

Encouraging Development in Everyday Spaces

Want to make the most of your time with your child to help them grow? Look at your spaces and find many opportunities to explore and grow together. Awaken your senses as you go about your day. Here are some ideas to help you get started.



Enjoy the outdoors! Your child may notice the birds, squirrels, and plants outside.

- Watch your child's face to see where she is looking. The outdoors is a great opportunity to build language skills.
- Talk with your child about what she is seeing. You can expose her to rich vocabulary words when describing the colors you see, sounds you hear, and scents you smell. You are introducing your child to concepts such as opposites when you describe the warm sun versus the cold snow. These conversations build her cognitive abilities.
- Make time to climb or cruise around the playground to build your child's gross motor skills. Crawling is a new experience when you are moving on the soft grass.

Discover treasures indoors! Your home has treasures that your child will enjoy discovering.

- Your kitchen space may be filled with safe items to discover, such as wooden spoons, measuring cups, and unbreakable bowls. Practice stacking and nesting these items with your child. This builds his spatial awareness. Pretend to cook and feed each other with older infants and toddlers. Pretend play is a natural way to develop social skills such as turn-taking and manners.
- You might place a few "treasure baskets" in different rooms of your home where you can put items that are safe for your child to explore. Remember, even the laundry basket is full of interesting textures, colors, shapes, and sizes to talk about!
- Help your child master gross-motor spaces such as stairs, ramps, and furniture.

Tour new places and familiar spaces!

- Many places that you visit regularly are routine to you but may be fascinating and new to your child. You can explore the library, the grocery store, or the doctor's office with your child. Explain what others might be doing as they move around you.
- Adventure out with your child to a new place that makes you curious. This may help you share the excitement of discovery that your child experiences in familiar places.
- Walk at a different playground, stroll around a museum, or explore a local cultural festival. Ask questions and wait for your child to answer or indicate his interest by turning his eyes toward you or pointing at things he sees. Respond to your own questions and be a language model for your child.

 **For more information, visit the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse at <http://eiclearinghouse.org>**

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