

Vroom Tips™



These print-at-home tip sheets include a mix of Vroom Brain Building Activities™ for children ages 0-5. Share them, put them up on your fridge, or carry them around—whatever helps remind you that brain-building moments are all around you.

Brain Building Basics™

Look

Children use their eyes to learn. See what catches your child's attention and talk about it. Or connect eye-to-eye, then smile, chat, hug, or make funny faces!

Chat

Children's brains light up when you talk, sing, or make sounds back and forth with them. Chat about your day, food, and what's around you, or string sounds together for a fun conversation!

Take Turns

Children learn from taking turns when you play, talk, or explore. After they go, take your turn. Then repeat: they go, you go, they go, you go!

Stretch

Children's brains grow strong when you help them stretch their learning further. Keep a moment going: ask your child a question that starts with what, when, where, how or why!

We've made the science of early learning simple! Remember these 5 actions to help build your child's brain anytime. They're color coded for easy finding.

Follow

Young children learn best when you follow their lead. Tune into your child's words, sounds, movements and ideas! Then respond with your own words and actions.

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Sharing the Story

When you're reading with your child, let them explore it with all of their senses. Allow them to touch, pat, hold, and even taste (if it's clean) what you're reading. Describe their actions like, "You're patting the picture of the bunny."

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Children learn through touching, feeling, and putting everything into their mouths. As you talk about their world and senses, you help connect words, pictures, and objects. Plus, you're not only sharing the story, you're sharing your joy of reading with them.

#82

Learn more at vroom.org

Picture This

Do you have some books or magazines around? Show your child the pictures. They will like clear simple pictures, especially of faces. Talk with them about what you see. How do they respond? Now talk about their response!

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



One of the best ways for your child to learn about language is by looking at things with you and hearing you talk about them. When you talk back and forth with them, commenting on their responses, you build their brain!

#83

Learn more at vroom.org

Follow My Fingers

With your child on their back, fly your hand above their face. Pretend your hand is a plane, a bird, or a car. Talk about what you're doing. Tell a story, make sounds, or sing. Do they grab your fingers, watch your hands move, or kick? Try different ideas to find what they like best.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Your child is learning to pay attention and use self-control as they follow your movements. You're also helping them learn that objects can stand for other things. Your hand can be a plane or a car. This ability is important for learning to read and write later on.

#450

Learn more at vroom.org

Real Life Matchup

Match pictures to the real objects. After looking at a picture of an apple, for example, let your child touch and smell one. Describe what they're doing. "You're feeling the smooth red apple. Look, here it is in the picture!" Go back and forth and create a conversation.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Babies take in information through their senses. When you let them make connections between real objects and pictures by using their senses, you help them understand the world around them. You're also introducing them to new words in a fun way through a back-and-forth conversation.

#875

Learn more at vroom.org

It's All New

Almost everything is new to your child in their first year. So describe what you see. "There goes the yellow school bus. Beep beep!" Let them see, hear, smell, and even touch things, if possible. Notice what they're interested in and have a back-and-forth chat. "You see the big tree? What else do you see?"

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



When you chat back-and-forth with your child, you help them begin to learn words. They're making connections between words and what they represent. This is an important language skill. By responding to their interests, you're prompting them to learn more.

#876

Learn more at vroom.org

Skin Sensations

Talk to your child about how things feel on their skin: "Your shirt is soft." "The wind is cold." "The ice cube is slippery." See how they react and continue the conversation: "You like the warm water in your bath!"

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



When you talk back and forth with your child about how things feel on their skin, you're introducing them to new words and feelings. This helps make new connections, which is how they start learning to use these words themselves in the future.

#33

Learn more at vroom.org

Sound Conversations

If your child says “Ba,” repeat the sound back to them. Then add on to it, “Ba, ba, ba.” Do they try to copy your sounds? Add a new sound next, “Ba, ba, MA.” Do they notice the change? Do they try to repeat it? Go back and forth repeating each other’s sounds and building on them.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Even conversations with only sounds encourage communication by your child, using sounds and actions to talk to you. Changing the sounds helps them pay careful attention to the differences between sounds—an important step in learning to talk.

