

ACTIVITY BASKET: “Play Together” Activities

Monster, May I?

This silly variation on the old-fashioned game “Mother, May I” is a great way to practice the locomotor skills learned in the Pre-K EZ Activity #3.

Materials:

Monster costume accessories (silly, not scary!) — for example, a hat with googly eyes or monster horns — that’s easy to take on and off.

Assume the role of Monster yourself for the first round, to show how it’s done. Have the children line up 10–15 feet away, facing you.

Now give instructions for movements, taking care to balance the different types of locomotor movements.

“Take 8 monster steps.”

“Take 7 lizard leaps.”

“Take 6 dinosaur stomps.”

“Take 5 bunny hops.”

“Take 4 baby steps backward.”

“Slide to the side 3 times.”

“Buzz like a bee around in a circle 2 times.”

Before following the instructions, the child must ask, “Monster, may I?”

Monster responds with, “Yes, you may” and then the child follows the steps.

If a child forgets to ask, “Monster, may I?” he or she goes back to the starting line.

Play again and again and make up new moves as you go along. Be sure to ask your preschoolers for suggestions!

Jump the Creek!

This simple game is a great way for kids to practice hopping and jumping — locomotor activities that build leg muscles, gross motor skills and strong bones. Since it requires minimal materials (a roll of masking tape or a few pieces of rope), it’s an easy go-to game when kids have extra energy to release!

Instructions:

Use masking tape or rope to make a line on the floor. Tell kids to use their imaginations and pretend this is a small creek (a tiny river of water). Now practice hopping back and forth over the creek. What is a hop? Think of a bunny hop—which is like a tiny jump.

Now add a second line of tape or rope. Make it parallel to the first, 6-12 inches apart, depending on the age of your preschoolers. Tell kids to use their imaginations and pretend this is a rolling river. To cross the river, kids must JUMP!

Show kids how to jump:

- Bend knees, spring off on two feet and swing your arms forward when you jump...then
 - Land on two feet, with knees bent and feet spread shoulder width apart
- Now set up a course with several “creeks” and “rivers” to cross throughout your room or outdoor space.

Kids’ Corral

Materials:

- Kitchen brooms (child-size if available)
- Dress-up clothes: Cowboy hats, bandanas, vests, etc.
- Cones, etc. for obstacle course
- Music player

Calling all cowgirls and cowboys! Grab a cowboy hat if you have one and a small broom and get ready to gallop and rustle around on your “horse.” Don’t have a broom? Use your imagination! Galloping is a key locomotor skill that combines a step and a leap. Preschoolers usually master this before skipping, but only after practice.

Instructions:

Practice galloping around your room or outdoor space, and give kids some help if they don’t get the hang of it at first. Once they’re ready, have kids ride a broom of their own (or an invisible horse if you don’t have a broom) and gallop away! Play some upbeat Country & Western music to get kids in the spirit.

For a challenge, set up an obstacle course with traffic cones and other markers and pretend you’re at a horse show. Gallop through the course, following zigzag patterns, turns and small jumps for older preschoolers.

Scarf Dancing

Materials:

- Scarves, handkerchiefs, bandanas or pieces of fabric
- Music player and a variety of songs
- Computer and Internet to research multicultural dances and music

Dance is a great aerobic activity and a good way to develop gross motor skills and physical coordination. Adding a prop like scarves provides an extra dimension for creative expression and is a simple way to keep kids interested and engaged. The longer they dance, the better!

Have the children begin by mimicking your dance moves. Then encourage them to dance freely, making up creative movements with their bodies and scarves as they listen to different types of music.

Play clips of songs with different tempos, rhythms and moods and encourage children to make creative movements with the scarves as they dance along. Start with a fun upbeat song clip and demonstrate how to dance along with the beat. Then switch to song that's slower and more flowing and follow along with swishing, fluttering and floating scarves.

How about an American cowboy/cowgirl dance? Put on some Country & Western music, twirl scarves in circles overhead and make lasso motions on your imaginary ranch while galloping around the room.

Now choose a different music style from a different country. Try African drum music and have kids dance with their scarves to the beat. Each time you do this activity, try two different styles of music from two different countries.

