



Caring for Kids

Active Play Is the Way...

...children learn, and they do this with their whole body. They learn about their world by holding, squeezing, climbing on, crawling under, dropping, poking, smelling, tasting, looking, and listening. Children learn by actively doing, moving, and using all their senses to understand and find answers to questions.

Caregivers can offer children a wide variety of materials for playful learning experiences.

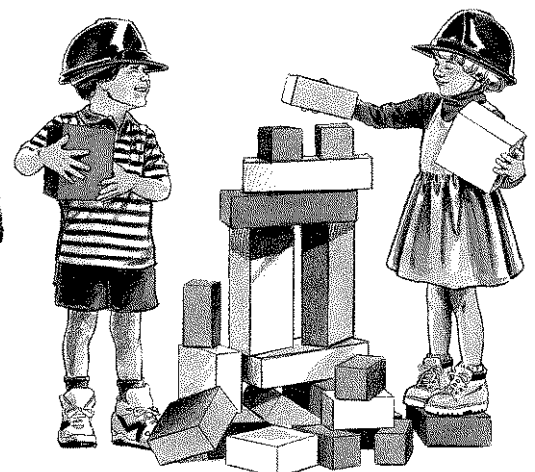
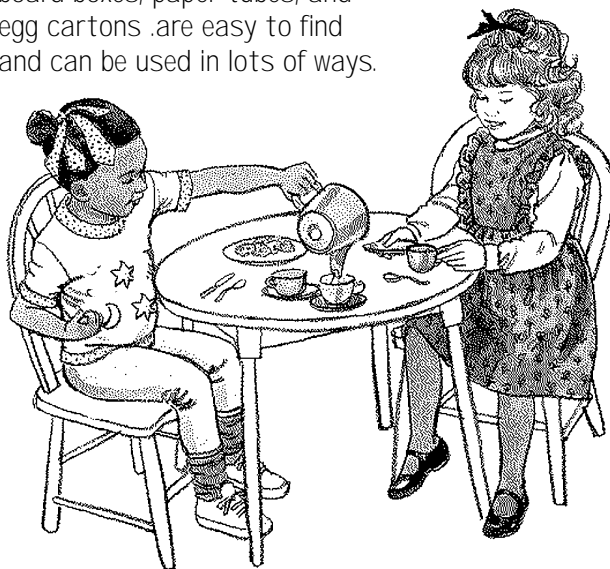
- **SIMPLE, EVERYDAY OBJECTS** — Children enjoy using the same things adults use: pots and pans, dress-up clothes, a lunch box.
- **NATURAL AND FOUND MATERIALS** — Items such as shells, twigs, pine cones, cardboard boxes, paper tubes, and egg cartons are easy to find and can be used in lots of ways.

- **SIMPLE HAND TOOLS** — Learning how to use simple hand tools is good for kids. It helps them feel good about what they are doing and teaches many skills.

- **MESSY, STICKY, GOOEY, DRIPPY, SQUISHY THINGS** — Children enjoy getting their hands into sand, water, paste, paint, clay, and dough.
- **LARGE PLAY ITEMS** — Things like blocks, shovels, toys with wheels, and other sturdy items help children learn about their bodies and use their large muscles.
- **SMALL PLAY ITEMS** — Things that fit into children's hands, such as small blocks, figures, and puzzles, allow children to explore and learn on their own.

Caution: Be aware that infants and young children can choke easily on small items. Only older children should use these items. Watch children closely during these activities.

TIP — It's also important that materials and activities provide choice and interest for the children.



S N A C K S

Yummy Ideas for Active Learners

APPLE CINNAMON SHAKE-UPS

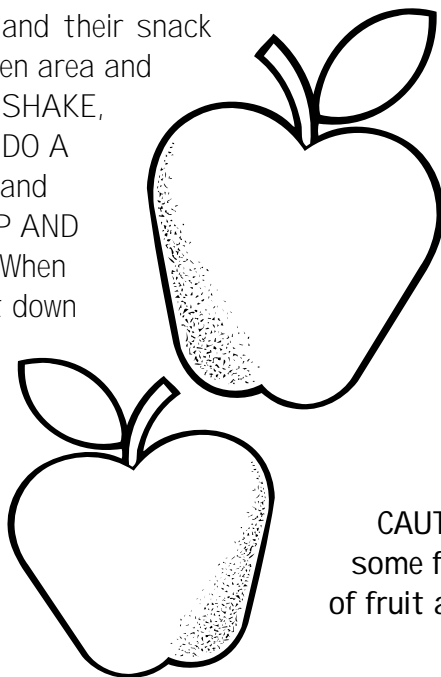
What you need:

- Apples
- Sugar
- Cinnamon
- Plastic sandwich bags that seal

What you do:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Let the children help you wash the apples. An adult should cut the apple into bite-sized chunks

Give each child a plastic bag. Put sugar and cinnamon into small bowls. Allow children to put a small amount of cinnamon and sugar into the plastic bags. Close the bags and seal. Take the children and their snack to an open area and SHAKE, SHAKE, SHAKE, DO A DANCE, and JUMP UP AND DOWN!!! When tired, sit down and eat!



CONFETTI CELERY

A colorful and healthy snack... even your picky eaters will enjoy this one!