#157

Learn more at vroom.org

A Tall Tale

During a diaper change, tell your child a silly story about the tallest little child in the world. While you are at it, stretch their arms over their head as you stretch out your words in a playful tone. (The taaaaaaallest baaaaaby in the woooooorld!)

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Your voice is your child’s favorite sound. Even if they can’t talk back yet, they’re listening to your words. Stretching out your words and using a sing-song voice makes it fun. This also helps their brain connect sounds and the ways we use our mouths to make them. You may not see it, but inside their brain they are practicing talking with you.

#427

Learn more at vroom.org

Laundry Pointing

As you do laundry, let your child know what you’re doing: “I’m putting white clothes in the washer so they will be clean.” As you say the words, point to the objects (clothes, washer, soap). When they respond, continue the conversation by talking and pointing.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



You help your child learn new words by talking and pointing. Also look at what you want them to pay attention to, and then they will learn even more.

#497

Learn more at vroom.org

Sound Shopper

As you shop for groceries, point out foods you see. Play with the sounds of words as you show your child the juicy red “toe-may-toes” or the long orange “care-rot.” How do they respond? When they make a sound in response, copy it.

Suggested Age **12 months - 18 months**

Brainy Background



Your child is practicing the skill of being able to identify different sounds. This is a skill that will help them learn new words and over time be able to hear the differences in sounds.

#274

Learn more at vroom.org

Mealtime Textures

What are all of the words you can use to describe the food your child is eating? Is the banana mushy, squishy, or slippery? Are the eggs warm, crumbly, and soft? Point as you say the words and watch them respond and reply back to them.

Suggested Age **12 months - 18 months**

Brainy Background



When your child hears and sees new ways to describe their food, they’re learning new words. They are learning to think carefully about their world. This will help them communicate more effectively.

#568

Learn more at vroom.org

Food Rhymes

During meal or snacktime, create a rhyme or a rap about what your child is eating: “No slice, no dice, we eat rice!” or “You’re no rookie, eating your cookie.” They’ll enjoy the sound of the words and if they respond, make rhymes from their words too.

Suggested Age **12 months - 18 months**

Brainy Background



When your child hears you rhyming, and when you go back and forth making up more rhymes, they’re learning to listen to the sounds of words, which is critical to communicating and pre-reading skills. Making up rhymes can also make mealtimes more fun.

#1023

Learn more at vroom.org

Laundry Ins and Outs

Invite your child to help you gather dirty clothes. Put them IN the laundry basket, pull them OUT. Then put them IN the machine, and pull them OUT. Use the words IN and OUT to describe your actions and see how they learn these ideas!

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Children this age like putting things in and out of stuff. Use this interest to help you get a chore done! It also helps them learn the concepts of IN and OUT and organize their world.

#503

Learn more at vroom.org

Read to Me

Share a picture in a book, magazine, or news article with your child. Be sure to point at what you're looking at and chat about it. For example, "Look at the blue shirt the lady is wearing—I have one too!" Or, "This is a picture of diapers, like the ones you wear." Let them pick the next picture and talk about what you see together.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Around age one or later, babies start to understand that pictures represent real things. As you connect pictures and real things—especially things they know—you help them understand symbols. These chats are a critical step in learning to read later.

#848

Learn more at vroom.org

Pointer Power

While you're with your child watch what catches their eye. Point to things you see and say what they are. "There's a black bird and he's flying!" or "The little girl is jumping." Watch where they're looking and say what it is.

Suggested Age

18 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



When you describe what you see, or what your child sees, they're making connections between words and what they mean. Children who know words and what the words mean have a head start on learning.

#194

Learn more at vroom.org

Sing, Rhyme, Repeat

Help your child recognize patterns and familiar words by singing simple songs with lots of repetition or rhymes. Can't remember one? Make up your own! Encourage them to join in by repeating the words or by adding their own ideas.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



The more you sing with your child, the more they're able to predict sounds and words and join in. Songs and sound games are great for building early language and reading skills. They make connections between sounds and words and build their vocabulary in a fun and playful way.

