks and cars make great tracks. One of the Lee's favorite big items to paint with are knee high stockings filled with sand. After you fill the bottom of the stocking with sand, tie a knot in the top. Dip the sand ball into the paint and drop it on the paper, it makes a beautiful print. When you are done, let the painting dry and use it for colorful gift wrap.

Clay Tree Faces: Use modeling clay to make faces for the trees in your yard! Take a large hunk of modeling clay and squish it onto a tree trunk at your child's eye-level. Let them make facial features by squishing and sculpting, and adding in natural materials to make hair, eyelashes, whiskers....whatever they desire! This is a fun activity for the whole family and really makes your yard a wondrous place!











Dale Chiluly Art Study: Da1e Chiluly is one of Lesli's favorite artists. His glass sculptures grace botanical gardens and museums all over the world. He has a collection of glass bowls called "The Macchia Bowls" that are just breathtaking. Do a google image search and show your children some of the bowls before starting this project!

Inspired by Dale Chiluly's Macchia Bowls, we decided to make our own. Use large white coffee filters and let the children paint them with liquid watercolor. Next, spray them with liquid starch. Drape over jar or bottle until they dry! We sprayed several coats of starch on ours. Once their masterpiece is dry, you can serve your preschoolers snacks in their very own Chiluly bowl.







Salt and Mirror Art: One of our best play tools has been a "back of the door" type long mirror with a thin frame. We like to lay this flat on the table and let our preschoolers explore different kinds of art. It allows another dimension for their little brains to process! Use table salt and pour a long river of salt out onto the mirror. Provide small cups of liquid water colors with droppers for them to add color to the salt. Don't forget to take pictures of the fun! When they are done, you can take it outside and scrape it off into the trash can. The rest of the mess should vacuum or sweep up easily.

He's Got the Whole World In His Hands: Teach your child the song "He's Got the Whole World In His Hands" this month. Lyrics and music can be found on The Homegrown Preschooler's YouTube Channel.

Let your child drop green and blue liquid watercolor over a round coffee filter to make a "world". This makes a beautiful suncatcher in your window.







Gross Motor and Outside

A young child is rapidly growing and needs to move their muscles to aid in this process. The best place for young learners to really work their bodies is outside. In addition to the outdoors being full of wonder, there are many places to climb, run, jump, skip, hop, and roll. Thinking back to your childhood, where did you like to spend your days? We bet most of you would say outside. Don't withhold this type of childhood experience from your little one. Make the outdoors accessible and give permission to go outside often.



Ball Skills: Ball skills are important activities for preschoolers to master. Sometimes we are guilty of thinking that only boys are interested in playing ball. This is not true! Ball skills are a necessary activity for ALL children despite their ability or interest level. Ball skills help address bilateral planning, hand-eye coordination, timing, motor-planning, and attention. Plus, it's just plain fun. We will work on lots of ball skills throughout the year. Here is a basic checklist so you can have a ballpark (like the pun?) idea of what ball skills to expect from your toddler/preschooler. Please keep in mind that all children develop differently. Sometimes connections in the brain are made literally overnight and a child who struggles in an area will suddenly be able to conquer an obstacle without difficulty. The most important thing is to keep trying and working those big muscles!

> Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth.
>
> -Walt Whitman

What to expect: Up to two: By two years of age, a child can roll a ball back and forth on the floor. Usually a child under two can "walk into" a ball but it usually isn't a real kick.

Game: It's fun to sit open-legged with your child feet to feet, and roll a ball back and forth. We like to count the rolls together while doing this. Positioning yourself this way means the ball won't roll away and cause frustration.

24-36 months: A child can usually swing his leg to kick a ball by about 30 months of age. Children this age will try to throw a ball overhand but may not be very accurate.





Squish the Bug: Cut a bug shape out of some craft paper and place it on the ground. Have your child plant his non-kicking foot on the bug, and kick the ball as hard as they can. Let them try this a few times and see how far they can kick the ball. Treat every kick with great fanfare and try to get them to kick it even farther! Your enthusiasm will delight your child. This simple activity helps preschoolers learn to actually plant one foot on the ground and kick with a full range of motion.

3-4 years: A child at this stage can kick a ball easily, throw a ball overhand and catch a bounced ball most of the time.

Hit the Hula Hoop: Stand a few feet away from your child and have them try tossing balls and beanbags of different sizes into a hula hoop. Keep backing farther and farther away. See how far you can get! Then let your child hold the hula hoop and try to catch your balls with it!

4-5 years: Ball play becomes more intentional. Children are more capable of throwing and kicking balls and getting them to go where they want them to.

Wonder-Ball: This is a great family game....Stand in a small circle and say "The Wonder-Ball goes round and round...Do not let it touch the ground!" Practice tossing the ball in the small circle from family member to family member. Your circle can get bigger as skills improve.

