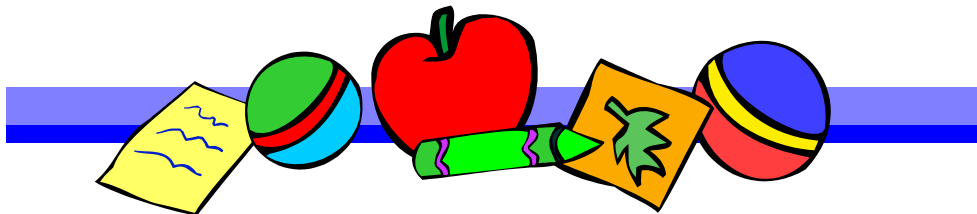


**MECC**

**Substitute Teacher**

**Policies and Procedures Manual**



Written by Linda Mesich for The Montelores Early Childhood Council  
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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome! You have been chosen to participate in The Montelores Early Childhood Council's Substitute Teacher pool. We hope you'll find this handbook helpful in guiding your efforts as you fulfill a vital role in our early learning centers and child care facilities. We want you to be successful in your role!

The Montelores Early Childhood Council (MECC) MECC is a community-based collaborative partnership that takes the lead in building and strengthening the comprehensive early childhood system for Montezuma and Dolores counties. Our membership includes representatives from area social service nonprofits; county social service and health departments; preschool directors, teachers, and childcare providers; Head Start; libraries; San Juan BOCES; Southwest Kids; K-12 education; business leaders; health and mental health professionals; families; and other community members who share a passion for young children and their families. Our mission is to promote and sustain a comprehensive, high quality early childhood system to support the community and families, and prepare children for success in school and life.

You'll find many helpful resources on our website: <http://monteloresecc.org> so be sure and check it out. MECC's Professional Development Coordinator, Tyra Hughes, can be reached at: [tyrah@monteloresecc.org](mailto:tyrah@monteloresecc.org) for questions and concerns. Please let her know if you have suggestions for this manual.

Thanks for your commitment to young children and their families!

## QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

### Qualifications:

All substitutes must meet the following qualifications:

- 18 years of age
- Minimum High School Education
- Pass a Colorado Bureau of Investigation background check
- First Aid Training/CPR certified
- Universal Precautions Training
- Immunizations up to date

Additionally, *ECE teacher* substitutes must meet the same minimum requirements as those of a regular ECE teacher. If you are interested becoming teacher qualified, visit the Colorado Department of Human Services Office of Early Childhood website and click on the far right button titled Early Care and Learning, and from the drop-down menu choose Child Care Licensing and Administration.

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

### Physical Requirements:

Substitutes should be able to lift and carry infants and preschool-aged children; move up and down from the floor relatively easily; kneel and sit on the floor; stoop; etc.

### Personal and Professional Knowledge, Attitude, and Qualities:

A successful substitute will:

- Be young at heart, have a cheerful disposition, and enjoy young children
- Have the ability to relate well with children and families
- Be nurturing and patient
- Be consistent, fair, and able to set appropriate limits with young children
- Have some knowledge of child behavior and development
- Be able to follow directions
- Be dependable, self-motivated, show initiative, and seek advice when needed
- Be able to work well with others as part of a team

### Professional Development:

We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities for professional growth available in our area in order to increase your knowledge, skills, competence, and success. Some of the opportunities include:

- Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care (EQIT)
- The Incredible Years

- Classroom Management Strategies
- Southwest Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference

See MECC's website for information about these and other professional development opportunities. Most trainings are free-of-charge.

**Child Development Associate(CDA) Credential:**

We encourage you to begin working on your CDA, a one-year self-study program in Early Childhood Education (ECE), which is a key stepping stone on the path of career advancement in ECE. Contact Tyra Hughes for more information:

[tyrah@monteloresecc.org](mailto:tyrah@monteloresecc.org)

**College Courses:**

ECE college courses are available in the area through Southwest Colorado Community College, a division of Pueblo Community College. Financial help is available. See MECC's website for more information.

## Substitute Guidelines

### Be Available:

The best way to ensure that you'll substitute as often as possible is to make yourself available to answer the phone between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. on weekday mornings. Being ready to accept a job encourages the sub coordinator to ask you again in the future. If you refuse often, the sub coordinator is less likely to call you for future job opportunities. If you're called on short notice, and it's not possible for you to arrive on time, tell the sub coordinator when you *can* arrive at the center so they center can have someone cover for you until you do arrive.