#99

Learn more at vroom.org

Bathtime Stories

Make up a story about someone who takes a bath just like your child. You can say things like, "First, they washed their hair," while you wash their hair. Then add twist by saying, "Then they splashed in the water," and see if they splash too.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Making up stories shows your child creative ways of thinking. You are also sharing new words with them. They're learning focus and self-control as they listen closely and make connections between their body and your words.

#371

Learn more at vroom.org

Delicious Descriptions

When shopping with your child, point out what you see. Use lots of different words to talk about the taste of different foods. Maybe you could say, "There are some juicy, sweet oranges," or "I bet those yellow lemons are sour!" Follow their lead and talk about what they point and look at.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



You're building skills when you guide your child's attention and make connections between words and what they mean. They are learning important skills like focus and self-control. When you respond to a word, sound, point, or even a look, you're showing them what they "say" is important.

#288

Learn more at vroom.org

Touch Talk

Ask your child to touch the clothes you're both wearing. Talk back and forth about how they feel. You could say, "We're both wearing shirts. Mine is smooth and yours is wrinkled." Take turns using as many words as you can to describe how your clothes feel.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



This type of conversation helps your child learn how to make connections. This is the idea that that one thing (a word) can stand for other things (what they touch). You're also helping them learn new words and their meanings.

#246

Learn more at vroom.org

Shopping List Scribble

Writing a shopping list? Talk with your child about what you need. Read outloud what you write down: "Milk, eggs, cereal." Invite them to write or draw on the list too and to tell you what they're thinking about when they make those marks on the paper.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Your child is learning that the marks you both make on paper have meaning. Understanding that one thing stands for another is an important thinking skill for learning to write, read, and communicate.

#272

Learn more at vroom.org

Piece-by-Piece

Offer your child a whole fruit or vegetable, like an apple. Ask questions about what the apple looks like, feels like, and smells like before cutting it. After you cut it, talk about what you both notice. What does it look like, smell like, and feel like now? Does it always taste the same?

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



It takes flexible thinking to understand two things can look different but still be the same, like how an apple can be whole or sliced and is still an apple. This ability is important for learning and creativity. Talking back and forth is the best way to develop their language skills too!

#610

Learn more at vroom.org

Pretend Play

Here's a fun and easy way to add something new to your child's favorite song or story. Use a few familiar objects as you tell the story or sing the song. If you are outside, they can be leaves or rocks, or household items like a spoon or toy if you are inside. Pretend these things are part of your song or story. Ask your child for ideas too!

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Using pretend play helps your child learn that one thing can stand for another. Making connections and thinking creatively are part of learning to read and communicate. What else can you do to build these skills?

#703

Learn more at vroom.org

Mail Time

Talk to your child about getting mail and what it means. Then write them a note or give them a piece of junk mail or store flyer and say, "Mail Time!" After they look at it, take turns talking about the letters, pictures, colors, and designs.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



This game sets the stage for a back-and-forth conversation. As you talk about mail, your child's vocabulary grows. As you point at the letters, they begin to understand that the lines on paper stand for sounds, words, and objects. This is a big step in becoming a reader.

#820

Learn more at vroom.org

Hand Games

Use hand actions for your favorite rhyme or song, or make up your own. Face your child and hold their hands so they mirror you. Vary your tone of voice from high to low and use a big, expressive way of speaking or singing.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Rhymes and songs are great for early reading skills. Plus, the mirrored actions teach left to right tracking, also an important part of reading. This kind of speaking is extra engaging for your child. It can add brain-building to any chat in an interesting and fun way!

#844

Learn more at vroom.org

Can You Find It?

Draw or use your cell phone to take pictures of things in your room like a chair, a table, or the refrigerator. Ask your child to look at your cell phone picture and say, "Can you find it in the room?" As they get good at this, you can make it a little harder.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



This game helps your child make connections between pictures (symbols) and real objects. This skill is a basic for reading (where written marks stand for words) and math (where numbers stand for quantities of things), and is essential for learning.

#886

Learn more at vroom.org

Mealtime Message

At mealtime, put a message next to your child's plate. It may be a picture you tear out of a magazine, a quick note, or a drawing. As you sit down to eat, invite them to share the message. Take turns talking about the colors, letters, and pictures you both see.

