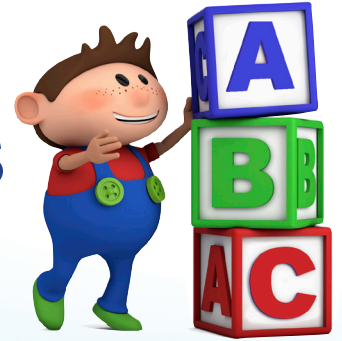




RECOGNIZING Words and Letters to Build Brains



Letters and words are all around us! Point them out and make everyday moments Brain Building moments, too!

Post an alphabet chart.

You'll make letters more recognizable and have a reference when you talk about letters and sounds.

Aa alligator	Bb bear	Cc cat	Dd donkey	Ee elephant	Ff flamingo
Gg giraffe	Hh hippopotamus	Ii iguana	Jj jaguar	Kk kangaroo	Ll lion
Mm macaw	Nn newt	Oo ostrich	Pp pig	Qq quail	Rr rhinoceros
Ss sheep	Tt tiger	Uu urial	Vv vole	Ww wolf	Xx x-ray tetra
Yy yak	Zz zebra				

Build sight word awareness.

Label the word "table" or "chair" or "door" so that a whole word is connected with a familiar object.

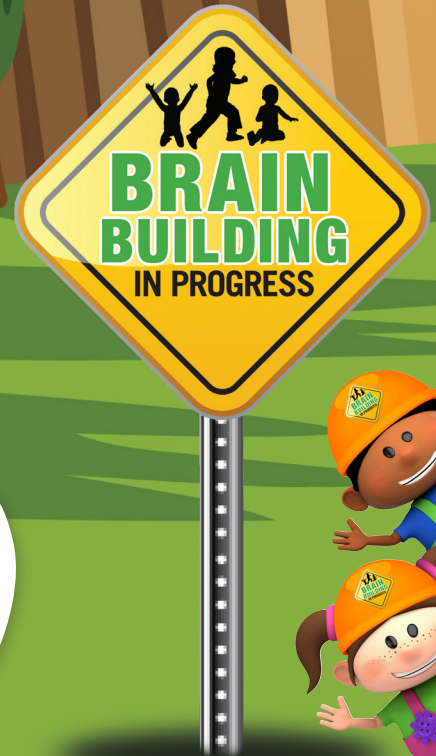


Go on an ALPHABET HUNT

Letters and words are all around us. Spot them together when you're shopping, taking a walk, eating in a restaurant or riding in a car, bus or subway.

- A** Find three letters.
- B** Count how many times you can find each letter.
- C** Which letter did you find most?
- D** Which letter did you find the least?

ABCD



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WRITING to Build Brains



When children see adults writing, they learn that it's an **important skill**. Here's how to make everyday moments Brain Building moments, too!



Be a model.

- When you send an email or fill out a form, talk through what you are doing.
- Write lists together, fill out a calendar or write a letter to a friend.

Encourage writing.

- Have paper, pencils, crayons or markers available and in easy reach.
- Take them with you when you're on the go.

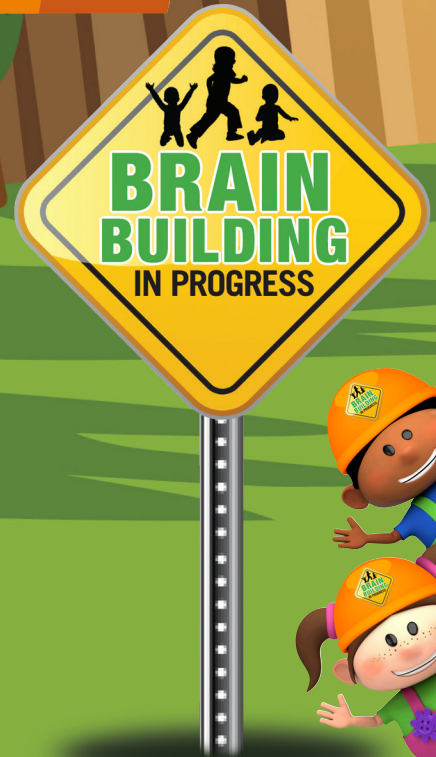


Make a homemade book.

- It could be a story that they imagine with their own drawings.
- Or, tell a story about family, friends, pets or an event using photos. Together, you'll create a keepsake while encouraging an understanding of books, the parts of books and the process of reading.

