

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™

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.

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!

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.

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!

© 2019 Vroom is a program of the Bezos Family Foundation

Wink Watcher

Smile at your child and wink at them. Then encourage them to try to copy you. When they can do this, change the order—wink first and then smile. You can step it up the challenge by smiling and winking two times.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Playing this game helps your child learn to pay attention to what you're doing, remember the rules, and copy what you're doing. These are important skills for school and life.

#55

Learn more at vroom.org

Finger Marker

While waiting, draw a shape (like a circle or a wiggly line), using your fingertip on your child's open palm. Can they name it? Repeat the same shape until they can guess what it is. Take turns back and forth, drawing and guessing shapes.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When you play "Finger Marker," you give your child a chance to put together what they know about how shapes look with how shapes feel. It's a new and fun way to learn shapes through the sense of touch!

#220

Learn more at vroom.org

Hot Potato

You and your child can play this game anywhere you are. Find a small item to pass back and forth and sing a song as you do. As the song ends, whoever has the object does something special or silly, like blink three times or jump up and down. Take turns.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Playing "Hot Potato" gives your child practice in following rules and taking turns. It also gives them practice at self-control, a skill that helps them to stick with something long enough to meet their goals.

#222

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

Comparison Shopping

A store can be a great place to build your child's brain on the go. Give them something like a banana and an apple to hold. "Which is heavier? Which is larger? Which is softer?" You can do this with any items, in any aisle, in any store!

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Games like these help your child to think like a scientist. They're taking in the world around them and guessing how things compare or fit together. Repeat the game a few times with different objects for them to compare. Remember, repetition is how we learn!

#257

Learn more at vroom.org

Laundry Delivery

After folding the laundry, ask your child to help you with "Laundry Delivery." Ask them, "Where do the towels go? That's right, in the bathroom! What about your pajamas? Yes! In your room. Which drawer?" Switch and let them pick the items and ask you where they go.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When children learn to group things into categories, they learn how to organize and make sense of their world. Just think about how important matching is to reading, math, science, and many other subjects.

#524

Learn more at vroom.org

Spice Rack Smells

While working in the kitchen, open up different spices. Smell the differences and even touch them with your child. You can describe these smells (using dramatic words) and talk back and forth with them about some of the foods that you eat with them.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Your child learns from their senses—from looking, listening, touching, and smelling. “Spice Rack Smells” uses all of these ways of learning. Making a meal together is a memorable way for them to have fun and to learn.

#574

Learn more at vroom.org

One, Two, Three Foods

Pick three food words such as “banana, apple, pear” to make a word pattern. Repeat with your child three times. Have them pick three food words and make a pattern three times: “fork, spoon, plate.” Talk about what word comes first, second, and third.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When your child is choosing words, listening to words, and making patterns with you, they’re creating and then using a rule. Understanding and applying rules in will help them learn math concepts as they grow.

#577

Learn more at vroom.org

Silly Song

Turn a familiar tune into a “Silly Song.” Change a word in a song your child knows well and see if they notice. Stretch the moment by asking why that doesn’t work. Can they take a turn to add a silly twist to the song?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Your child must listen closely and use their memory to recall the words to songs when you play this game. They’re also playing with what’s real and what isn’t—important concepts for understanding how the world works.

#596

Learn more at vroom.org

Colorful World

When you're out with your child, team up with them to find colors. Have them point to something and name the color. Then you name all of the things you can think of that are the same color. Take turns playing this game.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Thinking about the characteristics objects have in common (whether it's colors, shapes, or size) sparks connections in your child's growing brain.

#632

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

Color Walk

Going for a walk? Grab a paint brush, put a little water in an empty container, and take a color walk outdoors! Paint the flowers, leaves, or other colorful things as you go. Talk with your child about what they see. Enjoy the textures, colors, and shapes in your world and share your own joy and wonder.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



A color walk helps your child focus on the world around them. They are building their brain by observing and describing their world. It also a wonderful way for you to slowdown and enjoy a walk together.

#696

Learn more at vroom.org

Follow Me

Ask your child, "Can you do what I do?" Walk forward or backward, bend down, or reach up high. Talk with them about what you're doing like, "Touch your toes and touch the sky!" Then give them a turn to lead. Change the game and see if they can do the opposite of what you do.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When your child follows your actions, they learn ideas like up and down by doing them with their body. When you change the game, you challenge them to use self-control to stay focused and not go on autopilot. These are important skills for learning now and in the future.

