



# Early Intervention Clearinghouse

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## You Have Everything You Need: Using Household Items for Early Intervention

Children learn and develop through play, but does that mean you need to spend a lot of money on expensive toys? No. In fact, the best toys are often common household items. Young children learn best when they are in natural settings with the people and materials that are familiar to them. Early intervention providers may use this principle to help you choose materials already in your home, teach you how to use everyday objects to achieve your child's developmental goals, and engage your child in activities using their interests.

Remember a "toy" is just a tool to support your child's developmental goals and "play" is just a method we use to teach. You play an important role in your child's everyday experiences. You help your child grow stronger through play. Next, we share a list of common household items and related activities that you can use to support your child's development.

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# ITEMS

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## Empty Plastic Bottles

Have you tried bottle bowling? This is a fun activity that can work on your child's gross motor skills. First, fill several plastic bottles with the same amount of water. To make it colorful, add paint or food coloring into the water. Set the bottles up like bowling pins. Grab a ball and ask your child to knock the bottles down! In addition to building gross motor skills, you can also boost cognitive and communication development by asking your child to identify the colors in the bottles.



## Muffin Tray

A muffin tray is not only for muffins. You can use the tray as a color matching game. Get a muffin tray, colorful plastic balls (use balls bigger than ping pong size to avoid choking hazards), and colored paper that matches the colors of the balls. Place the colored paper in the muffin tray and have your child match the right ball with the correct colored tray. You can also encourage your child to identify different colors. This activity builds both fine motor and cognitive skills.

## Peeling a Clementine or Banana

A very simple and healthy way to work on your child's small muscles (e.g., finger strength, pincer grasp, bilateral coordination) is to have your child help peel their fruit (e.g., clementines, bananas). To make it easier, you can start to peel the fruit and then have your child finish.



## Couch Cushions, Pillows, Cardboard Boxes, and Masking Tape

Do you want to work on your child's gross motor skills when it's cold or rainy? Gather couch cushions and pillows and arrange them in an obstacle course. If you have a large cardboard box, ask your child to crawl through it like a tunnel. Also, use masking tape to create lines on the floor and have your child to walk heel-to-toe on the line or jump over the line. The line can be straight or curvy. Then, join your child and have fun!



## Grocery Items

Just get home from the grocery store? To build your child's vocabulary and language skills, have your child name the products or encourage your child to describe the color and size of the products as you unpack the bags. Meanwhile, you can also play a guessing game by giving them three to five clues. For example, you may say "This item is a fruit. It looks round and red. It tastes juicy and yummy." Then encourage your child to guess what it is.

With a little creativity, you can use household items to create fun games between you and your child. If you have more questions on how to use household items to address your child's developmental outcomes, talk to your service coordinator or early intervention providers.

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# New Items in the Clearinghouse

## Outdoor Science Lab for Kids: 52 Family-Friendly Experiments for the Yard, Garden, Playground, and Park

Liz Lee Heinecke  
Quarry Books, 2016  
GE 115 .H45 2016



## Breathe, Mama, Breathe: 5-Minute Mindfulness for Busy Moms

Shonda Moralis  
The Experiment, 2017  
BF 311 .M6297 2017  
Also available as an **eBook**

## Retro Toddler: More Than 100 Old-School Activities to Boost Development

Anne H. Zachary  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
HQ 774.5 .Z33 2018

## Learning Is in Bloom: Cultivating Outdoor Experiences

Ruth A. Wilson  
Gryphon House, 2016  
LB1139.5 .S35 W549 2016



## The Design of Childhood: How the Material World Shapes Independent Kids

Alexandra Lange  
Bloomsbury, 2018  
GV 425 .L36 2018  
Also available as an **eBook**

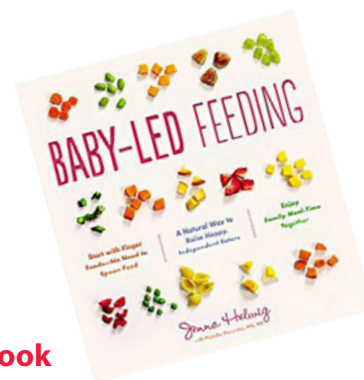
## Little Walks, Big Adventures: 50+ Ideas for Exploring With Toddlers