Have fun together!

- 1 Fill a cookie sheet with shaving cream or sand and **trace** the letters.
- 2 Write words together on a steamy mirror or window.
- 3 Have a **conversation** about how this kind of writing feels different from writing with a pencil or crayon.



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BUILDING Little Hands to Build Brains

Little hands need to be strong to hold writing tools and form letters clearly. Here's how to build that strength while turning everyday moments into Brain Building moments, too!



Build writing muscles with a “workout.”

- Squeeze balls of play dough.
- Count how many “reps” you both can do.

Snap! Crumple! Pop!

Make some noise while you build muscles.

- Little hands love to snap green beans or shell peas.
- Tear and crumple different kinds of paper.
- Pop the bubble wrap that comes in a package.
- Talk about all the different sounds you’ve made and how noisy your hands can be.



Have cutting edge fun.

Cutting paper, play dough, foam, fabric or other materials (with child-sized safety scissors) strengthens hand muscles and develops hand-eye coordination.

- Start by practicing opening and closing the scissors.
- Ask how it feels to cut a piece of paper.
- Does it feel different from cutting play dough or foam?



Follow a scissor trail!

Draw straight lines, swirly paths or zig-zaggy trails and cut along them with scissors. Build up to more complicated trails or patterns or thicker papers such as grocery bags or cereal boxes.



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COUNTING to Build Brains

Young children are learning important emerging math skills. Help them to build awareness of numbers in the world around them. Here's how to turn everyday moments into Brain Building moments, too!



Show that numbers are a part of everyday life.

- **Count, write numbers and problem solve** as you do everyday things or run errands.
- **Notice numbers when you see them** – in addresses, the prices in a store or on a keyboard or phone.
- **Ask questions like**, “If I have two apples, do I have more than someone with six apples?”



Count out loud together.

- **Post a number chart**, just as you would the alphabet.
- **Point to it when numbers come up in conversation.** Follow the line of numbers in order, naming each one.

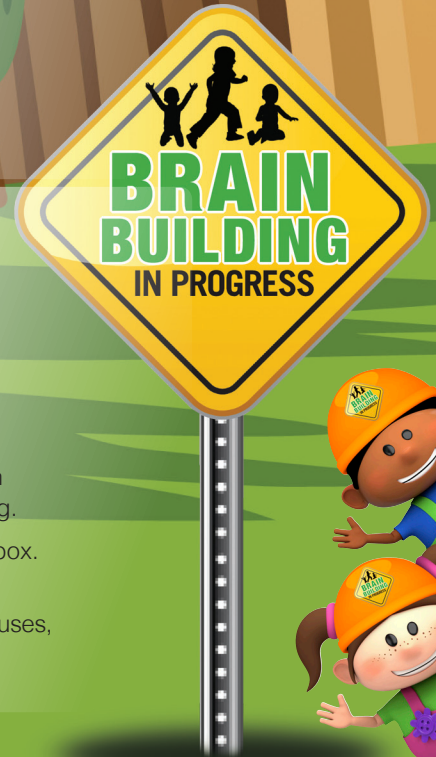
Brain Building by the Numbers!

In the car: Count the number of times you see signs or objects. Start counting when you enter a tunnel to see how many numbers it takes to reach the end. Read the numbers on signs out loud.

At a grocery store: Count the number of pieces of fruit you are buying as you put them in the bag. Have your “helper” unload the cart and count how many items you are purchasing.

At the playground: Count as you push the swing. Draw numbers in the sand in the sandbox. Ask questions like, “How many children are playing on the slide?”

On a walk: How many steps does it take to get from here to there? Find the numbers on houses, or count how many cars or trees you see.