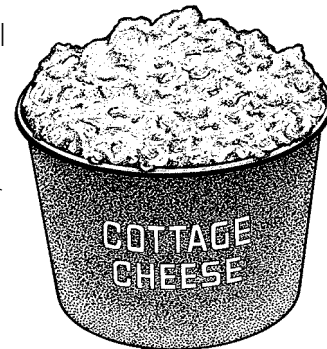
What you need:

- 1 raw carrot, finely chopped
- ¼ cup finely chopped red bell pepper
- ½ cup cottage cheese
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese or mozzarella cheese
- 6 celery stalks cut in half

What you do:

All cooks need to wash their hands. Let the children help wash the vegetables. An adult should prepare the finely chopped carrots and peppers and celery stalks. Encourage the children to help you measure and mix the first four ingredients together.

The children will enjoy spooning the cheese and vegetable mixture into their celery pieces.



CAUTION: Young children can choke easily on some foods listed in the recipes, such as pieces of fruit and vegetables. Watch children closely when they are eating these foods.



CHILDREN NEED...

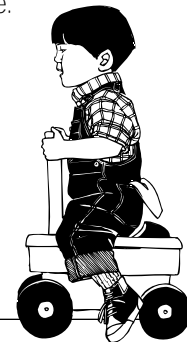
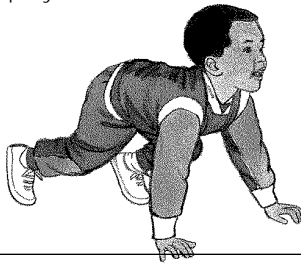
Space

...and...

Time

Have a place for:

- **Art activities** — a table with nearby low shelves.
- **Blocks** — an open space that allows children to build together.
- **Toys** — a place where children can pick and choose and explore.
- **Pretend play** — any corner where children can “make believe.”
- **Sand and water** — indoors or outdoors, children naturally enjoy and learn from sand and water play.



Children need long periods of time for active learning.

- **Small group time** — children are free to choose where they want to go in all the active learning areas. This can be done on their own or with others.
- **Large group time** — children gather together for stories, songs, and games.
- **Outside time** — plan to spend time outdoors every day for play on wheeled toys, outdoor art projects, running, jumping and exploring nature.

The Story of Play

When children play together they are creating stories together. Take some time to watch and listen to the stories you see and hear as children play. Later, at circle time, tell the children in your child care the story of their play. You might tell them about the firefighters who fought the fire and those who went back to the firehouse to wash the fire engines or about the time they played house or grocery store. The children who were involved love to hear the story about their play. They will want you to add details to the story.

Sharing the stories of their play is a special way to make storytelling come alive for the children in your care.



Better Behavior Tip:

*Give your children
time to play outside
every day*

Children need to run around and get their energy out. It's normal and natural for children to need a great deal of active play, such as running and climbing. Make sure there is time to play outside every day and indoor active play when the children can't play outside. Some groups of children seem to need more time for this type of play than others. Don't be afraid to increase outdoor play time if the children seem to need it. An extra ten minutes outdoors may result in better behavior all day long.

FAMILY ZONE

When a family member is picking up a child, take the time to talk and explain more about what went on during the day.

Sometimes parents feel that all the children do all day is play. Use this time to tell them about the value of play in their child's day. For example, say:

- ***“Juan worked 20 minutes on painting that ocean with dots of blue paint. He talked about the time he visited the ocean and all the interesting things he saw. Tomorrow we’re going to write a story to go with his painting. I know it will be a story that Juan will want to hear and read over and over again.”***
- ***“Sam enjoyed mixing those colors. He kept pointing out how they changed as he added white or black paint. He’s very excited about this discovery. It’s a great way for Sam to learn about colors.”***



- ***“Franco and Michelle have been working together on this block building for two days. They decided they could carry more blocks if they put them in a basket. So far they have used 34 blocks. They are seeing and understanding that numbers represent amounts.”***

In these examples, children are learning about taking turns, problem solving, and cooperating. They’re learning about colors, patterns, shapes, balance, and design. They’re developing reading and math skills.

If case you didn’t have the chance to talk with a parent, jot down your thoughts on a sticky note and put it on the back or corner of the picture for parents to see. Or leave a brief message on the family’s answering machine or voice mail.

Check It Out

GOOD BOOKS ABOUT STORYTELLING

- ***The Storyteller’s Start-Up Book***, by Margaret Read MacDonald, 1993
- ***The Family Storytelling Handbook***, by Ann Pellowski, 1987
- ***All about Pockets: Storytime Activities for Early Childhood***, by Christine Petrell Kallevig, 1993

OTHER RESOURCES:

National Storytelling Association
P.O. Box 309
Jonesborough, TN 37659-9983

You Can Learn Too!

Visit the Better Kid Care Web site, www.betterkidcare.psu.edu, for these resources:

- Web-based workshops and learn-at-home videos offering training credits that will count toward requirements in Pennsylvania
- The E-Newsletter (read and sign up)
- Family Time-Work Time (read and copy for parents)
- Snack and activity ideas

- A live satellite workshop in your own home on your own computer

Better Kid Care
telephone help line:
1-800-859-8340.

He or She? Him or Her?

Please note: In this and all Better Kid Care publications we take turns referring to children as “he” or “she.” When we use he or she, we include all children.

Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Project Director
Supported by funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Child Care/Early Childhood Development Training System, Developed by the Better Kid Care Program. 253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA; Phone: 1-800-452-9108. Website: betterkidcare.psu.edu.

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<http://daycare.about.com>
Penn State Better Kid Care Learn at Home Video Program – LV-26 Believe It or Not... You Can Be a Storyteller

Family Friendly Communication for Early Childhood Programs

By Deborah Diffily and Kathy Morrison

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