### The Basics:

1. Complete a daily time sheet.
2. Complete a daily report for the teacher.
3. Purses or other types of personal bags usually carry items that are unsafe for children.

Ask the center director where you can store your personal items.

4. Cell phones should be left with your personal items. Voicemail should be checked and personal phone calls made only during break time.
5. You should dress appropriately for sitting on the floor and ground, stooping, moving freely, etc. Your clothes can be casual and comfortable, but should also be clean, neat, and modest. Shoes should be close-toed and low/no heel. Those working with infants (and toddlers in some centers) will be required to wear a smock and shoe covers (or wear socks) provided to them.

6. **Emergency Procedures:** Each center will have its unique set of emergency procedures. It is very important that you know what to do in case of an emergency. Take the time to find out what the emergency procedures are; know what the evacuation procedures are; where the nearest fire extinguisher is; and where a phone with emergency numbers posted is located. Familiarize yourself with fire and emergency weather drill procedures. Account for all children during these drills.

7. Never leave any child in your care unsupervised. If an emergency occurs, call your supervisor and get help.
8. Respect the values and traditions of the diverse cultures represented in the center.
9. Refer complaints from parents and any other problems to the center's director.
10. Children are never to be verbally, emotionally, or physically punished or abused.
11. Treat others with courtesy, kindness, and respect at all times.

### **Confidentiality:**

Maintain a professional attitude regarding confidential information about students, families, teachers, administrators, centers, and interactions between these groups. If you feel the need to make any comments, they should be positive ones. Here are other guidelines:

1. You must not discuss any confidential information, other than with appropriate personnel, regarding the lives and situations of the children you work with.

2. You must not discuss the child's progress or lack of progress with anyone other than appropriate personnel. If a parent asks you what you think about a specific problem their child might have, such as a behavior issue or a developmental level, tactfully suggest that the parent ask the permanent teacher about it because they see the child on a regular basis and would be better able to address the parent's concerns.

3. Maintain center confidentiality; you may not discuss problems of one center with another center or anyone else.

### **Code of Ethics:**

ECE substitutes are ethically bound to uphold a professional standard of conduct. The National Association for the Education of Young Children's *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment* is a standard followed by early learning centers nationwide. Substitutes should be able to abide by NAEYC's Core Values as identified below:

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture,\*community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

\* The term culture includes ethnicity, racial identity, economic level, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child's development and relationship to the world.

Below is the NAEYC's **Statement of Commitment** as it appears in the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct*.

### **Statement of Commitment**

As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself to furthering the values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. To the best of my ability I will

- Never harm children.
- Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children.
- Respect colleagues in early childhood care and education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Serve as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society.
- Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
- Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.
- Continue to learn, grow, and contribute as a professional.
- Honor the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

*\*This Statement of Commitment is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgment of the individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education. It is recognition of the moral obligations that lead to an individual becoming part of the profession.*

#### **Child Abuse:**

Child abuse and neglect are serious problems and state law mandates that suspected child abuse be reported to the proper authorities. However, many signs of neglect and abuse may not be apparent to you since you don't see a child regularly. If you do see or hear something that gives you concern, report these to your immediate supervisor or to the director of the center.

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## Daily Checklist

- \_\_\_ Keep a notebook and pencil by the phone you'll be using to answer early morning calls.
- \_\_\_ Arrive at the center at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of school.

### PRIOR TO ENTERING THE CLASSROOM

- \_\_\_ Report to the director.
- \_\_\_ Ask about special procedures.
- \_\_\_ Find the location of the staff room and restroom.
- \_\_\_ If you haven't been introduced to staff members in your part of the building, introduce yourself to them.

### IN THE CLASSROOM

- \_\_\_ Review expectations or rules if any are posted.
- \_\_\_ Locate the school evacuation map. It should be posted by the door.
- \_\_\_ Read through the lesson plans left by the permanent teacher.
- \_\_\_ Locate the materials you'll need for the day.
- \_\_\_ Familiarize yourself with the names of the children.
- \_\_\_ Greet the children and parents at the door as they arrive. Introduce yourself. The children may need to be signed in according to center policy. Help the children put their personal belongings away.
- \_\_\_ Get the children involved in an activity.
- \_\_\_ Ask questions of other teachers and ask for help when needed.