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Talking About FEELINGS to Build Brains

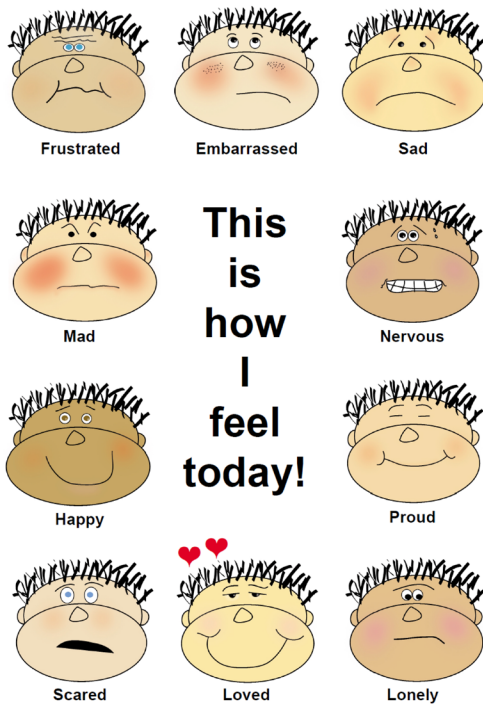
Conversations help to build a young child's brain. The ones that you have about feelings will also help them develop important social-emotional skills. Children who can recognize and express their feelings will be better prepared for kindergarten. Here's how to turn these everyday moments into Brain Building moments, too!

Problem solve.

Help an angry or frustrated child problem solve. Suggest strategies such as taking the next turn, finding another toy, or making a different choice. Role play to practice problem-solving skills. This will help them as they develop friendships and engage in school.

Talk about feelings.

Use the pictures of faces below to name and understand feelings and the feelings of others. Post it next to a mirror so children can see the expression on their face, or compare it to the pictures of characters in books.



Reproduced from the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/2006/feelingchart.pdf>



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Reading to Build Brains



The back-and-forth conversations and interactions that happen when you read together build a young child's brain. **Here's how to make everyday moments Brain Building moments, too!**

Explore the book before reading it aloud.

- A** Look at the front cover.
- B** Talk about what you think is going to happen in the book.



Pay attention to pictures.

Young children use the clues in pictures to help them understand, process, remember and retell stories as a foundation for learning to read. Do a "picture walk" and discuss what you see on each page. Look at the pictures and ask them to tell you what they think is taking place.

Express yourself!

The excitement in your voice is an invitation to become part of the experience.

- A** Have an ongoing conversation about what is going on in the story.
- B** Ask and answer questions about what is happening in the book.
- C** Point out things on the page and encourage observations.
- D** Connect what happens in the book to your child's experiences.

HAVE FUN TOGETHER!

- ★ **Choose books that match interests** – whether it's dinosaurs, trucks, puppies or princesses, they'll be more engaged.
- ★ **Relax!** If a child is wiggling or fidgeting, it doesn't mean they aren't listening. For some children, moving their bodies helps them to concentrate. It's okay if a child doesn't sit for a whole story.
- ★ **Be prepared to read the same book over and over again.** Memorizing stories can often be an early step to becoming a reader.



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Talking About Books



Here's how to explore books so that you turn reading moments into Brain Building moments, too!



Make reading a back-and-forth activity.

- A** : Interact and engage. Don't read to a child, read with him or her. Ask questions and let your child turn the pages.
- B** : Having a discussion builds language and literacy skills, as well as connections in the developing brain.

Connect the book to real life and the larger world.

The excitement in your voice is engaging and is an invitation to become part of the experience.

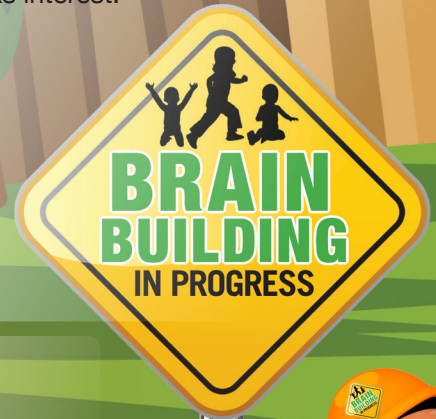
- A** : Are the characters like people they know?
- B** : Did something that happens in the book happen to them?
- C** : Share what you know about where the story takes place or something in the book that sparks interest.

Introduce new concepts.

- A** : Explain how a book reads from front to the back or left to right.
- B** : Point out that every sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a punctuation mark.
- C** : Hunt for exclamation points. They mean that something exciting has happened in the story!

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- ★ What does this picture tell us about what might happen next in the story?
- ★ Did that ever happen to you?
- ★ What might happen next?
- ★ Where did he go? Why did she do that?
- ★ How do you think that made her feel?
- ★ What was your favorite part? Why did you like it?
- ★ I wonder if...?
- ★ That was a great question. Do you have more?



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