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



A "Mealtime Message" is unexpected and fun. As you take turns talking about it, your child is learning to pay attention to details. They're also learning that marks and pictures stand for words and ideas, which is important when learning to read in the future.

#560

Learn more at vroom.org

Treasure Box

Give your child a small box and tell them it's a "Treasure Box," made to keep very special things. With their help write their name on top of the box. Talk back and forth about things they might keep inside. Store it in a place they can reach so they can use it.

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Your back-and-forth conversation about treasures gives your child the chance to express their ideas and build their vocabulary. With conversations like these, you're helping them become a better communicator.

#805

Learn more at vroom.org

Silly Speech

Start by asking your child to choose a word. Then say it together in different ways. Use a high voice or a low voice; a loud voice or a soft voice; speak slowly or speak fast. Have fun and keep it going back and forth! Take it to the next level by having a conversation or telling a story together while you play “Silly Speech.”

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Playing with word sounds is fun, but those sounds are also the building blocks of your child’s language and reading skills. They’re also paying attention and thinking flexibly. These skills also help them to come up with new, creative ideas.

#148

Learn more at vroom.org

Picture Detective

Encourage your child to be a picture detective. Look at a picture in a book or magazine. It can even be in a newspaper or in an ad on a bus or train. Talk about the picture together. Can you find certain objects? Ask questions like, “Look at that boy’s face. How do you think he feels?”

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Pictures help your child make connections and to understand that words have meaning. Having them look closely builds focus and self-control. The example here also helps them learn to recognize other people’s feelings.

#90

Learn more at vroom.org

Sound Pattern Play

Take turns with your child making sound patterns. For example, say, “Coo, coo, ca, coo.” Ask them to repeat your sounds. Then ask them to come up with a new pattern, and you repeat it. See if you can make the patterns harder by going faster or adding more sounds.

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Your child must use their focus, memory, and self-control to pay attention, remember the pattern, and follow the rules of the game. Playing sound games like these are a great way to build language skills with them in a fun way too.

#103

Learn more at vroom.org

Grab Some Words

Shopping? Give your child a copy of your shopping list or a few of the store's coupons, talking back and forth about what they're looking at. Point to a word or picture on your list or on a coupon and say, "Look, we need bananas. Let's go find some together!"

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



You're helping your child learn to develop self-control when you give them the opportunity to use words and pictures as a way to focus. When you involve them in tasks like shopping, you also give them a sense of responsibility, something they will need in school and in life.

#286

Learn more at vroom.org

Wait and See

Waiting in line at the store is a great chance to be a brain builder. Point to a picture on a magazine and ask your child, "How do you think that man feels?" You can also look for different letters like, "Look, here's a B just like in your name. It says 'baseball' on the magazine."

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



This game gives your child an early reading experience. They're learning to read the meaning of pictures, to see how pictures and words work together, and hear how letters sound. Not only are you developing literacy skills, you're showing them how to manage the boredom of waiting in line!

#290

Learn more at vroom.org

Letter Shapes

Encourage your child to point out letters on signs. Chat about the shapes of the letters. Is the letter A pointy like a triangle? What about the letter O? How many letters of the alphabet can you find? Enjoy describing their Letter Shapes.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Having fun with language and shapes helps your child enjoy learning. It's not just fun though. This game builds focus, self-control, and memory. Your child stretches what they know about letters and shapes to make new connections at the same time!

#253

Learn more at vroom.org

Truck Talk

When you're out for a walk or drive, point out all the different trucks for your child. See if they can guess what's inside by the pictures on the outside of the truck. Try to imagine together where the contents come from. Do the veggies come from a farm? Or the fish from the sea?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



This kind of game helps your child think like a scientist by looking for clues in pictures. If they make a mistake, point them to a picture with a better clue. "See the apple on the truck? Does that help?"