Extension:

Research different scarf dances from different countries and try simplified versions with your preschoolers. There are traditional scarf dances from West Africa, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Greece, and many parts of the Middle East. Find a wide range of different styles of music to broaden children's horizons, challenge their listening skills and encourage an interest in dance and creative movement.

There's a Bear!

This is a very simple game involving walking and running, and therefore best done outside. It can be done in 5 minutes or 15 minutes, with two children or a dozen.

Take a walk and tell children you're going on a "bear hunt." Tell them that they should walk, not run, EXCEPT if you spot a bear. Ask for a volunteer to help you role-play as you explain how it's done.

Instructions:

Go for a walk in a field, park, back yard or small open space. Walk for a minute or so and then say "There's a bear!" Children say, "Where?"

You point and say, "Over there!"

Now the children RUN in the other direction until you yell "STOP."

You can say, "Sorry, that was only a [fill in the blank with a different small animal each time, e.g., chipmunk, mouse, salamander, etc.]

Now all must walk until the next time you spot a bear!

Let's Play Ball!

Materials:

- Recycled newspapers
- Cardboard paper towel tubes
- Masking tape and duct tape

Make your own balls and bats using recycled paper and paper towel tubes. Go green, get crafty and use your imaginations!

To make a bat:

Have kids tear up small pieces of newspaper and stuff them into cardboard tubes. Now tape two stuffed tubes together and secure with duct tape. Tape both ends as well to keep the newspaper stuffed inside.

To make a ball:

Have kids crumple newspaper pieces into the size and shape of a softball. Go round and round the ball with masking tape until strong and secure.

Now play ball!

Take Five!

Have five minutes to spare while transitioning between activities? Are preschoolers feeling antsy or looking like they need a pick-me-up? Tell them it's a good time to "Take Five!" Now lead them through 5 repetitions of some quick activities like:

- 5 Jumping Jacks
- 5 Toe Touches
- 5 Squats
- 5 Hops
- Reach to the sky 5 times!

Have them count along as they do these and then repeat! Or let them choose to run in place for the remainder of the 5 minutes.

5. ACTIVITY BASKET: "Eat Together" Activities

Let's Play Store!

Materials:

- Toy shopping cart or basket
- Toy cash register or shoe box
- Small bags (paper, plastic and/or reusable)
- Grocery items (whatever you can find in your pantry and fridge!)
- Play money (or use imaginary money)
- Construction paper or labels and marker

For this game you can use real food or play food and make it as simple or involved as you like, based on the developmental readiness of the children in your group. Take your cues from the kids and let them drive the process.

Preparation:

- Categorize the food into the 5 food groups: Fruits, Vegetables, Protein, Grains and Dairy.
- Group them together on shelves or on a table and make big labels each group. You may also make labels for each food item or a select few like Apple, Bread, Corn (All preschool-age children benefit from a print-rich environment, even if they're not starting to read!)
- Set up a checkout station with your cash register (or shoe box) and shopping bags.

Instructions:

Start by making a shopping list. Ask kids to help with suggestions for each of the food groups, or for each meal of the day. Remind the class about the importance of eating a balance of foods from the 5 food groups each day.

Now you can all go “shopping” in your store! Take turns playing checkout clerk and bagger. Based on the number of children in your group, decide how you’d like to divide up the shopping list. Improvise and have some fun!

Grocery Store Guessing Game

This easy game requires minimal props and preparation and can be done anywhere, anytime and with any size group. Ask children to stick to food products, but there are no right or wrong answers!

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells something RED.

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells something ORANGE.
(Continue with YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, PURPLE and WHITE.)

Variations:

Each time a food item is named, draw or place a picture of it up on a wall or board for all to see. No item may be named twice!

Play this in connection with the “Let’s Play Store!” activity above. Keep your store set up for a week or more for free play time and use it to play games like the “Grocery Store Guessing Game” as well. For this variation, sit in a circle on the floor and play the game. The child who guesses an item correctly goes to the “store,” fetches the item, and brings it back to the circle.

For older preschoolers: Play the game in the style of the “I’m Going on a Camping Trip” game, in which each item must be remembered and repeated. For example:

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells RED APPLES.

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells RED APPLES and ORANGE MANGOES.

My grandfather has a grocery store and in it he sells RED APPLES, ORANGE MANGOES and GREEN GRAPES.

