

Vroom Tips™



These print-at-home tip sheets include a mix of Vroom Brain Building Activities™ for children ages 0-5. Share them, put them up on your fridge, or carry them around—whatever helps remind you that brain-building moments are all around you.

Brain Building Basics™

We've made the science of early learning simple! Remember these 5 actions to help build your child's brain anytime. They're color coded for easy finding.

Look

Children use their eyes to learn. See what catches your child's attention and talk about it. Or connect eye-to-eye, then smile, chat, hug, or make funny faces!

Follow

Young children learn best when you follow their lead. Tune into your child's words, sounds, movements and ideas! Then respond with your own words and actions.

Chat

Children's brains light up when you talk, sing, or make sounds back and forth with them. Chat about your day, food, and what's around you, or string sounds together for a fun conversation!

Take Turns

Children learn from taking turns when you play, talk, or explore. After they go, take your turn. Then repeat: they go, you go, they go, you go!

Stretch

Children's brains grow strong when you help them stretch their learning further. Keep a moment going: ask your child a question that starts with what, when, where, how or why!

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Space Explorer

Show your child the world from different points of view. When they're in your arms, crouch down low or gently lift them up in the air. Describe what you're doing and respond to their reactions. "You're as high as the light! Look what you can see up here!"

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



Moving your child around and talking about what you're doing helps them learn about important things like shape and space. Children learn these ideas through back and forth conversations, where you follow their lead and respond to their reactions.

#122

Learn more at vroom.org

Tummy Drum

When your child is on their back, gently pat their tummy. Sing a favorite song and tap along to the beat on your baby's tummy. Try patting fast and slow. Do they smile or kick? Keep going as long as they seem to be having fun.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background



When you share different sounds and sensations with your child, you're introducing them to concepts of math, rhythm, and music. Connecting with them by touching and talking helps them feel safe and taken care of, laying a strong foundation for learning and growth.

#455

Learn more at vroom.org

Toothy Wonder

When you're brushing your child's teeth, look in the mirror together. Talk about how your teeth are the same and different from theirs. For example, you have more teeth, and bigger teeth, but you both can make funny faces. Follow their lead and talk about what they notice.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Comparing things that are the same and different will help your child sort their experiences into categories and make connections—skills that are important in reading, math, and science in the future. This also builds their connection with you!

#342

Learn more at vroom.org

Bye-Bye Bubbles!

While cleaning up, give your child a soapy sponge and a large container with a little water so they can help wash safe kitchen items. Scrub up lots of bubbles together. When you're ready say, "Bye-bye bubbles!" and show them how to rinse the bubbles away. Encourage them to try it.

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



You're helping your child think like a scientist as they explore the water and bubbles. This kind of play will help them with learning math and science later on. Plus, when you include them in daily chores, you help them feel confident and independent.

#410

Learn more at vroom.org

Open-Close, In-Out

Working in the kitchen? Give your child some safe plastic containers to open and close. Say "open" and "close" as they play. Show them how to take things, like spoons, in and out of the containers. Say "in" and "out." Make sure to talk to them about what they're doing.

Suggested Age

#REF!

Brainy Background



Your child is thinking like a scientist by seeing how things work when they open and close containers, put things in, and pull things out. You can even give them different lids for the containers to see which ones fit and which ones don't.

#603

Learn more at vroom.org

Stair Count

When your child is learning to walk up and down stairs, hold their hand, and count each step you take. This helps them become familiar with their numbers and it's fun!

Suggested Age

15 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Making connections between numbers and what they stand for (such as the steps your child climbs or the fingers on their hands), helps your child see that numbers aren't just words they memorize. They actually stand for quantities of things. This is the first step in learning math.

#51

Learn more at vroom.org

Ins and Outs

At the market, point out the ins and outs with your child. Are they IN the cart? Is a worker taking fruit OUT of the box? Did you put food IN a bag? Are you walking OUT the door? Play often enough and they will get it and find ins and outs of their own!

Suggested Age

18 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



You're helping your child begin to think and talk about where objects are in relationship to one other. This helps them organize their understanding of the world. It takes time to develop but it is important for doing math in the future.

#271

Learn more at vroom.org

Laundry Sort

During laundry time, pull out a single sock and see if your child can find a match for it in the laundry basket. Once they get it, let them pull out another sock and you find the match. Talk about the clues you use to find the match.

Suggested Age

18 months - 2 years

Brainy Background



Your child is figuring out what's the same and what's different. This is an important early math skill that they'll use to organize their thinking and solve math problems later in school.

