

Preschool Family Fun Guide

The Pennsylvania One Book 2021 “Many Books, One Pennsylvania Community” Program engages young children, families, and caregivers to read, explore, and play with special emphasis on emotional resilience and wellness. The purpose of this guide is to provide activity ideas, family engagement, and learning at home.

How to Raise a Reader: Talk. Write. Read. Play. Sing.

Doing those five things with your child every day helps them build pre-reading skills. Talking builds vocabulary; if you’ve heard a word before, it is much easier to sound it out when you try to read it. Writing and coloring improves the fine motor skills needed to hold a pencil and shows children that letters represent sounds. Reading together creates a magical love of books and stories. Playing enhances imaginative play and encourages language development. Lastly, when you sing, you slow down and emphasize the different sounds in words. All of the tips and activities in this guide will help you talk, write, read, play, and sing together.

- Read together every day.
- Set up a comfortable place to snuggle and read. The act of being close together adds another positive feeling to reading.
- Create sound effects or use fun voices as you read a book.
- Ask open-ended questions while you read. For example, you could ask, “Does ice cream make you happy?” which has a yes or no answer. Instead, consider asking, “I see that the bunny in this book is happy because she has ice cream. What makes you happy?” This question has many possible answers.
- Reading the same book multiple times may seem boring; however, children enjoy the feeling of knowing what is coming next.
- If you find an author or illustrator that you like, read more books by them.

- If you like reading stories, flipping through a magazine, or delighting in the illustrations in a book, let your child see how much you are enjoying reading for pleasure.
- Point out all of the different types of print in your environment, such as signs in stores and labels on food. When possible, read aloud instructions, recipes, or street signs to help children make connections between the print, words, and sounds in their world.
- Look for activities that extend upon the themes, characters, and plotlines of books. These activities help children build their knowledge base and enjoyment level of the book.



Balloon Bellies

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - 1.5.PK.A – Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- ▶ **Approaches to Learning Through Play – Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - AL.3.PK.A – Use music, art, and/or stories to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Taking slow deep breaths is an easy way to calm yourself down. Help your child learn through this simple shared activity.

Materials:

- Just your body

Directions:

- Tell your child to put their hands on their stomach. You may want to model doing the same thing. Tell them to fill up their belly like it is a balloon. Can they feel their belly rise? Now let all the air out of the balloon. Can they feel their belly fall?
- If they are having trouble feeling it, or just for fun, have them put their hands on your belly as you take slow, deep breaths. Be sure to overemphasize filling up your belly with air. Encourage them to try breathing like you are.
- Talk about filling up their belly balloon 5 times whenever they are mad.

Extensions:

- Add another level of fun by finding out what else you can feel through the belly. What do you feel when you laugh? What does the belly feel like when you bounce in your seat or jump?
- Do you have a pet? Can you see their belly breaths? This can be easiest to see when your pet is sleeping.
- Flower Breaths is another way to practice this activity. Hold your hand into a tight fist (flower bud) while you breathe in. As you breathe out, spread your fingers wide into a blooming flower. You can even blow on your fist to help the flower open up. What kind of flower is your hand?
- Sesame Street has a great song about breathing to calm yourself down when you feel like a monster. Search for “Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat Sing ‘Belly Breathe’ with Elmo” on YouTube or [use this link](#).



Wiggles, Wiggles, Everywhere

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - 10.4.PK.A – Demonstrate coordination of body movement in active play.
 - 10.1.PK.B – Identify and locate body parts.

Help your child gain a sense of their body while learning the body parts. Knowing the parts of the body is also useful knowledge as children learn about health and the body in school.

Materials:

- Space to move around

Directions:

- Name a body part. Shake, wiggle, or dance with just that body part. Can you move just your big toe? What about your nose? Shoulders? Belly?
- Add some music to the fun. Start some music, say a body part, and wiggle that body part until the music stops. Then start again with another body part. Who can dance the silliest? Be sure to get the whole family involved.

Focus Time!

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Scientific Thinking and Technology and Expression – Exploring, Processing, and Problem-Solving**
 - 3.1.PK.A.9 – Participate in simple investigations about living and/or nonliving things to answer a question or to test a prediction.
- ▶ **Approaches to Learning Through Play – Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - AL.2.PK.C – Attempt to accomplish challenging tasks by employing familiar and new strategies as needed.

This simple activity helps kids focus while building strong observation skills that they will need later for science.

Directions:

- Go to a park and pick one thing to focus on. A great example is the grass. Try to learn as much as you can about the grass. What does it feel like? Feel it with your hands and with your feet. Does it feel different? What does it smell like? What color is it?
- This activity can also be completed at home. Observe an ice cube as it melts. Melt an ice cube inside, then melt another one outdoors on a sunny day. Do you notice anything different? Grab a favorite blanket. Does it smell like anything?
- Spend 5 or 10 minutes observing and talking about that one object.