Let’s Play Restaurant!

Materials:

- Play food: Plastic fruits, vegetables, bread, meat, fish, poultry; you may also borrow real food from your own fridge or pantry!
- Miscellaneous: Cooking utensils, notepad and pencil, dishes, table napkins, silk flowers, old sheets for tablecloth, salt and pepper shakers—whatever you can find!

- Dress-up clothes (optional): White shirt and bow tie, apron, fancy clothes, jewelry and hats for customers, purse or wallet
- MyPlate template printouts (one per “customer”)

Preparation:

Place a sheet or tablecloth on a table, then set place settings for each “customer.” At each place, set a [MyPlate template](#) printout with a fork and napkin on the left and knife and spoon on the right.

Instructions:

Have children take turns playing waiter/waitress, bus boy/girl, and customer. If you have dress-up clothes, let the kids get creative! If you have a range of ages, consider having older preschoolers wait tables, while younger ones bus tables and assist. If you have mainly younger

preschoolers, have them take turns being customers and bus boys/girls while you play the waiter/waitress.

Now take turns playing waiter/waitress. Demonstrate first by going through the steps start to finish. Explain that it is the dinner hour in your restaurant, and that you will be serving a full menu of foods from the 5 food groups. They may repeat the same options that you say below in your demonstration, or they may use different ones in those food group categories.

First, introduce yourself:

Hello, I’m [your name] and I’ll be your waiter/waitress this evening.

Then ask:

[start with protein]: *Would you like beef, chicken, fish or beans?*

[then vegetables]: *Would you like carrots or corn?*

[then fruit]: *Would you like applesauce or grapes?*

[then grains]: *Would you like rice or bread?*

[then dairy]: *Would you like milk to drink?*

Next you can prepare, fetch and serve the food; ask the customer if they’d like ketchup or mustard, salt or pepper; clear the table; ask if they’d like dessert [“Our choices are frozen yogurt or fruit!”]; and then bring a check.

This is also a great way to teach grace and courtesy lessons. Model how to say “please” and “thank you” each step of the way.

Paper Plate Pizza

Materials:

- Paper plates (preferably uncoated)
- Red paint and paint brushes
- Tissue paper (different colors: white, yellow, green, red, brown, black)
- Scissors
- Bowls for cut-up tissue paper

Instructions:

- Fold tissue paper into several layers and then cut it up into tiny squares. Do this yourself in advance, or let children do the cutting with child-safe scissors.
- Place tissue squares into bowls, one color per bowl, to represent pizza toppings (yellow for cheese, green for green peppers, white for onions, red for red peppers or cherry tomatoes, brown for mushrooms or meat, black for black olives)
- Take a white paper plate and paint it with red paint. This is your tomato sauce.
- Now sprinkle this with “cheese” (yellow or white tissue paper squares).
- Now choose some toppings like “green peppers” and “brown meat” and “black olives.”
- That’s it! For more fun, you may also play “Pretend Pizza Parlor” and serve your creations to customers (other children or stuffed animals); use a toy phone to take orders; and have a delivery person drive pizzas for extra speedy service!

Extension:

Help children make their mini pizzas for a snack after his activity. Use whole-grain English muffins or pitas and low-fat mozzarella cheese, along with their choice of various toppings.

Rainbow Pops:

In this activity, kids make fruit “lollipops” with a variety of fruits in a variety of colors. They learn about the range of available fruits, the value of eating a balanced variety, and take away an important lesson — that fruit is sweet and tasty.

Talking Points:

It’s good to eat many different types of foods.

When it comes to fruits and vegetables, it’s good to eat many different colors as well!

Fruits and vegetables come in different colors. Which colors? (For simplicity, stick to 5 main color groups: Red, Yellow/Orange, Green, Blue/Purple and White)

It’s good to eat a many different colors of fruits and vegetables—like a rainbow!