### AT THE END OF THE DAY OR YOUR SHIFT

- \_\_\_ Be sure children leave with the proper adult. Make sure each child has all personal belongings. The children may need to be signed out according to center policy.
- \_\_\_ Complete "Notes for the Sub" form or write a note to the teacher about how the day went.
- \_\_\_ Close windows, turn off lights and equipment, and make sure the room is in good order before you leave.
- \_\_\_ Check in with the director before you leave and see if you will be needed again the next day.
- \_\_\_ Think about ways you can improve as a substitute teacher.
- \_\_\_ Give yourself a big pat on the back - you did a great service!



## RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SUBSTITUTE TEACHER/TEACHER AIDE

The responsibility of the Substitute Teacher is to fulfill the duties of the regular Early Childhood Education Teacher or other ECE staff in the event of the teacher's absence. You are responsible for implementing the daily schedule and routines, leading activities, and providing a safe, developmentally appropriate, and nurturing environment in which the children are able to learn and grow.

As an Aide Substitute, your role is to help the regular Early Childhood Education Teacher carry out their duties.

Substitute responsibilities can potentially fall into three distinctive groups:

1. **Infants (0-18 months):** In the infant program, the focus is on nurturing, carrying out routines using responsive caregiving, and playing. Use daily routines to develop trust, a sense of security, and successful learning experiences through play.

2. **Toddlers (18 months-3 years of age):** In the toddler program, the focus is on language development, creative enrichment, and physical activities. Learning takes place in a supportive environment where the child builds a positive attitude toward emotional well-being, social development, and language skills. The relationship between child and teacher fosters self-confidence, security, trust, and belonging.

3. **Preschoolers (4-5 years of age):** In the preschool program, the focus is on developing self-help and independent behavior. The goal is to hear the child exclaim, "I can do it all by myself!" Emphasis is given to the development of the child's skills, personal care, emotional control, learning, and problem solving.

### **General Duties and Responsibilities:**

1. Help children develop appropriate behavior, social skills and coping skills.
2. Help children develop intellectually and physically.
3. Help each child develop a positive self-esteem.
4. Encourage developmentally appropriate independence.
5. Provide developmentally appropriate active learning opportunities.
6. Encourage creativity, questioning, and problem solving.
7. Provide opportunities for each child to be successful.

**Classroom Duties and Responsibilities:**

1. Supervise classroom activities, indoor and outdoor play, and routines such as toileting, meals, and snacks, including set up and clean up.
2. Maintain a safe, healthy, and positive environment.
3. Keep the classroom organized and arranged appropriately.
4. Use acceptable behavior management techniques in the classroom.
5. Keep your supervisor informed of problems that arise in the classroom, including accidents, injuries, and illnesses.

**Relationships with Parents/Legal Guardians:**

1. Maintain good communication with parents/legal guardians
2. Pass on any family communication to the regular teacher or the director.

**Other Responsibilities:**

1. Provide documentation to the regular teacher of the day's happenings
2. Build good communication and cooperative relationships with other staff to create and maintain a professional atmosphere.
3. Maintain student and school confidentiality.
4. Communicate with staff members regarding children's issues and parent/legal guardian communications.
5. Follow through with center decisions, plans, and expectations.
6. Comply with center's policies and procedures.
7. Perform other duties as requested by your supervisor

## Encouraging Social-Emotional and Behavioral Wellness

Instead of thinking of behavior as something *to be managed*, it might be more helpful to think of yourself as a **guide**. You're helping kids develop the emotional capacities and learn the social skills that will help them be successful and happy! As their **guide** it's your job to remember the following:

- ✦ All behavior is communication. If kids don't have the language skills to get their point across, they'll use another method. If they don't have the emotional (self) regulation to control their impulse to grab a toy or hit another child, no amount of lecturing is going to "give" them self-regulation.

- ✦ Social-emotional and behavioral skills are learned in a developmental progression. Remember that kids can't *behave* at a higher level than their developmental age, so as their guide, adjust your expectations to match their capacities. Development happens from the inside out.

- ✦ Part of social learning is experimenting. Acknowledge to yourself, and to them, that they are trying new things and that these don't always work. "Your friends don't want to play with you when you kick their tower over. What else could you try instead?"