#715

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

Turn Tower

Take turns stacking things with your child to build a tower. Say, "My turn," as you stack one and then, "Your turn," as they do. Eventually, stop using words. Do they keep taking turns? Try to playfully break the rules and take two turns. What do they do?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



You're showing your child the importance of working together as you build, while also asking them to focus to make sure the tower stays up. They're also using their memory to keep track of whose turn it is, without your words to guide them.

#861

Learn more at vroom.org

Balancing Feat

Take turns with your child standing on one foot and then the other, trying to balance. You can say, "Your turn," and "My turn." See if you can do it with your eyes closed. What else can you do?

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



You and your child are having a conversation with actions as you take turns standing on one foot, then the other. When they practice doing this, they're learning about balance—what it takes to stay steady and not fall down.

#869

Learn more at vroom.org

Snack Sorters

Give your child three different snacks. Talk about what's the same and what's different. Ask them if they can group one type of snack together (like all the fruit). Then ask if they can find another way to sort the snacks, like by size, shape, or color.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Making connections is an essential skill for learning. When your child groups things, they're learning things like size, color, and shape. They're also learning to think flexibly by seeing how things can go together in different ways.

#1032

Learn more at vroom.org

Truck Mysteries

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 each of them by the pictures and words on the outside of the truck.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



This kind of game helps your child think like a scientist, looking for clues in the pictures and words about what's inside the truck. If they make a mistake, give them a better clue. "See the apple and a word that begins with an F—it's fruit."

#617

Learn more at vroom.org

Our Weather Wrap-Up

When you come in from outside, have a chat with your child about the weather. Were you hot or cold? Make sure you use simple sentences, but add bigger words, too.

Suggested Age

2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Talking with your child about their world helps to build their brain. Remember to ask questions: “Did your coat keep you warm?” And build on what they say: “The wind made me shiver just like you!”

#1043

Learn more at vroom.org

Rhyme Time

Pick a word and take turns saying words that rhyme with it. Keep going until you run out of words that rhyme. Then let your child pick a word. See if you can come up with silly ones to keep it fun like “slinky, pinkie, stinky.”

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Rhyming games, like this one, help your child focus on word sounds. This will help with reading and writing later on.

#5

Learn more at vroom.org

Name That Tune

Start humming a song your child knows and have them guess what it is. If they guess wrong, start over and hum the tune again. After a few guesses, you can add in some words to the song as hints. After a few tries, let them try a tune while you guess.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



This game helps your child focus and pay attention to sounds—which is important in communicating, reading, and writing—and it’s fun too!

#6

Learn more at vroom.org

Would You Rather?

Ask your child questions like, “Would you rather be a bird or a fish? Why?” Have them give you a few reasons from real-life experience like, “I love the water so I want to be a fish!” Then you take a turn answering their questions!

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Asking and answering questions helps develop reasoning skills—especially when you ask questions that go beyond simple yes or no answers.

#8

Learn more at vroom.org

Fill in the Blank

Fill in the blanks to make up a story: “We’re going to _____. When we get there we’ll see _____.” As your child gets in the rhythm, take turns going back and forth. Is your story realistic? Make believe? There is no right or wrong, just have fun!

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Creating a “Fill-in-the-Blank” story means your child is thinking and cannot go on autopilot. They have to shift their thinking to a new and changing story line. Thinking in flexible ways builds problem solving skills.

#27

Learn more at vroom.org

In The Real World

When out and about, point out things you and your child have read about in books or seen in their favorite show. For example, “See that dog over there? Where have we seen a dog that looks like that?” or “When you wear your red coat it makes you look like a superhero! Are there any superheros with a red cape like that?”

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



This game helps your child understand symbols because they can see how the things in books or on TV are representations of real life.

#177

Learn more at vroom.org

Stop and Go

While at the park, play a game of “Stop-and-Go” with your child. When you say “go” you both run, dance, and jump around. Then, when you say “stop” everybody freezes. After a few rounds, let them be the one to shout the commands.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing “Stop and Go” helps your child focus, remember the rules, and not go on autopilot—important skills for success in school and in life.

