

Vroom Tips



Whether it's mealtime, bathtime, or anytime in between, there are so many ways to help build your child's brain. This PDF has a few brain building activities for children ages 2-3. You can print or cut them out, put them on your fridge, or carry them around—whatever helps to remind you that brain building moments are all around you in the things you already do.



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!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

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.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#49



Smiles and Winks

Smile at your child and wink at them. Repeat it several times, then encourage them to try to copy you. The smile is easy, and their wink, which may be just crinkling their eyes, will make you smile again! Take turns. Count how many smiles and winks you share.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing Smiles and Winks may seem simple, but it takes a great deal of skill for your child to pay attention to what you're doing, remember the rules (first you smile, then wink), and copy what you're doing. These are important skills for school and life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#54



What's Next?

Encourage your child's independence by asking them questions instead of telling them what to do. If you're getting ready to leave the house, instead of telling them to put shoes on, try saying something like, "I see your socks are on. What comes next?"

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Asking questions encourages them to think before acting instead of just responding automatically. This ability takes focus and self-control: your child must stop what they might want to do so they can reach a goal, even something as simple as putting on shoes!

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#147



Use Your Words

Does your child get upset and start to cry and whine? Remind them to use their words to say what is bothering them or what they want. If they're too upset to talk, try to guess what they want to say until they let you know you "got" it!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Helping your child learn to communicate their upset feelings in words is one of the most important tools you can give them for managing these feelings, and expressing themselves in ways that can be understood and responded to.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #152



No Words?

Are you teaching your child to use words to express their feelings? As you're out and about, ask them to notice animals, which don't use words, and see how they communicate what they want. Does the dog bark or stare at you? Ask them what they think the dog is trying to say

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

You can help your child learn to communicate with words and in other ways by noticing how animals communicate when they have No Words. Use what they notice to ask questions and help them think like a scientist, applying what they observe to their own life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #153



Imaginary Flower

Does your child like to pretend? Tell them there is an imaginary flower growing on their nose. Describe what it looks like. Then pretend to grab it! Now say there is a flower on their ear and grab it too. Have them describe and grab the flowers on you and enjoy the joke.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Although pretending is lots of fun, it also teaches your child that one thing can stand for something else. These symbols are the basis of reading and writing, with words standing for objects and ideas. This game also develops children's creative thinking.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #165



New Timers

When you're at a playground, help your child do things they haven't done before. Try out the swings or the slide, or even feel the different textures on the ground. As long as they're safe, let them try new playground experiences, with a helping hand if they need it.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Giving your child the chance to do safe things by themselves helps them feel confident, competent, and to learn to take on challenges.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #182



What Can You Do?

Ask your child to think of things they can do in the park like jump, climb, take giant steps, or collect stones. Ask them to show you one of them. Respond with something you can do, like collect leaves or make a telescope with your hands. Go back and forth.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Are there things you can do together? Things they can do that you can't? Things you can do that they can't? You're giving them the chance to compare and understand people are the same in some ways and different in others.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #183



Sounds of the Park

As you walk in the park, listen to the sounds with your child. Which ones are quiet, which are loud? Yell "loud!" and mimic the sound. Then whisper "quiet" and try that one too. Go back and forth with them imitating all the sounds at their different volumes.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Outdoors is the perfect place to talk about quiet and loud sounds. As your child listens for sounds and waits for the right time to make a quiet or loud sound, they're controlling their behavior. This skill is part of being able to set and reach goals.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #184



Park Ranger

The park is a great time to be on the lookout for what’s around. As you walk with your child, point out groups of birds, trees, leaves, people, etc. and ask them, “How many do you see?” Take turns pointing to different things all over the park!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

As you act like Park Rangers, your child is learning 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.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #185



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.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

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.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #204



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?”

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

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

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #225



Song-versations

While waiting, create singing conversations. Instead of talking back and forth, quietly sing what you want to say to each other. How does your child respond? Then try whispering. Keep going back and forth and make it a game.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Singing their words and whispering them gives your child practice with controlling their behavior to play the game. This self-control is an important foundation for learning and being able to do what it takes to meet goals.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#227



Touch Talk

While you're waiting, encourage your child to touch the different clothing you're each wearing. Talk back and forth about how it feels: "We're both wearing shirts. Mine is smooth and yours is wrinkled." Take turns using as many words as you can to describe how your clothes feel.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

With this conversation, you're helping your child learn how to make connections—that one thing (words) can stand for other things (what they touch). You're also helping them learn new words and their meanings as you turn waiting time into learning time.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#246



Food Favorites

As you go shopping, point out some of your favorite foods to your child and see if they like them: "I love yogurt, do you?" Then invite them to point out a favorite food. Tell them if you like it. Play back and forth as you move down the aisles.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game teaches your child that people have different likes and dislikes. The ability to think that someone else might feel differently about something than they do will help your child form better relationships with others and learn from them.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#270



Shopping List Scribble

Writing a shopping list? Talk with your child about what you need. Read outloud what you write down: “Milk, eggs, cereal.” Invite them to “write” or draw on the list too and to tell you what they’re thinking about when they make those marks on the paper.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child is learning that the marks you both make on paper have meaning. Understanding that one thing stands for another is an important thinking skill in learning to write, read, and communicate.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #272



Toothy Twosome

When brushing your teeth, have your child be your partner. Let them brush their own teeth first, then give them your toothbrush so they can help brush yours. Ask, “Can you help me brush my teeth? Can you brush the ones in the front, and then the ones on the sides?” Take turns!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Sharing a moment and taking turns is one of the most important ways you can promote your child’s learning today and in the future.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #357



What Do You Feel?