- ✦ When things heat up and kids get overwhelmed, they usually can't and don't use their highest level skills (and neither do we), so let the situation cool down before doing any "teaching."

- ✦ Don't take their behavior personally. Even when they tell you they "hate" you, they are just picking a word that describes a big feeling in the moment. They don't mean it.

- ✦ You set the emotional and behavioral tone of the classroom by your patience, calmness, cheerfulness, attunement to their feelings, fairness, and thoughtfulness.

### Some additional guidance strategies to help you connect and be a good guide:

1. **Make an emotional connection with each child.** Get on the floor, pay attention, get in tune with them. Listen to the underlying message of their words and actions. If they are sad or mad, acknowledge their feelings first before using other strategies.

2. **Praise their efforts and their products.** Praise children often when they try to act better, when they help, or perform other actions that you want them to do more of. Be specific.

"Thank you for bringing Joey the other spoon when he was crying."

"Thank you for sharing your apple with Sam."

"How great that you helped Susie put away her toys! What a good friend you are."

Also praise their products and accomplishments. Don't just say, "Nice painting." Say, "You did a nice job mixing the blue and the red. It made purple."

3. **Tell them specifically how you want them to act and what you want them to do.** First, make sure what you're asking is within their abilities. If not, show them **and** tell them. They will forget, so remind them often and show them again. State what you want them to **do** instead of telling them what they are doing wrong, or what you **don't** want them to do. For example:

"Use a quiet voice, please," instead of, "No shouting!"

"Walk in the hall," instead of, "No running!"

4. **Recognize and praise good behavior; ignore misbehavior.** It's best to ignore minor misbehaviors while recognizing other children's appropriate behavior. Avoid bringing attention to

inappropriate behavior as this will often cause to child to continue with it.

**5. Be kind and personal.** If you need to speak to a child about a challenging behavior that can't be ignored, avoid addressing it from across the room. Rather, go to the child, make eye contact, and speak quietly about the inappropriate behavior, getting down on his/her level.

**6. Restate the problem.** Young kids often can't express what they're feeling. When a child shouts, "I don't like you," because a playmate won't give him a turn with the red car he's playing with, help the first child by saying, "Sounds like you're really mad you can't have a turn now. Let's ask your friend if you can have a turn when he is done with it." Use understandable "feeling" words like /mad/, /sad/, /glad/, instead of the adult words for these feelings.

**7. Honest statements.** Sometimes it's helpful to tell children in a simple, honest way how their actions affect others. "It really bothers me when you pull on my clothes when you want to talk to me," or "It hurts my ears when you scream inside." This will not work with all children all of the time.

**8. Active problem solving.** Try to help children come up with solutions to their problems before jumping in. Ask questions like, "What could you do instead?" "How can you help Billy feel better?" Offer suggestions if necessary, like "What might happen if.....?"

**9. Redirect the activity or their attention.** If a child is doing something inappropriate, you might need to guide him/her to a different activity, toy, center, etc. For example, if a toddler is enjoying a book but is too rough on the paper pages, offer the toddler a board book instead. Infants and toddlers can often be distracted from undesirable activities by helping them focus their attention elsewhere.

**10. Give choices.** If a child needs to leave a play area or center because it's too crowded, offer two other centers or play areas. Be sure you can live with the choices you offer.

**11. Natural consequences.** Sometimes it's OK to let children experience the natural consequences of their actions. Instead of having a confrontation with a child who refuses to come to the table for snack, allow the child to make that choice, and experience hunger later. You need to be sure to follow through.

**12. Time out.** The effectiveness of time out is debatable. Avoid using it as a punishment. Instead, use it when a child needs a quiet space to recover after being overwhelmed by a strong feeling. Talk to your supervisor about the time out policy. Remember, if you do use it, make sure it is no longer in minutes than the age of the child in years. If you can find an alternative to time out, use it. We call this *time in*. It means connecting with the child on their level to offer compassion and support during their time of dysregulation.

# **TIPS, ACTIVITIES, & IDEAS FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS**

The following section contains a variety of tips and activities useful when you work with infants, toddlers and preschoolers. These are not meant to replace a good curriculum, and their success relies on your knowledge of child development from birth through preschool. Have Fun!