#179

Learn more at [Vroom.org](https://vroom.org)

Reporting Live

Waiting is a part of life. Do you wait in line at the store, at a doctor’s office, or for a ride? While you’re waiting, pretend you’re a newscaster. Using your pretend microphone, ask your child questions: “What do you see? Who else is here? What do you think is going to happen next?”

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Giving your child a chance to tell the news provides them a chance to look at what is happening around them and put it into words. They’re learning to be an effective communicator. There’s nothing like a pretend microphone to get someone talking!

#216

Learn more at [Vroom.org](https://vroom.org)

Silent Game

While waiting, challenge your child to see how long both of you can be silent. Let them be the timer. You can use your face and body movements to communicate. Whoever stays silent the longest wins!

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When your child is challenged not to talk, they’re focusing on their goal and using self-control to stay silent. Focus and self-control are important life skills for learning new things.

#223

Learn more at [Vroom.org](https://vroom.org)

Cart Companion

When you're grocery shopping with your child, hand them some of the items before you put them into the cart. As they check each out, tell them its name and talk about what you plan to use it for. Make sure it's a conversation, where they're adding their ideas!

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Holding an object in front of your child as you say its name helps them learn new vocabulary. And every time you have a back and forth conversation that extends their knowledge, you're building a brain!

#262

Learn more at vroom.org

Drummer Beats

When you're doing the dishes, use one of the clean pots and a spoon to make a drum. Copy each other's sounds. Go back and forth taking turns, repeating the same sounds. Build on each other's rhythm.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child will be paying attention and using their memory to repeat the sounds you make. Memory and focus are important skills in learning.

#395

Learn more at vroom.org

Choosing Clothes

Try giving your child some options today. As you're getting dressed give them a choice between two shirts. Ask them why they like the one they have chosen, where they remember wearing it. What else has the same color or pattern?

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Helping your child explain why they made this choice builds their reasoning and communication skills.

#460

Learn more at vroom.org

Sandwich Shapes

Sandwiches can seem even better when they aren't square. As you make one for your child, ask, "How many pieces do you want?" Count them together. Talk about their shapes or arrange them on a plate in a new shape and ask what it looks like now.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Did you ever think making a sandwich could stretch your child's thinking skills? You're helping them learn the skill of making unusual connections, which is the basis of creativity!

#543

Learn more at vroom.org

Spot the Color

Ask your child, "What color is your shirt today (or pants or dress)?" Then ask, "What other things are that color?" Add your ideas, too, and make it a back and forth game. See how many things you can think of.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing the "Spot the Color" doesn't just teach your child colors. You're also giving them the chance to practice focusing on an idea and a task with another person. The ability to focus is very important in life and in school.

#545

Learn more at vroom.org

The Big Game

Play "The Big Game" by naming something big. Then ask your child, "Can you name something that's bigger?" Take turns and keep playing until you come up with the biggest, most gigantic, huge thing you can think of. Switch it up and name the smallest thing you can think of.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Playing "The Big Game" helps your child see connections between the size of things, then organize them according to size. These are thinking skills they'll need in school and work.

#550

Learn more at vroom.org

Car Clappers

Sitting in traffic makes anyone antsy. So turn it into a clapping game with just a few simple rules. If the radio is on, have your child clap to the music. If you turn the radio off, they stop clapping and freeze.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Changing the rules of the game requires your child to think flexibly and respond to new information, instead of just going on autopilot. This kind of focus and self-control is an important skill that we use everyday—even as adults!

#616

Learn more at vroom.org

Imagination Station

When you're waiting at a stoplight, bus stop, or train platform, make up a story together about someone across the street or on the opposite platform. Where is the woman in the hat going? What will she do when she gets there? Try to elaborate on your child's ideas.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When you're telling stories, have your child think about how the character in the story might think and feel. This will help them learn how to see other people's point of view. It's a valuable skill that we all use everyday, adults and children!

#626

Learn more at vroom.org

Move Like Me

Ask your child to imitate you as you walk, jump, clap, or bend down to touch your toes. Then see if they can do the actions when you just say the words. Challenge them by going fast and slow or adding multiple steps like, "Reach up, turn around, and then jump!"