Put some safe items your child loves—like an egg carton, plastic bottle, or small box—into a bag just for them. They can play with the full bag. When they reach in, ask, “What do you feel? Is it an egg carton or a bottle?”

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Who needs expensive toys when learning possibilities are limitless from everyday objects! This activity promotes the skills of paying attention and making connections between what your child remembers by sight and feels by touch.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #404



Proud Potty

Potty training can be really tough. Try celebrating your child’s successful potty trips. Tell them about what they did in a proud tone: “You went to the bathroom in the potty.” Invite them to tell you what they did too. Be matter-of-fact about accidents.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

It’s hard work to put together the signals that your body is telling you (“I have to go potty”) with the actions of sitting in the right place, the potty, and going. When you praise your child’s effort, “You did it!”, they’ll be more willing to take on the challenge.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #433



What’s Inside?

When changing your child’s diaper, grab an empty tissue box and hide something safe inside. Lie them down, hand over the box, shaking it and ask, “Can you guess what’s inside?” See if you can keep the guessing game going until they’re changed and dressed!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game is a great way to help your child learn life skills, like paying attention to clues (the sounds inside the shaking box), remembering the names of things, and having the self-control to try to lie still until the diaper is changed!

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #443



Hiding Clues

Invite your child to hide. Then search for them, talking out loud about the clues you’re using to find them. You can say, “I see something wiggling. I wonder if they’re near that chair.” If they giggle, say, “I hear a laughing noise near the door.” Now you hide and they make up the clues to find you!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Children love hiding games because they help them understand when things disappear they can continue to exist. To stay hidden, they have to use self-control. In sharing your clues for finding your child, you’re helping them learn problem-solving skills too.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #1016



Clothing Choices

Does your child want to choose their clothes? Help them by giving them two choices: “Do you want to wear your blue pants or your green pants?” When they choose, congratulate them by saying, “Great choice, I like those too.”

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Limiting choices in the early years sets your child up for success as a decision-maker, a skill they’ll use their whole life. You’re giving them the control they want and need yet protecting them from being overwhelmed. This lets them focus on thinking.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #466



Tissue Talk

While getting dressed this morning, give your child a tissue to carry in their pocket. Talk to them about what tissues are used for as you each pretend to blow your nose. Make funny sounds!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you ask your child what tissues can be used for, you’re helping them think about how things can help us achieve a goal—like keeping our noses clean. Did you ever imagine that a tissue in the pocket could promote thinking skills of making a plan and reaching a goal?

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #467



Big Foot, Little Foot

When you’re doing laundry, have your child help with simple sock matching. As you do, talk about who has big feet and little feet in your family. Have a conversation about which socks go together and why. Are they the same color, pattern, or size? Help them hold the socks next to their feet, then your feet, and talk about the differences.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Grouping objects into categories (figuring out what’s the same and what’s different) and having a back and forth conversation about them helps your child to understand the world around them.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #489



I Can Help

While you're doing laundry, ask your child to help. Invite them to sort clothes into piles of dark and light colors.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

It may take longer, but when you let your child help, they learn about how to hold an idea in their mind and get it done. These thinking skills are needed to make plans and see them through—skills they will need the rest of their life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #495



Sock Puppets

Sorting the laundry? Encourage your child to help you find all of the socks and make a pile of them. Pick a sock and pretend it is a puppet looking for its matching friend. Celebrate when you and your child find a match. Then let them take a turn as the puppet.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Not only is this activity fun, but your child makes connections as they group the socks and looks for the matching pairs. They must use focus and self-control to remember the details of the matching sock. When they pretend, they're thinking creatively.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #506



Pick the Cup

As you both have something to drink, take turns talking about how your cups are the same and different. Is one bigger? Smaller? What colors are they? What is in your cups? Is the liquid warm or cold?

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Exploring a cup might sound silly, but when you explore and talk about the everyday things that are around you in a back and forth way, you're fueling your child's curiosity they will need to be a lifelong learner. For them, the ordinary is extraordinary.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #542



Little Independence

Does your child want to do everything by themselves? Whether it's eating with fingers or trying to use a fork, give them ways to be more independent. Talk to them about what they're doing. If they need, help them a little. When they're done, notice how they respond with a smile or an "I did it!" Celebrate with them!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

It may take longer and be messier, but you're helping your child to feel good and develop new skills. This will give them a sense they can try something new and succeed.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#554



Mealtime Message

At dinner, put a message next to your child's plate. It may be a picture you tear out of a magazine or a quick note or drawing. As you sit down to eat, invite them to share the message. Take turns talking about the colors, letters, and pictures you both see.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