Outdoor Obstacle Course: When Lesli was a child, she grew up in Northern California and would often go camping in the mountains. One of her favorite things to do was to jump from rock to rock or walk across the giant trunks of fallen trees. While some are lucky enough to live in places that already have these wonderful natural playgrounds, most of us need to re-create this! Ask your friends if any of them have had trees removed and gather up some of the logs. Set them into the ground and create a place for your child to hop around from log to log. Long logs make wonderful natural balance beams. If city living doesn't allow for this, take your child on a hike and try to find some of these natural climbing opportunities to take advantage of.

Spin-a-Thon: Children love to spin around! Every time your child spins around, his/her brain is collecting information about what it means to be in balance. The neurons in the brain are also building connections. This is a valuable meaningful activity! Practice spinning around with your child until you all fall down and giggle. Vary it throughout the month by adding music. Go outside and spin on green grass and add the sensory experience of falling down and looking up at the clouds. Let yourself go and have fun laughing with your children.



Doggy Doggy Where's Your Bone? Preschoolers love to find things and this is a great way to burn off some excess energy. We made a bone out of a pool noodle (you can also purchase a large dog bone from the pet store) and used it to hide in our back yard. The size of the "pool noodle bone" made it easy to spot for our little ones. You can vary your hiding place and difficulty based on the age and ability of your child. Have your child curl up and pretend to be a sleeping doggy with their eyes closed. Place the noodle somewhere in your backyard and then say:

Doggy, Doggy, where's your bone?
Somebody stole it from your home.
Guess who! Maybe you . . .
Maybe the monkeys from the zoo.
Wake up doggy, find your bone.

Your child will love running to get the bone! Take turns being the doggy!



Movement Co-op Day: Plan a day with a few other preschool moms where you each plan and bring the supplies for an outdoor gross motor activity. Meet at a local park or someone's backyard for a mini field day. This is a great way to get a little "mom" socialization AND learn some new fun games. Check the THGPreschooler Pinterest Page for some great ideas. Don't forget the juice boxes and muffins for a real party! Consider making this a monthly activity.





FIELD TRIPS

News Station: The Local News Station is a place where your community is discussed on a daily basis. Most news stations are happy to schedule a field trip for your family. When you get home, have your children create their own news show. You can take them through hair and makeup and even video their episode. Don't forget to send a thank you note to the news station for taking time with your family. Have your child decorate the note to add a personal touch.

Grocery Store: If your family is like ours, you tend to shop at the same stores each week. Your local grocery store or farmer's market is a great field trip for your family. Helping your child understand how food gets to the table is valuable information. To make it more personal, invite your child to create a dinner menu and shopping list. You can shop for the needed items and cook dinner together.

When night comes and retrospect shows that everything was patchwork and much which one had planned left undone, when so many things rouse shame and regret, then take it all as it is, lay it in God's hands and offer it up to Him. In this way we will be able to rest in Him. Actually to rest. And to begin a new day like a new life.

-Edith Stein

September Supply List

Hot Air Balloon Snack
- Bananas
- Strawberries
- Celery
- Popcorn
- Graham Crackers
- Grapes
- String Cheese

Manners Book
- Blank Books from THGP (or Paper, Hole Puncher, Ring)
- Magazines
- Crayons/Colored Pencils/Markers
- Glue
- Scissors

Name Letter Museum
- Cardboard Letters
- Modge Podge
- Foam Brush
- Items that begin with each letter of your child's name

My World Book
- Camera phone or Other Camera
- Printer
- Scissors
- THGPreschooler Blank Books (or Paper, Hole Puncher, Ring)
- Glue

Print Rich Environment
- Sentence Strip
- Tape

Letter Stones
- River Rocks

DIY Spindle
- Tin Cans
- River Rocks
- Glue
- Sticks

Shape Making
- Popsicle Sticks
- Colored Masking Tape
- Pipe Cleaners
- Foam Pieces

DIY Pendulum
- PVC Pipes

Herbal Play Dough
- 4 Herbal Tea Bags
- 2 Cups of Water
- 2 Cups White Flour
- 1/2 Cup Salt
- 4 Tablespoons Cream of Tartar
- 1 Tablespoon Oil

Pond Play
- Ice
- Blue Watercolor
- Blue and Green Water Beads
- Plastic Frogs and Other Pond Life

My World Nesting Set
- Graduated Sizes of Tin Cans
- Spray Paint
- Variety of Pictures

September Supply List

Weaving Loom
- Large Picture Frame
- Chicken Wire
- Large Fabric Strips
- Variety of Natural Materials

BIG Painting
- Butcher Paper
- Tempera Paint
- Aluminum Pan
- Knee High Hose
- Sand
- Balls
- Trucks
- Large Blocks

Clay Tree Faces
- Natural Clay
- Water
- Sticks
- Leaves
- Variety of Natural Items

Dale Chiluly Art Study
- White Coffee Filters
- Watercolor
- Spray Starch
- Pippettes

Salt and Mirror Art
- Wall Mirror
- Salt
- Variety of Watercolor
- Droppers or Pipettes

Ball Skills
- Balls
- Hula Hoop
- Construction Paper

Doggy, Doggy Where's Your Bone
- Pool Noodle 0r Dog Bone

Movement Co-op Day
- Supplies for each activity (Plan with other moms and create list)

September Memories

September
Daily Planning

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