Materials and Ingredients:

- Select a range of fruits, as least one of each color:
 - o RED strawberries, watermelon, red apples, red grapes
 - o YELLOW/ORANGE mangoes, papayas, oranges, cantaloupe, peaches, nectarines, pineapple
 - o GREEN kiwifruit, green grapes, green apples, green pears, honeydew
 - o BLUE/PURPLE blackberries, blueberries, purple grapes, plums, raisins
 - o WHITE bananas, white nectarines, white peaches, brown pears
- “Lollipop” Sticks: thin pretzel sticks, popsicle sticks, flat toothpicks, recycled straws or coffee stirrers all work

Instructions:

- Let kids do as much of the hands-on prep work as possible, including washing, peeling and slicing fruits with a blunt knife. Do small things to make it easier for them to do tasks all by themselves, as this is a critical part of the activity. For instance:
- Cut off the tips off of bananas (or make a slip halfway through the tips) to make them easier for kids to peel.
- Open a can of pineapple slices and place slices into a bowl so kids can serve themselves with a fork and then chop them into chunks themselves with a blunt knife.
- To make a “lollipop,” poke a toothpick or other “stick” into a piece of fruit, then pick it up and eat!
- Demonstrate how to use smaller sticks with smaller fruit (like a blueberry on a toothpick) and bigger sticks with bigger fruit (like a melon chunk on a popsicle stick).

Soup’s On!

Let kids help prepare a pot of vegetable soup and then sit down and enjoy a bowl of it all together. It’s often surprising to see all the different vegetables children will try when they make a recipe themselves! There are numerous benefits for preschoolers. Washing, peeling and chopping vegetables develops hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills, and cooking a recipe from start to finish builds confidence in one’s abilities.

This “recipe” is not much of a recipe at all, as the point is for preschool-age cooks to make it up as they go along!

Ingredients:

- 2 quarts of chicken broth (or use stock cubes and water)

- 1 cup dried alphabet pasta or macaroni
- fresh and frozen vegetables
- mini soup crackers

Begin by preparing a variety of vegetables. Allow kids to do as much of the prep work as possible while you demonstrate and supervise. For instance:

- Sweet potatoes: adults peel with vegetable peeler and dice
- Carrots: adults peel with vegetable peeler and cut with blunt kitchen knife
- Green beans: kids wash, then snip off ends with child-size scissors, then cut in half with a blunt knife
- Frozen peas: kids measure in small measuring cups and pour into the pot

Do you have a vegetable from every color group? A can of diced tomatoes and some chopped purple cabbage added to the ingredients above would make a complete rainbow! Let kids

choose which vegetables to add, and how much of each. Put bigger chunks in first, since they will take longer to cook. Simmer soup for 20 minutes and add frozen peas during the last 5 minutes.

Multicultural Variations:

Research ingredients and recipes from other parts of the world and add some multicultural soup recipes to your repertoire. Ideas:

- Asian: chicken broth, ramen noodles (discard seasoning packet), bok choy, napa cabbage, green onions
- African: chicken broth, a can of unsweetened coconut milk, sweet potatoes, and a few tablespoons of peanut butter*
- Mexican: chicken broth, green peppers, tomatoes, corn, canned black beans (let kids mash the beans with a fork instead of pureeing them)

Book---Based Variations:

Read the picture book *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert and then make a pot of soup, using the same ingredients used in the book: carrots, green beans, peas, tomatoes, zucchini, corn and potatoes. There's even a recipe included at the end of the book.

Read the book *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown and then act out the story and make a pot of soup, using the same ingredients used in the book. The story adds the benefit of identifying the vegetables by color. You can follow the recipe in the book and then improvise to update it.

"So far we have" . . .

- orange carrots
- purple cabbage
- white potatoes

“What other ingredients can we add? Which colors are we missing? Maybe we could add” . . .

- yellow onions or corn
- green beans or peas
- red peppers or tomatoes

For this cooking activity, you could ask each child to bring in an ingredient or ask them to help you make a shopping list. For a super-quick activity, shop for ingredients and cook them in advance. Then give each child an ingredient to add to the pot of broth. Encourage them to taste a piece of each ingredient before adding it to the soup.

If you don't have the book, you can show a video version before or while eating soup:

Stone Soup, classic 1947 version by Marcia Brown:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trbHdayluLA>

Stone Soup, contemporary retelling by David Cullen: <https://vimeo.com/8671479>

Afterward, you can get up and dance— just like in the story! Then you can take nap, just like the soldiers in their lofts. The end!

EZ Recipes

Here are some fun recipes, simple enough for preschoolers to make with minimal help from an adult.