#504

Learn more at vroom.org

Category Convos

Tell your child about a favorite food. Ask them to name a food they like that's in the same category, like fruit, but different. Keep count of how many different things you both like in the same category. Play the same game with something else, like clothes!

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



This game is teaching your child about categories; things that are the same in important ways, though different in others. They're also learning about your likes and dislikes compared to theirs, helping them learn about other people.

#49

Learn more at vroom.org

Up and Over

Ask your child to find an object like a stick or rock and place it on the ground near you. Encourage them to explore different ways of moving over it: Can they jump? Hop over on just one foot? Run and then jump? Take turns jumping with them and talk together about how far you both go.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



It takes focus and self-control for your child to manage how their body moves, as well as flexible thinking to come up with different ideas. Fun experiences with math ideas like space and distance help them develop a foundation for learning now and in the future.

#204

Learn more at vroom.org

Splish, Splash, Pour

Grab two cups before bathtime. Give your child a cup and pour water into theirs. Then ask them to pour the water back into yours. Count the number of times out loud and see how many times you can go back and forth!

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



Supporting children as they explore and discover will help them become learners for life. Counting out loud also helps them build a stronger sense of numbers.

#351

Learn more at vroom.org

Sight Search

Being out and about is a great time to be on the lookout for what's around. As you go, point out what you see. Do you see birds, trees, leaves, people? Ask your child, "How many do you see?" Take turns pointing to different things all over!

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



This type of activity helps your child learn to estimate numbers. They're using what they know about numbers and applying it. Being able to estimate is an important part of learning and using math.

#185

Learn more at vroom.org

Big Time

Play “Big Time” to make waiting time fly by. Hold up an object—a magazine, an item from a bag, or a toy. Ask your child, “Can you find something bigger than this?” After they do, then ask, “Can you find something smaller than this?”

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background



When you take turns asking questions, this game becomes a back and forth conversation about size. It is a chance for them to focus on and explore the idea of size—something they will use to organize their understanding of the world.

#225

Learn more at vroom.org

Sort & Clean

Encourage your child to sort objects during cleanup. Talk about what you’re doing: “All of the small lids go in the little bowl and the big lids go in the big bowl.” Then mix it up and ask them to put the small objects in the big bowl. You can also sort by shape or color.

Suggested Age

18 months - 4 years

Brainy Background



Being able to group things by size or color is an important skill. When you switch the rules of the game, you’re helping them learn how to think flexibly, use self-control and not go on autopilot.

#408

Learn more at vroom.org

Simple Steps

Make cleanup more fun by starting small. Say something like, “You can pick up these three books first.” After that, encourage your child to choose their next simple step. As they get the hang of it, increase the number of objects and add more steps.

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



By helping your child break tasks down into steps, you encourage them to practice using strategies to achieve goals. They can use these strategies to take on challenges in the future.

#423

Learn more at vroom.org

Finger Marker

While waiting, draw a shape (like a circle or a wiggly line), using your fingertip on your child's open palm. Can they name it? Repeat the same shape until they can guess what it is. Take turns back and forth, drawing and guessing shapes.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



When you play "Finger Marker," you give your child a chance to put together what they know about how shapes look with how shapes feel. It's a new and fun way to learn shapes through the sense of touch!

#220

Learn more at vroom.org

One, Two, Three Foods

Pick three food words such as "banana, apple, pear" to make a word pattern. Repeat with your child three times. Have them pick three food words and make a pattern three times: "fork, spoon, plate." Talk about what word comes first, second, and third.

Suggested Age

#REF!

Brainy Background



When your child is choosing words, listening to words, and making patterns with you, they're creating and then using a rule. Understanding and applying rules in will help them learn math concepts as they grow.

#577

Learn more at vroom.org

Comparison Shopping

A store can be a great place to build your child's brain on the go. Give them something like a banana and an apple to hold. "Which is heavier? Which is larger? Which is softer?" You can do this with any items, in any aisle, in any store!

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Games like these help your child to think like a scientist. They're taking in the world around them and guessing how things compare or fit together. Repeat the game a few times with different objects for them to compare. Remember, repetition is how we learn!

#257

Learn more at vroom.org

Bath Count

Think of all the things you can count together at bathtime! Toes, of course, but what about the number of times you pour water on your child? Let your child think of things to count too. Take turns counting and talk about what you're doing.

Suggested Age

3 years - 4 years

Brainy Background



Counting small numbers of things helps your child understand that numbers go in order from little numbers to big ones.