# Let's Read a Book

By Linda Mesich

The single most important thing we can do to help children become successful readers is to read to them, beginning in infancy! As a substitute, if you find yourself needing to fill some empty time, always consider reading a book with the children. Carrying several of your own personal favorites along with you when you substitute will prove to be useful. But even if you don't have your own books, the centers will have an abundance of books to choose from. And the children will always have their personal favorites they will want you to read over and over.

## Choosing Books:

Selecting books can seem overwhelming with the never-ending choices that are available. Award winning books and authors are always a good place to begin, but by no means a requirement. Here are some all-time favorites.

1. Eric Carle books such as The Very Hungry Caterpillar, The Very Busy Spider, The Very Noisy Cricket, The Grouchy Ladybug, and The Very Lonely Firefly
2. Ezra Jack Keats books such as The Snowy Day and Over in the Meadow
3. Bill Martin, Jr. books such as Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?, Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?, Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?, and Baby Bear, Baby Bear, What Do You See?
4. Nancy Elizabeth Wallace books such as Alphabet House
5. Knuffle Bunny by Mo Willems
6. I Like Myself by Karen Beaumont
7. The "David" Books and Alice the Fairy by David Shannon
8. Owl and the How Do Dinosaurs... books by Jane Yolen
9. Library Lion by Michelle Knudsen
10. Rain by Peter Spier, a wordless book (children can 'read' their own story, by looking at the pictures)
11. Jan Brett books such as The Mitten or The Gingerbread Baby (Brett's illustrations are delightful)
12. A Color of His Own and little blue and little yellow by Leo Lionni
13. The Skippyjon Jones books by Judy Schachner (have fun with Spanish!)

14. Mama, Do You Love Me?, a book about the Inuit culture and Father, Do You Love Me?, a book about the African Maasai culture, by Barbara M. Joose
15. Diary of a Worm and Diary of a Spider by Doreen Cronin
16. Chicken Sunday by Patricia Polacco
17. Kevin Henkes books such as Sheila Rae, the Brave, Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, Owen, and Chrysanthemum
18. One Smile by Cindy McKinley
19. Lois Ehlert books such as Eating the Alphabet, Planting a Rainbow, Snowballs, and Leaf Man
20. Whales Passing and A Turkey for Thanksgiving by Eve Bunting
21. The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant
22. Non-fiction books: Don't overlook non-fiction books. Children love books about real things. Animal books, especially, are sure to be a big hit.

Be sure and visit with any of our local children's librarians to help you begin your own list. Book lists are also plentiful on the internet. Listed below are a few you might enjoy looking at:

- <http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/preschool> (one of my favorites)
- <http://www.teachersandfamilies.com/open/psreading.cfm>
- [http://www.getreadyforschool.com/kindergarten\\_reading\\_list.htm](http://www.getreadyforschool.com/kindergarten_reading_list.htm)
- <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/booklist.pdf>

### **Reading the Book:**

Reading a book is more than just reading. Here are some things you might like to include along with the reading. You won't want to do all of them all the time. Pick and choose what seems to be best for the book you are reading. You don't want to do so much *talking* about the book that the children lose interest in the *reading* of the book.

1. Introduce the book by reading the title and showing the children the front of the book.
2. While looking at the front of the book, have the children predict what the story will be about.
3. Ask questions during the story.
4. Talk about what's happening in the pictures.
5. Predict what might happen next.
6. Talk about new vocabulary words that might be unfamiliar to the children.
7. When the text is repeating itself, let the children help you 'read' the words once they have learned the pattern. They can also sometimes help you read a rhyming word that comes at the end of a line.
8. Help the children understand the difference between real and pretend.
9. Use facial and vocal expression.

10. Add drama to the characters' voices.

11. Have fun!

It's important to remember that the younger the child the more you should think of *sharing books* rather than *reading books*. Whatever way they choose to use the book, including chewing, dropping, holding upside-down, shaking, turning pages from back-to-front, or middle-out - all these are OK. When you show interest in their activity, you are encouraging literacy! Follow their lead. When they are done, let them be done.

