

Before You Begin...

A simple paper bag sparks lots of learning!

You can use paper bags—and these easy-to-make puppets—in some of the activities on the rest of the cards. Try copying these faces onto one or more small bags or draw any faces you want. You might draw a face for each family member so you can act out funny family memories or stories together.



Stop, Go, Slow!

BASIC CONCEPTS

Stoplights help children recognize shapes, colors, and symbols.

Inside

Use a paper bag, construction paper, and glue to make your own stand-up traffic light, or draw one. Talk about the different shapes you use to make the traffic light, like circles. Can you name other things that are round?

Outside

The game "Red light, Green light" is all about following directions! When the leader says "green light," players can move. "Yellow light" means move slowly, and "red light" means freeze.

On the Go

Notice traffic lights (and "walk/don't walk" signals), explain what each color means, and talk about how they keep neighborhoods safe.



Paper Bag Pretend

LANGUAGE &
LITERACY

Pretend play expands children's vocabulary.



Inside

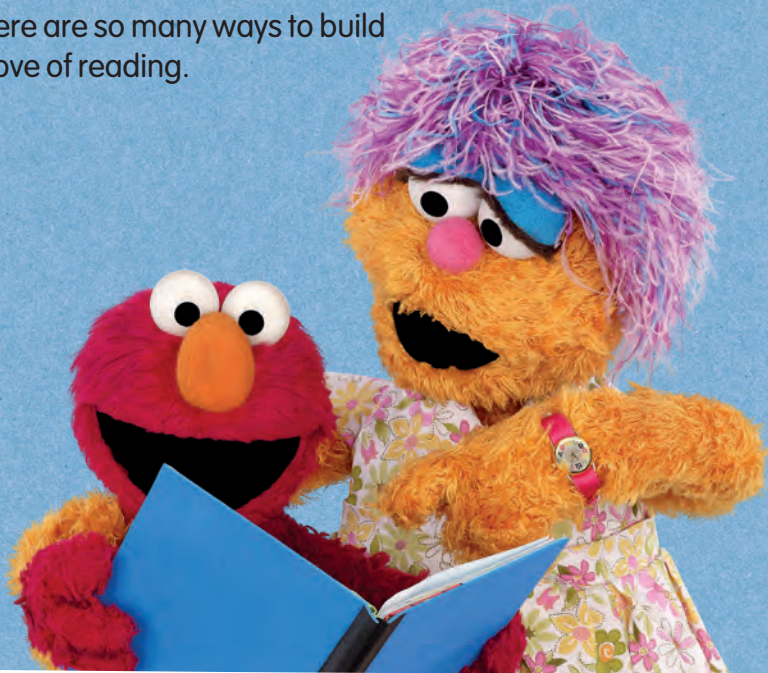
Invite children to decorate and then wear the paper bag as a hat. It could become a helmet, cowboy hat, and so on. Build vocabulary by acting out stories about these roles and characters.

Outside

Bring a few extra paper bags to the park or playground and suggest that children offer one to a new friend to help spark play (for instance, a child might say, "This is my crown. What kind of hat would you like?").

Reading Is Everywhere

There are so many ways to build a love of reading.



Inside

Read a book together and let children turn the pages. Talk about what you see on each page and ask how characters may be feeling and why. Don't forget to check your local library! Libraries usually have weekly story times, and a librarian would love to help you choose books.

Outside

Tell imaginative stories about what you see around you, taking turns adding sentences (for instance: "That bird looks busy." "She's flying to meet her squirrel friend for a tea party.")

On the Go

Play "Letter Detective" to help children notice and identify words and letters ("I spy a blue letter *N* on a big sign..." or "I see the word *stop*").

Paper Bag Math & Science

MATH &
SCIENCE

Spark learning with everyday items.

Inside

Make a "feely bag" of items with different shapes and textures. Try a cotton ball, large ball of foil, or crayon! As children reach inside, help them describe and guess what they feel.

Outside

Collect fallen leaves or petals, small rocks, or twigs in your paper bag. Together at home, count, examine, and sort them in different ways: big/little, rough/smooth, green/not green, and so on.

Anywhere

Make your paper bag puppet count to 10 and beyond! Take turns counting, going as high as you can.



Paper Bag Language Learning

LANGUAGE &
LITERACY

Spark indoor learning with everyday items.



Inside

- Have your puppet sing the alphabet song!
- Write letters of the alphabet on small slips of paper and put them in the paper bag. When children pull one out, think together of things that begin with that letter and invite children to draw one of them.
- Storytelling Bag: Write words on slips of paper and put them in the paper bag (try *red*, *blue*, *shiny*, *striped*, *dragon*, *fish*, *truck*, *rocket*, and *spider*). Have children pull a few slips of paper from the bag. Use them to take turns adding to a story.

Birding & Learning

SCIENCE

Kids are natural explorers, and birds are almost everywhere.



Inside

- Look out the window and notice birds or close your eyes and listen for them.
- Online or in the library, learn about birds you've seen or are curious about.
- Draw or trace pictures of birds. Point out beaks, webbed feet, tail feathers, and so on.

Outside & On the Go

Notice and observe birds closely. Get curious! Talk together about how they move and fly. Do they seem to stay alone, or in small or large groups? How are the birds you see similar and different? You can try this with any creature you observe.