#350

Learn more at vroom.org

Doing the Dishes

When you have a sink full of dishes, turn the chore into something fun. As you scrub, ask your child to talk about the shapes of each dish. "What else is round like this bowl?" Have a conversation around their response. Remember, there are no wrong answers!

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Every back and forth conversation you have builds your child's brain. Try and build on what they're saying, using their response to inspire the next question. This helps grow their communication skills.

#388

Learn more at vroom.org

Beat and Repeat

Play "Beat and Repeat" anywhere. Create a rhythmic beat with two claps. Can your child copy it? Repeat until they get it. Have them create their own rhythm with two claps. Anytime someone misses, try again. Then make it three beats. How many beats can you get to? Four? Five? Six?

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child develops self-control as they copy your patterns or create their own. If they make a mistake, all the better. They learn that mistakes are a necessary part of learning—a good lesson no matter how old you are!

#29

Learn more at vroom.org

Color Countdown

Challenge your child to find as many things as they can that are blue. Get creative by limiting the game to a specific time (three minutes or so) or place (the grocery store.) Have them count how many they find. Switch it up by looking for letters or objects instead.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child is practicing focusing in this game. They are also using their memory to remember the color and the number of times they have seen it. Playing this game with different rules helps your child learn to think flexibly and make new connections.

#68

Learn more at vroom.org

Waiting Games

Anytime you're waiting in line, ask your child to guess how long until it's your turn. How many numbers can you count? Or how many times will you sing a favorite song? Take turns inventing new "Waiting Games."

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



"Waiting Games" is not about right or wrong answers. It's about learning strategies for waiting or self-control. Studies have found that patience and self-control help children thrive now and in the future.

#215

Learn more at vroom.org

Find the Opposites

When you're waiting somewhere, ask your child to play "Find the Opposites" with you. You call out something big and they respond with the opposite, something small. Start with easy comparisons, like big and small, high and low, or near and far.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When your child learns opposites and distances (near and far), they're learning ideas they'll use in math, science, and reading. Remember, it's always important to play these games in a back and forth way because that is how your child learns best.

#218

Learn more at vroom.org

Cart Manager

While grocery shopping, ask your child if they can manage the cart by sorting your shopping into vegetables, fruits, frozen foods, or by color. Can they find a way to keep the boxes lined up so they don't topple over?

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When your child sorts food and manages space, they're using math concepts. Sorting is important for learning math.

#265

Learn more at vroom.org

Sock Sorters

When you're doing laundry, make sock matching a learning game! Ask your child to help you match socks by size. Then change the game and try to match by color. Have a back and forth chat about what you're doing.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Grouping objects helps your child understand the world around them. When you ask them to change the rules of a game (from colors to size), you're helping them think flexibly and not go on autopilot.

#490

Learn more at vroom.org

Size Search

Invite your child to hunt for objects of different sizes. How many small things can they find? What about big things? Make it harder and ask them to find things that are medium-sized or huge. Talk about what they see and what is the same and different.

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When you and your child take turns and talk about ideas like big and small and same and different, you're helping to develop their vocabulary. They're also beginning to understand math and science ideas that are important now and in the future.

#136

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Guess My Number

Think of a number and see if your child can guess it based on your clues. Say something like, “My number is bigger than four and smaller than six.” Or “It is the number of fingers on my hand.” Make it harder by adding or taking away numbers. “My number is two more than the number three.”

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Your child must think on their feet and use what they already know about numbers to play this game. Guessing games like this one ask your child to use their memory and focus to follow the clues and come up with the answer.

#108

Learn more at vroom.org

Nature Patterns

Have your child collect items like rocks and leaves. Arrange them in a pattern such as one rock, two leaves, one rock, two leaves. Then mix them up and ask your child to recreate your pattern. Can they remember the order? Have them take a turn making a simple pattern for you to remember.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



Finding and repeating patterns builds focus and memory. It is a great way to make connections and solve problems. These are all important skills for learning. Playing with patterns also builds math skills like comparing sizes, numbers, and shapes.

#199

Learn more at vroom.org

Food Finder

At the store? Ask your child to find one orange, two apples, and three bananas (or any items on your list). As they bring them to the cart, have them count out each item one by one. Take one of the items out and ask them how many are now left.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background



When you use everyday experiences to teach counting, the idea that numbers stand for actual objects becomes real. With this game, they're counting backward and forward—using the skills of focus, self-control, and remembering.

#293

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