### **Follow-up Activities:**

After reading a book, consider doing a follow-up activity to go along with the book. Art projects, cooking projects, singing, retelling the story with puppets, outdoor play or games....the ideas are endless. Consider the ideas below:

- The Snowy Day - go outside and make snow angels. Or make a snowball outside and bring it inside and see what happens; measure the snowball; measure the water as it melts.
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar - Reread the story allowing the children to act out the part of the caterpillar.
- little blue and little yellow - use paints to experiment with mixing blue and yellow, red and yellow, blue and red, etc.
- Chrysanthemum - everyone write their name; count the letters; how many letter in your name? who has the longest name? shortest?
- Leaf Man - take a nature walk and collect fall leaves; do leaf rubbings using the side of a peeled crayon.
- Skippyjon Jones - practice Spanish words.
- Gingerbread Baby - eat gingerbread people cookies. Or read the traditional fairy tale, The Gingerbread Man, and compare the two stories. What is the same? Different?
- Diary of a Worm and Diary of a Spider - go on a worm/spider hunt outdoors.
- Library Lion - visit a library.
- The Wheels On The Bus - sing the song; let the children create new verses.

Use your imagination and have fun!

### **Storybook Plays:**

Let the children choose a story to act out, one that you know the story of, as well. Let each child choose each part that he or she wants to play -- it's fine if there's more than one child playing a character. Then narrate the plot or read aloud the story to the group of children. As you narrate the story, the children should act out their roles according to your instructions. Be sure to give extra verbal cues when necessary, like "then Sleeping Beauty climbed the stairs" and all the Sleeping Beauties should pretend to climb stairs, or "the prince chopped through the vines to the castle" and all the princes should pretend to chop with a sword. It won't matter if there are several children for each part. They all will act and have fun together.



**Step into the Story:**

When reading a story to your preschoolers, try this activity to develop their problem solving and creative thinking skills. When you get to a point in the story where the character faces a problem or needs to make a decision, stop reading and the children to describe what they might do in a similar situation. Encourage them to explain their choices.

**Book Illustrators:**

Have the children choose a favorite part of the story and draw a picture for the book. Help them to include details in their pictures. Perhaps some children might like to try and copy an illustration that is already in the book.

**Memory Master:**

Tell the children to stare at a picture page of a favorite book. After 30 seconds, the children should look away and you, as Memory Master, can quiz the children about what they have seen.



**HAPPY READING!**

# Books for Infants and Toddlers

Even infants and toddlers need to experience books. Long before they can speak or even comprehend words, they are learning from books. As they begin to listen to books being read to them, they begin to learn what language is all about, the rhythm of it, and how it sounds. As they handle books and as they watch adults handle the books being read to them, they are learning about reading. Language development and literacy awareness begins to take root. The more infants and toddlers are exposed to books, the more likely they are to experience success in the area of literacy as they enter school. So be sure to share books with them, too.

For these little ones, the focus will likely center around developing the following skills:

- 1) manipulating or handling books
- 2) looking at and recognizing books
- 3) comprehending pictures and a simple story
- 4) interacting with books verbally, for example, babbling in imitation of reading

Cloth, vinyl, and cardboard books are a must for babies. The following make good book choices for babies and toddlers.

- 1) Books with simple pictures and bright colors
- 2) Books about familiar things, like people, babies, animals, objects, and familiar routines, especially bedtime
- 3) "Touch and feel" books, "lift-the-flap" or "pull-the-tab" books such as Peek-A-Boo, You and "hide and seek" books such as I Spy Little Bunnies
- 4) Predictable books and books with simple story lines
- 5) Rhyming books
- 6) Books of favorite songs, such as "The Wheels on the Bus", especially if there are actions to go along with the song
- 7) Movement books such as Eric Carle's From Head to Toe

## Toddler Activities

Toddler activities should focus on the following developmental areas:

- **Active & Gross Motor Play:** Rocking and riding toys and large climbing structures.
- **Fine Motor Play:** Action/reaction toys, puzzles and stacking toys.
- **Imagination & Quiet Play:** Items to stimulate imagination like dolls and accessories, kitchen sets and play food.
- **Language Development, Music & Movement:** CD players, children's books, musical instruments and puppets.
- **Creative Arts & Exploration:** Art materials, sand and water table, and sensory materials.

Different types of activities include:

- **Group activities** like singing songs, exploring books, or playing games
- **Teacher-initiated activities** like music or art
- **Child-directed activities** as experienced during free play and at centers
- **Story time**
- **Snack, lunch and naptimes**
- **Outdoor play** 1-2 times a day, weather permitting

### Suggestions:

Allow toddlers to explore whatever it is that you give them. Be flexible - the play may not go according to your plans. Take the children's lead if their interest leads in a different direction than you had planned.