Erin Buhr  
Gryphon House, 2018  
HQ 782 .B867 2018  
Also available as an **eBook**



## Baby-Led Feeding: A Natural Way to Raise Happy, Independent Eaters

Jenna Helwig  
Houghton Mifflin  
Harcourt, 2018  
WS 130 .H3699 2018  
Also available as an **eBook**



## Be the One for Kids: You Have the Power to Change the Life of a Child

Ryan Sheehy  
Dave Burgess Consulting, 2018  
LB 1033 .S47 2018

## The Emotional Life of the Toddler

Alicia F. Lieberman  
Simon & Schuster, 2018  
HQ 774.5 .L54 2018  
Also available as an **eBook**

## We're All Wonders

R.J. Palacio  
Alfred A. Knopf, 2017  
PZ 7 .P17256we 2017



## Sensorimotor Interventions: Using Movement to Improve Overall Body Function

Cara Koscinski  
Sensory World, 2017  
QP 454 .S46 2017

## eBooks Are Here!

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# What Is a Developmental Therapist?

In early intervention, you may have several therapists or specialists working with your child and family. One of those team members may be a developmental therapist. This team member is uniquely qualified to consider the whole child and the impact of a child's development on the family.

A developmental therapist holds a degree in early childhood education or a related field and has also completed educational experiences or training in the following areas: typical and atypical child development, collaboration with families, intervention strategies, and assessment. The developmental therapist will view your child's overall development and enable families to help their children in areas of strengths and concerns. This might be done by

- helping to provide accommodations within different environments,
- recommending ways to use common household items to help achieve outcomes, and
- being a sounding board for a family's concerns.

**A developmental therapist works closely with families and additional members of a child's team, including the service coordinator, to ensure that the services provided are appropriate to a family's needs and desires.**

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The developmental therapist participates in the assessment process, assists in the development of the individualized family service plan (IFSP), and communicates services and strategies to all team members.

The developmental therapist also works with families to support the parent/child relationship, to help families find new ways to support their child's development, and to help the family understand their rights and responsibilities as the child transitions out of early intervention. In addition, the developmental therapist can support the family in learn-

ing to observe and interpret their child's behavior and help to identify resources that might be helpful to families.

The developmental therapist works with a child and family in the home or another place that the child visits often (e.g., child care center). At each visit, the developmental therapist will review the child's progress with the family or provider, discuss any new concerns or updates, and then model play interactions with the child. Upon completion of the visit, the developmental therapist reviews the day's activities and plans for the next session.

A developmental therapist is an important member of the EI team. By looking at a child's overall development, the developmental therapist can enable a family to support their child in all areas of development.

## What Is Bagless Early Intervention?

Early intervention providers, including developmental therapists, speech therapists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists, use bagless intervention to help improve a parent's competence and confidence in supporting their children's development in natural environments. Typically, early intervention service providers have brought bags of toys with them into the family home to address a child's skills and goals. However, this approach may not always be appropriate. Instead, when service providers use toys or everyday items already available in a family's home, parents may participate more in early intervention and engage in similar activities with the child even when the service provider is not present.

Bagless intervention encourages providers to focus on routines, activities, and materials that are familiar to the child when addressing IFSP outcomes. This allows the caregiver to observe and participate in an activity that happens naturally within the child's context. For example, a provider might focus on fine motor skills during a mealtime interaction. A toddler can peel a clementine or pick grapes off the vine. The provider can also observe the utensils that the family uses and determine what modifications are necessary, if any. A narrow handle on a spoon can be adapted by securing a sponge hair roller or a small stress ball around the handle.

Bagless intervention is flexible, individualized, and adaptable. The parent-child interaction continues long after the provider has left the home because the toys/supplies used during the visit are still with the child!

Written in collaboration with the family development early intervention team of the Military Families Learning Network (MFLN).

For more information, visit <https://go.illinois.edu/bagless>

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