Extensions:

- Once you've learned how to focus and study objects, test your skills. Grab 3-4 oranges (or other fruit, but make sure they are all the same type of fruit). Pull out one orange and study it closely. Notice and remember as much as you can about your orange. Put the orange back with the others and mix them up. Can you find your orange again? What special things made you recognize your orange?

Edible Art



PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - 10.5.PK.A – Use hands, fingers, and wrists to manipulate objects.
 - 10.5.PK.B – Coordinate eye and hand movements to perform a task.
- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - 9.1.V.PK.B – Combine a variety of materials to create a work of art.

We tend to rush through mealtimes. Take time to slow down and enjoy a meal together while being creative. This activity also works on fine motor skills as your child manipulates the food. Finger strength and movement are important building blocks for being able to hold a pencil and write later.

Materials:

- Handheld foods: banana slices, blueberries, cooked and cooled spaghetti or other pasta, pieces of chicken, cooked and cooled broccoli, crackers, etc.
- If you are a little more comfortable with a mess, add applesauce or hummus.



Directions:

- Ask your child to create a drawing with the food. Can they make a smiley face? How about the first letter of their name?
- After creating the work of art, eat it piece by piece. Eat the nose off the smiley face and then the ears.





Songs and Rhymes

Talking and singing about feelings even when it isn't an intense moment helps to normalize them. It also helps to remind children about appropriate ways to express emotion. Add some of these to your typical song repertoire.

"If You're Happy and You Know It (feelings version)"

*If you're happy and you know it
clap your hands*

*If you're happy and you know it
clap your hands*

*If you're happy and you know it, then your face
will surely show it*

*If you're happy and you know it
clap your hands*

*If you're sad and you know it
let yourself cry*

*If you're sad and you know it
let yourself cry*

*If you're sad and you know it, then your face will
surely show it*

*If you're sad and you know it
let yourself cry*

*If you're mad and you know it
take a deep breath*

*If you're mad and you know it
take a deep breath*

*If you're mad and you know it, then your face will
surely show it*

*If you're mad and you know it
take a deep breath*

*If you're silly and you know it
laugh out loud*

*If you're silly and you know it
laugh out loud*

*If you're silly and you know it, then your face will
surely show it*

*If you're silly and you know it
laugh out loud*

Sing related songs while doing yoga with children to add a fun and silly element to the practice. Try doing boat pose together. If you are unfamiliar with the pose, [this fun video shows you how it works](#) (or search for "Cosmic Kids Yoga Boat" on YouTube). Sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" while trying to hold the pose. Over time, can you hold the pose for the whole song?

Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream

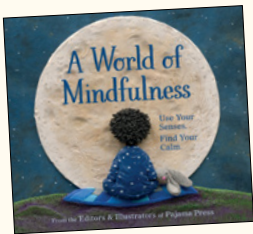
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily

Life is but a dream



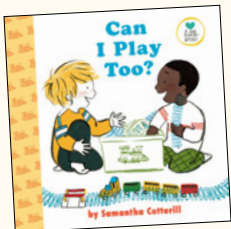
Books to Share

There are many recently published books that help children learn about emotions, mindfulness, and self-care. Try one of these titles or ask for more suggestions at your library.



A World of Mindfulness. Erin Alladin. Pajama Press, 2020.

Take time to experience the world through all of your senses. The work of fourteen artists accompanies a strong sense of self. Read the book all the way through or flip to a page and look for ways to act out what is happening.



Can I Play Too? Samantha Cotterill. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2020.

Two boys have fun with a train set until one becomes selfish and bossy. A thoughtful teacher helps the boy read the social cues of his friends so that they can play happily again.



The Big, Angry Roar. Jonny Lambert. Tiger Tales, 2019.

Cub gets angry when he gets in trouble for a fight with his little sister. The other animals of the jungle help him learn how to channel his anger.



Why Do We Cry? Fran Pintadera. Illustration, Ana Sender. Kids Can Press, 2020.

When a child asks his mom why we cry, she shares a variety of reasons, including happiness. The last two pages include facts about tears and a couple of activities.



Fergal and the Bad Temper. Robert Starling. Imprint, 2019.

When Fergal the dragon doesn't like something, he snorts angry fire. It's not long before his friends have had enough. Fergal learns how to control his anger by watching what other animals do to calm down.

App to Try

Breathe, Think, Do by Sesame Street



The makers of Sesame Street have created a free app to help children learn how to de-stress and ease frustration by thinking about solutions to common kid problems. The app is available in English and Spanish and features a parent section.

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