### Read a Book Together!

**Balloon Badminton:** Blow up balloons and play *balloon badminton* with your hands or make paddles by taping a tongue depressor to a paper plate. Try to 1) hit the balloon, 2) keep the balloon off the ground, and 3) hit the balloon back and forth to each other across a play table or other object. This activity should not be done with children under 24 months of age because balloons are a choking hazard. If a balloon pops, be sure to pick up any broken pieces right away.

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**Easter Egg Hunt:** Go on a Easter egg hunt or any kind of hunt. Hide some like items around the room like you would Easter eggs! Use anything that might be available....dinosaurs, farm animals, building blocks, etc.

**Newspaper Basketball:** Have the children help scrunch up newspaper sheets into balls. The tighter the ball, the easier it is to throw. Use a wastepaper basket or other container to throw the balls into - for younger toddlers, a tub or laundry basket is good. Place a piece of masking tape on the floor to mark the throw line. Practice counting skills by counting how many made it and how many missed.

**Yogurt Painting:** Use yogurt or pudding to finger paint. If high chairs are available, use sanitized high chair trays. Or tape a large piece of wax paper or butcher paper to a table. Be sensitive to the fact that not all children will want to touch something squishy - let them observe and interact at their comfort level.

**Sticker Art:** Any kind of stickers will do: pictures, stars, dots, white hole reinforcement stickers. Give each child a piece of construction paper to fill with stickers. Let them add colors with crayons.

**Magazine Ripping:** PREP: Tear out pages from magazines ahead of time. (We don't want toddlers thinking they can tear up books!) Gather assorted containers in which to place torn pieces of paper. Demonstrate to toddlers how to tear the pages and then place the torn piece into a container. This is a great fine motor activity that encourages pincer grasp.

**Scavenger Hunt:** Give each toddler a bag or other sort of container. Call out an object or describe an object and send them off to find it: for example, find a block..., a small car...., something red..., something round...., etc.

**Matching Lids and Containers:** Recycle yogurt, cottage cheese, butter, soft cream cheese, lunchmeat, coffee containers...anything that has a lid. Give them to toddlers with the lids off and have them try to match the lids to the corresponding containers.

## Preschool Activities

### Read a Book Together!

**Letter/Number/Color Basketball:** Write letters or numerals or draw colored shapes on several pieces of paper. Make enough papers for each child, plus one or two extra. Make a line with masking tape on the floor and place the trash can about 4 feet away. As each child has a turn, tell them which letter to find. They pick up the letter, crumble the paper into a ball, and stand on the tape to toss it into the trash can. If they miss, they get as many chances as needed to get the "ball" in the basket and they can move closer if needed.

**Color Hunt:** Go on a color hunt through the classroom or play area. Seek out items that are all the same color. You could pair up kids with a partner and assign a different color to each pair.

**I Spy ABCs:** Gather together a collection of empty cereal boxes. (Boxes can be flattened for easy transportation.) Have each child choose a box. Choose one letter of the alphabet. Write it on a white board or piece of paper. Then have the children look at the words on their boxes and search for the chosen letter. This game can also be played using words that are posted around the room.

**Crayon Games:** Give each child a handful of used crayons of various sizes and have them spread the crayons out on the table. Ask them to arrange the crayons from smallest to largest, then reverse the order. Next, have your child group the crayons by color, then within each color group, ask them to line the crayons up smallest to largest and vice versa. Make a starting line on the floor with a piece of masking tape. Now have each child make a train by lining up all his crayons on the floor end to end, all beginning at the starting line. Which child has the longest train? The shortest? A more interesting challenge for older preschoolers is to draw a line on a piece of paper and ask them to guess the fewest number of crayons (of any size they choose) that will equal the length of the line when the crayons are laid end to end. Then have them actually line up the crayons and see how close they came to the right answer.

**Texture Walk:** Take a texture walk outside on the playground. Look for things that are soft like sand, dirt, etc. Look for pine cones or rocks that are hard and rough or smooth. Look at tree leaves or flowers that are smooth, flat or detailed. The kids will love looking and discovering. This game could also be modified to be played in the classroom.