#614

Learn more at vroom.org

Listening Game

When you're out with your child, talk about sounds. When you hear a sound, tell them what you hear and chat about where you think it is. "I hear a bird and I think it is in that tree." Ask what they hear, and where they think the sound is coming from. Take turns being the leader.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When your child listens and names what they're hearing, they're paying attention and learning to connect words with sounds. This promotes language skills. By going back and forth together, you're reinforcing their learning.

#657

Learn more at vroom.org

Wheel Watch

Encourage your child to point out the different kinds of wheels they see. Talk with them about what you both notice. Do they see big wheels on a truck or thin wheels on a bike? What else can they think of that has wheels?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



By listening and responding to your child, you're helping build their vocabulary and ability to focus. Grouping things, like finding what is the same and what is different, also helps them become better at making connections.

#737

Learn more at vroom.org

Letter Lookout

Pick a letter with your child and try to find it everywhere you go. Take turns calling it out when you see it. If they see an apple for the letter A, then you have to find something next. See how many things you can find. Four? Ten? More?

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



"I Spy" games like this one are great brain builders. They make your child aware of their environment and teach them to make connections between similar things. You can try this game with letters, colors, shapes—anything really!

#12

Learn more at vroom.org

List Master

When you're out running errands, put your child in charge of the list. Have them help list out a few things you both have to do that day. When you finish each task, cross it off the list together!

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When you make a list and cross things off the list together, it helps your child learn that written words represent real-world activities.

#259

Learn more at vroom.org

Double Vision

Have your child look for doubles of letters or numbers on signs and license plates. You can say, "Can you find two E's on one sign outside?" Take turns and see who can find the most.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child must pay close attention to their surroundings to find letters or numbers, and keep track of what they have seen and how many times. They also use self-control when they wait for their turn.

#707

Learn more at vroom.org

In the Right Order

Have your child look for letters or numbers in a specific order on signs and license plates. You can say, "Can you find a one and a two next to each other?" or "Can you find an A and an E next to each other?" Take turns and see who can find the most.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child must pay close attention to their surroundings to find letters or numbers and keep track of what they have seen and how many times. They're also using their working memory to remember the correct order to look for.

#708

Learn more at vroom.org

Word of the Day

Come up with a word of the day, like "play." As you and your child go through your day, point out moments or things you see that remind you of the word of the day. You might say, "Look, those dogs are playing!" Encourage them to find their own examples of the word of the day.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child must use their memory to remember the special word all day, and use focus and self-control to play the game. They're also exposed to new words and learn about the different ways that words can be used. These are important parts of learning to read and write.

#105

Learn more at vroom.org

Same Letter Sentence

Start this game by choosing a letter. See if you and your child can think of a sentence that uses as many words as possible that begin with that letter. If you chose the letter M you might say, "My mother made meatballs." What other M words can you both come up with?

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing with letters and sounds is not just fun, it's also the building blocks of your child's language and reading skills. They're using what they already know, paying attention and thinking flexibly. These skills also help them to come up with new, creative ideas.

#131

Learn more at vroom.org

One Letter at a Time

Is your child curious about spelling? Take turns going back and forth spelling a simple word like "cat." You say "C," they say "A," and you say "T." Add a twist and help them spell the word backward with you!

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing games like this helps your child connect letters and sounds. Spelling backward helps them to think flexibly and not just go on autopilot. Spelling games like this one also help prepare them for later reading and writing.

#146

Learn more at vroom.org

Letter Language

Use a letter, like B, to begin every word you say. Instead of "Hello, how are you?" say, "Bello, bow bar boo?" Encourage your child to use the same letter to begin the words of their response: "I am fine, how are you?" would become "Bye bam bine, bow bar boo?" How long can you keep it up?

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



To keep the game going, your child must focus and think flexibly to switch the letters in the words they say. It also helps them to think hard about what each letter of the alphabet sounds like. Making these connections between letters and their sounds is important in learning language.

#166

Learn more at vroom.org

Menu Maker

Involve your child in meal planning. Ask them to choose how to organize the meal. Can they do it by color or family favorites? For example, they could ask family members which dish is their favorite. Then help your child draw or write a menu based on everyone's picks.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child is using important skills to make their menu. They're grouping things and making connections. They're learning how important language is in daily life and using early reading skills.

#590

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