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child uses their skills of focus and self-control as they try to copy your words and actions. By changing the speed of the movements, you ask them to think on their feet. They must also use their working memory to keep track of what comes next.

#81

Learn more at vroom.org

Memory Book

Special moments happen all the time. Trips to a new park, visits with family, or birthdays are a few examples. Stretch those moments! Ask your child to help you make a memory book using photos or drawings. Then write down the words they use to describe what's happening in the pictures.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Writing down your child's words connects real life, pictures, and language. They're using thinking skills to remember details of that special moment. By connecting words and memories, you're building language skills too.

#94

Learn more at vroom.org

Do as I Say, Not as I Do

Ask your child to listen to your words and do what you say, instead of following what you do. Say, "Stomp your feet" while you clap your hands. They should stomp their feet and try not to focus on the clapping. Try new words and new actions when they learn to do this. Take turns!

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child has to focus carefully on what you say and use self-control to not be distracted by what you do. It's hard, but playing this game helps children develop life skills that they'll use now and in the future.

#110

Learn more at vroom.org

Pretend Packing

Pretend you and your child are packing for a trip. It can be for a visit to a family member's house or an imaginary trip, like to outer space. Take turns naming things to bring. As they get older, you can try coming up with things in alphabetical order.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



As they think of what to bring, they use what they already know to plan for the future. This is thinking critically to plan and thinking flexibly to come up with new and creative ideas. Taking turns also helps your child practice their self-control.

#111

Learn more at vroom.org

Street Stories

Work together with your child to invent a story about people you pass on the street. Ask them, "Tell me about that man who just walked by." See how they respond. You can help them by asking questions like, "What do you think he likes to do for fun?" or "What is his favorite food?" Use your imagination!

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



As you and your child create a story, they use their communication skills to figure out what they want to say and how, in order to be understood. They are also practicing seeing through others' eyes as they explore how different people might think or feel.

#118

Learn more at vroom.org

Mealtime Check-In

When eating together, invite your child to think about their day by asking, "What was the best part of your day?" Have each person at the table answer. Then ask, "What was the worst part of your day?" Go around the table again. Share your day with them and encourage them to ask others.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When your child hears about your day, they begin to learn how to understand another person's point of view. This is an important skill for life. They're also practicing the back-and-forth of conversation and thinking about their own day. This builds family connections and makes mealtime fun.

#592

Learn more at vroom.org

Napkin Folds

When you set the table for a meal, encourage your child to think of different ways to fold napkins or paper towels to make different shapes and sizes. You might say, "What shapes can you make?" "What does this shape look like?" "What would happen if you kept folding the corners down?"

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child is thinking about a familiar thing—a napkin—in new ways as they fold. Having a back-and-forth conversation about what they're doing promotes curiosity. It also helps them connect shapes and what they look like. The conversation helps develop creativity and critical thinking, all skills they'll need later in life.

#593

Learn more at vroom.org

Math Munching

At mealtime or snacktime, create math stories with your child: "Imagine you're a hungry bear and these crackers look yummy." Count them together and invite them to choose a number of crackers to eat. Then ask: "How many crackers did you eat? How many crackers are left?"

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Having fun with math helps your child love learning, while becoming familiar with counting, numbers, and what they stand for. They're also learning to pay attention, hold numbers in their mind as they use this information, and use self-control not to eat everything all at once!

#611

Learn more at vroom.org

Warm and Cold

Hide something like a spoon or cup and encourage your child to find it. As they get closer say, "You're getting warm." If they move farther away say, "You're getting cold." After they find it, take turns choosing a hiding place and use "warm" and "cold" to tell each other where to look.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



As you give your child clues with the words warm and cold, they must remember the rules of the game to search for the item. They must focus on finding the object without getting distracted, a skill that will help them achieve their goals now and in the future.

#1005

Learn more at vroom.org

How Many?

Cut an apple and ask your child to guess how many seeds they think will be inside. Or how many pieces of orange there will be after you peel it. Count the seeds or segments together and compare that number with their guess. What other foods can you use for this game?

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child is thinking like a scientist. Making a guess, looking at the results, and then comparing the two is just what a scientist does. Your child is also learning to estimate numbers. This is an important skill for math.

#1037

Learn more at vroom.org