**Toy Town:** On a carpeted area, tape down long (5 or 6 feet) strips of masking tape in straight and curved patterns. Make the strips intersect each other to form a system of 'roads' on the

floor. Gather toys and divide them up by themes, i.e. railroad, farm, zoo, school, construction, etc. Place each group of toys at the end of a road, creating a little city. Drive various cars and trucks up and down the roads. Have children make up stories as to where the cars are going and what they are doing.

**I'm Going to the Beach:** This is a good memory game. One person starts the game by saying, "I'm going to the beach and I'm going to bring my ...." Fill in the blank with anything you want, 'flip flops' for example. The next person then repeats the first line and adds another item, "I'm going to the beach and I'm going to bring my flip flops and my sunscreen." Play continues around the group with each person repeating the items mentioned and adding their own at the end. Each player must begin with the phrase "I'm going to the beach..." and they must list all items in their correct order. For younger children, add actions that can be helpful hints. For example, for flip flops, pretend to put a pair of flip flops on your feet. The game starts over when someone forgets an item or messes up the order. It's fun to change around the opening line, also. Instead of the beach you can go to the park, rodeo, grandma's house, or wherever.

**Consonant Crazy:** Choose a consonant letter from the alphabet and use that sound to sing every word of the song. Two tunes that work well are "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" and "Happy Birthday to You." Example: B = Bed, Boulders, Bees and Boes or Z = Zappy Zirthday, Zoo Zoo! This is a fun way to promote phonics and encourage reading readiness!

**5 Questions:** This game is a variation of 20 questions. Explain the game to the children. You are thinking of something and you will give 5 clues. After each clue, each child will have a chance to guess one time. If nobody guesses correctly, you will give a second clue and everyone will get a chance to guess again. Continue until you have given 5 clues. If nobody guesses, you get to tell them what you were thinking of. For example, you might say, "It's small." Everyone takes a guess. If no one guesses correctly, the next clue might be "It eats and drinks." If they still don't guess it, keep giving clues, like "It lives at my house", and "It barks."

**Color Mosaics:** Give each child a piece of white construction paper. Let them choose a favorite color. Then have them cut pieces of their selected color from pages that you have torn from old magazines. Using glue sticks, make a mosaic of color by gluing the pieces of colored paper onto the white paper.

**Freeze Tag:** One person is It and he or she chases the other players in an attempt to tag them. When players are tagged, they're frozen in place and can only be freed when another player crawls through their legs.

**Mix-It-Up Storytelling:** You and your children create your own story. Begin by giving the children the first line or two of the story (e.g. "Once upon a time there was a little girl who loved to go the circus. And then one day when she went, the craziest thing happened..."). Each storytelling participant then takes turns adding to the story. You can bring the story to an end any time by coming up with a conclusion. Afterwards, see if someone can retell the story. The children might even like to draw pictures for their story.

**Rhyme Time:** This is an easy rhyming game to play. Start by saying, "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with \_\_\_\_\_ and it starts with \_\_\_\_." For example, you could say "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with BED and it starts with H." The children should respond with 'HEAD'. For older kids, you don't have to provide the starting letter.

*Variation:* This time say, "I'm thinking of someone's name that rhymes with \_\_\_\_\_." For example, for Vanessa, you might say Banessa. For Brandon, you might say Strandon. Or have the children come up with their own rhyming name. They should say their real name first, followed by the rhyming name. For example, Vanessa would say, "Vanessa - Tanessa."

**Freeze Dancing:** Let the children dance to music being played on a CD player. Then turn the music off randomly and shout 'Freeze.' If they don't freeze, they can be out or you can just continue to play without eliminating those that don't freeze. With more kids, the elimination works well and they have fun with it.

**What's Missing?:** On a cookie sheet, place 5 or 6 small objects, such as a spoon, brush, book, toy, block, or crayon. Allow the children to look at all the items on the cookie sheet. Then have children turn around, so you can remove one of the objects from the tray and hide it out of sight. The children will try to guess which item is missing. You can add more objects to the tray for older children.

**Obstacle Courses:** Using various playground objects, develop a running, jumping, ducking course for children to run around on the playground. Talk about what comes 'first, second, third, next...last' etc., in the obstacle course. Have the kids line up. Then help them move through the course in the correct order. After they have learned the course, the kids can have a race or run just for fun! For additional fun, bring in a stop watch and time how long it takes a child to run the course.

\*Ideas for many of the above activities found on the following website:

<http://www.savvysource.com>