Rainbow Hunt

LANGUAGE &
LITERACY

Noticing and naming colors helps build observation skills and vocabulary.



Inside

With paint samples from a hardware store, challenge children to match the individual colors to things around your home. Use words such as *exact*, *brighter*, *lighter*, and *darker*.

Outside

Look around for things in different colors. Say, for instance, "Let's skip to the yellow sign" or "Can you hop all the way to the red swing?"

On the Go

Take turns naming fruits and vegetables in each color (red: apple, cherry, strawberry, red pepper).

Sky Science

SCIENCE

The sky is full of learning opportunities, whether you're stargazing outside or noticing the morning sunlight fill your home.



Inside & Outside

- Together, notice sunrises and sunsets...and moonrises and moonsets too! Explain that the Earth moves around the Sun...that's why the light is always changing in our sky.
- Expand vocabulary as you look at the sky together (use words such as *dusk*, *dawn*, *twilight*, *constellation*, and so on).
- Enjoy a quiet moment of wishing upon a star together. End with a "star stretch": stand on tiptoes and reach your arms up as high as you can!

Wiggle & Jiggle, Move & Groove

The outdoors is great for playful physical activity, but there's plenty you can do inside to help kids get the movement their growing bodies need...while learning!



Copy Grover's moves.

Count stairs as you go up and down.

Use masking or painters' tape to create hopscotch on a rug or floor and invite children to count or say letters in order as they hop.

Stretch... It's a great "brain break"! Together, try a "Letter Stretch" (sing the alphabet song and move around a little as you stretch).

Leaf Learning

SCIENCE &
MATH

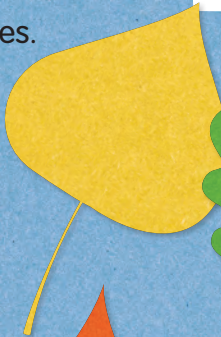
Nature is full of learning opportunities.

Inside

Look at these leaves and talk together about how they are the same and different (for instance, two are yellow, two are the same shape, four are pointy, and so on).

Outside

Notice leaves on a walk (on the sidewalk, ground, tree, plant, and so on) and talk about how they are the same and different. Or collect leaves outside and put them in a paper bag. At home, lay them out and compare and contrast them. You can also put white paper over a leaf and gently rub with the side of a crayon to reveal an image of the leaf.



Brain-Building Boxes

LANGUAGE &
LITERACY

A simple box can take children on a learning adventure, promote storytelling and family bonding, and more.



Inside

Turn a shoebox or any small box into a “family-story treasure chest” by filling it with pictures or souvenirs from family outings, like a rock you saved from a hike. From time to time, go through the box together and retell the story of each object.

Outside

With markers or crayons, a large box can become a fort, a race car, a spaceship, or a cozy nest to rest in. Children’s imagination leads the way!

Curiosity & Cardboard

Turn used simple household items (such as used cardboard paper-towel or toilet-paper rolls) into teaching tools.



Inside

Help children tape the rolls together to create chutes, tunnels, and towers. Follow children's curiosity and experiment together: What objects travel fastest through a chute? If you balance your tower on a tabletop, what can you do to keep it from falling over?

Outside & On the Go

Tape together two rolls to create "binoculars." Looking through them can help children slow down and focus their observations! Try to notice and follow cloud shapes or airplanes or examine things that are near and far.

Paper Plate Play

LANGUAGE &
LITERACY

A paper plate can be so much more!

Inside

Invite children to draw different “feeling faces” (such as *happy*, *sad*, *nervous*, and *frustrated*) on four paper plates. Use them as puppets to act out stories, introducing similar words for each feeling (for instance, for happy, you might also use *delighted*, *glad*, or *joyful*).

Outside

Write letters on plates, one letter per plate. Spread them out and take turns tossing a small ball or toy, trying to land on a plate. Together, think of an animal or a movement that starts with the letter of the plate you land on, then move like that animal (A is for ant—so crawl like ants) or do that movement (H is for hop).



Helping Hands

MATH

When you're stuck inside on a rainy day—or simply have a lot to get done around the house—kids can help and learn at the same time.

Laundry Learning

Ask children to help you match socks or sort clean laundry into piles (categories may be towels and sheets, children's clothes and grown-up clothes, or shirts and pants). Older children can help you fold towels or sheets—point out it's always easier with two people! Use language such as fold in half, fold into quarters, match the corners, and so on.

Match Up

That kitchen drawer full of plastic containers and lids can become children's valuable brain-building time! Before you start your own work, like making dinner, put the contents of the drawer onto a table or the floor and ask children to help match all the containers to lids.



Making Cents of Money

MATH,
FINANCIAL
EDUCATION

Starting conversations about money early lays a strong foundation of financial literacy.



Inside

Explain that people make choices about how to spend the money they have. Build awareness of making thoughtful choices in all areas of life (for instance, ask children to help you choose the right size salad bowl as they set the table, or choose clothes that are right for the day's weather).

Outside & On the Go

Together, notice the different jobs people are doing. Explain that people work hard at their jobs to earn money so they can buy things they need and want.