Homemade Applesauce

4 apples

1/2 cup apple juice

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

- Peel and core the apples yourself, then cut them into slices.
- Let children cut the slices into chunks, using a blunt knife.
- Put the apples apple juice into a pan and let each child give the apples a stir with a wooden spoon.
- Cook on medium heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
- Stir in cinnamon and remove from heat.

- Now you can all clean up while the applesauce cools for 10 minutes. Fill a wash pan with warm water and a tiny bit of soap and let the preschoolers wash the blunt knives and the cutting board with sponges; let them wipe off the table or counter.
- Let children give the cooked mixture a stir. How did the apples change when they cooked?
- Serve in small bowls and enjoy warm. Or refrigerate for snack time later in the day.

Cookie-Cutter Sandwiches

- Several slices of soft, whole-grain bread
- Assortment of sandwich fillings: peanut butter*, cream cheese, American cheese slices, deli ham slices
- Condiments like honey, jelly, mayonnaise, mustard
- Cookie cutters
- Blunt knives

This simple activity is a good way to get children accustomed to the taste of whole-grain bread. The focus is more on the process of making one's own sandwich, and the fun of making them into different shapes.

Note: Choose large cookie cutters so kids don't waste too much of their sandwiches! If you have a group of tough customers accustomed to white bread, try a special treat like chocolate-hazelnut spread* on whole-grain bread, or a "fluffernutter" — peanut butter* and marshmallow cream on whole-grain bread.

Go Bananas!

See how many creative recipes you can come up with for this one favorite fruit.

Banana Lollipops

Slice a banana into 1/2 inch rounds and insert a toothpick or thin pretzel stick into each one. Voila!

Pudding Parfait

Make instant vanilla pudding with low-fat milk. Serve a portion to each child in a clear plastic cup (8 oz. or smaller) and let each child make their own parfait with sliced bananas and crumbled whole-grain graham crackers. Whipped cream optional!

Frozen Banana Pops

Cut bananas into 2-inch chunks and insert a toothpick into each chunk. Arrange toothpick side up on a foil or parchment-lined tray and freeze for 2 hours.

Now melt some chocolate chips in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat in microwave for 10–20 seconds at a time, stirring frequently until smooth. Dip each banana chunk in the melted chocolate, and then roll in chopped walnuts or almonds. Eat right away for freeze.

Banana Sandwich

Let kids make their own open-face sandwich, using bananas and a few other ingredients to decorate. Spread whole-grain bread with peanut butter (or sunflower butter or soy nut butter) and make a design. For example:

Clown: a row of banana slices for hair, raisins for eyes, a red strawberry for a nose and an apple slice for a mouth.

Reindeer: make antlers with pretzels, use raisins for eyes and a red grape for a nose

6: Wrap-Up Party!

Why not throw a simple party for your last EZ session? It can be a two-person or a 20-person party, and kids can serve each other or invite stuffed animals as their guests!

Pick a creative theme like:

- Teddy Bear Tea Party or
- Brontosaurus Brunch (Plant---eaters only!)

Or eat in a pretend restaurant like the

- Dinosaur Diner or
- Busy Bee Bakery (serve whole-grain bread and crackers with spreads and honey)
- Rainbow Restaurant (serve fruits and vegetables from all colors of the rainbow)

Party Time

Serve EZ snacks from your favorite recipes and activities from this unit. Ask kids to vote! You can also ask them to vote for their favorite fruits and vegetables, write the names on a whiteboard, and put a star next to each vote. Then serve them in a small tray as an appetizer, along with chunks of cheese.

Have kids help with the cleanup!

Play Time

After cleanup, ask a question:

Now put on some music and have everyone dance! Or you may lead a few rounds of Follow the Leader around the room or outdoor space. If preschoolers are sleepy, keep it short and then lie down and take a nap!

7. Certificate of Achievement

You're the bee's knees! Customize and print this certificate to congratulate your preschoolers when they complete the Enrichment Zone!

[SEE NEXT PAGE]

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT
Congratulations!

name of student

has successfully completed The Enrichment Zone Program! You have learned all about making healthy decisions for a more active, healthy lifestyle.

Date: _____

Signed:

SMART FROM THE START
HEALTHY DECISIONS. HEALTHY HABITS.

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