A message at dinner is unexpected and fun. As you take turns talking about it, your child is learning to pay attention to details. They're also learning that marks and pictures stand for words and ideas, which is important when learning to read in the future.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#560



Setting Sizes

As you and your child set the table, take turns holding things up and asking, "What is bigger? What is smaller?" You might compare a plate with a container, their cup and your cup, a large bowl and small bowl, etc.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing Setting Sizes gives your child practice focusing on details. They're learning about size and developing the thinking skill of seeing differences between objects that are similar, a skill needed in school and life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#561



Before and After

Talk back and forth with your child about how foods change as you cook them. Show them how a pancake or tortilla goes from doughy to solid or how pasta or rice boils and becomes soft. Let them touch them before and after (once cooled) and talk about it.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Showing your child how food changes invites them to hold information they know about the food and see and understand how it changes when cooked. This conversation promotes working memory and critical thinking.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#567



One, Two Foods

Pick two food words, such as “banana” and “apple,” to make a word pattern two times. Repeat with your child, “Banana, apple, banana, apple.” Have them pick two food words and make a pattern two times: “fork, spoon, fork, spoon.” Talk about which word comes first and second.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

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 creating patterns will them learn math concepts as they grow.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#576



Piece-by-Piece

Offer your child a whole fruit or vegetable, like an apple. Ask questions about what the apple looks like, feels like, and smells like before cutting it. After you cut it, talk about what you both notice. What does it look like, smell like, and feel like now? Does it always taste the same?

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

It takes flexible thinking to understand one thing can look different but still be the same, like how an apple can be whole or sliced and is still an apple. This ability is important for learning and creativity. Talking back and forth is the best way to develop their language skills too!

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app!

#610



Finger Telescope

When outside, make a telescope with your hands. Circle your fingers and hold them to your eye and look at your child telling them, “I see you!” Show them how to make their own finger telescope. Take turns looking through the finger telescope and sharing what you see.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This simple game is not only fun, it gives your child the chance to pay attention to their surroundings and think flexibly as they see familiar people and things in a new way. Being flexible is a big part of problem-solving and making the most out of life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #666



Animal Game

While waiting for the bus or in line say, “I’m thinking of an animal” and provide clues to help your child guess what animal you’re thinking of. For example, “I’m thinking of an animal who lives in our house and has black and gray stripes.”

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing “I’m thinking of…” helps develop your child’s working memory, including their ability to recall names and details. It also turns waiting time into a fun learning activity.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #698



Nature Stories

While outside with your child, look for rocks, leaves, or pinecones, and use these objects to retell one of their favorite stories or songs. For example, sing “Old MacDonald” and pretend to use the objects as different animals. Ask them for ideas.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

At this age, your child uses pretend play to practice their understanding of symbols—that one thing can stand for another. Being able to make these kinds of connections and to think creatively are important parts of learning how to read and communicate.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #703



Little Lineup

Pick a few objects around the house, and line three of them up by size from smallest to biggest. Talk with your child about the lineup. Have them turn around while you rearrange the objects. See if they can put them back into the original order and talk them through it!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Lining objects up by size gives your child the chance to practice using information they know about size. Applying information to new situations—like remembering the old order when the objects are rearranged—is an important thinking skill for school and life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #799



Tent Time

Today, make a tent with your child! Cover two sturdy chairs with a blanket or towel and invite them to come inside. Make it a special place for games like playing peekaboo or bringing special tent toys inside to play with. Name the special place together!

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

A tent creates a new, almost magical space in a familiar place. As your child goes in and out, they have a chance to change their view of the world and adjust their behavior and play accordingly—in other words, to be a flexible thinker.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #800



Fast-Slow Race

Invite your child to have a Fast-Slow Race. Find a starting line and count, “1, 2, 3!” together, then GO! As you get going, call out “slow!” Can they adjust their speed? Give them a turn calling out “fast” or “slow.” How fast can you go? How slow?

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

During a Fast-Slow Race, your child is practicing how to listen to directions, how to switch what they’re doing, and do what the game calls for. This lays the foundation for being able to manage feelings and actions, now and in the future.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #819



Mail Time

Talk to your child about getting mail and what it means. Then write them a note or give them a piece of junk mail or store flyer and say, “Mail Delivery!” After they “open” it, take turns talking about the letters, pictures, colors, and designs.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game sets the stage for a back and forth conversation. As you talk about mail, your child’s vocabulary grows. As you point at the letters, they begin to understand that the lines on paper stand for sounds, words, and objects. This is a big step in becoming a reader.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #820



Fast Dance

Let your child pick a fun, fast song to dance to. Ask them to make a dance move and then copy what they do. Take turns going back and forth copying each other’s dance moves.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you and your child copy each other, they’re learning to focus and make connections between what they’re seeing and what they’re body is doing. Being able to follow movements and learning to focus are important skills for learning new things.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #823



Hand Games

Make up the hand actions to your favorite nursery rhymes (like “Hickory Dickory Dock” or “Itsy Bitsy Spider”). Face your child and hold their hands so they mirror you, for example, have the mouse run up the clock. Vary the pitch of your voice from high to low.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Nursery rhymes are great for promoting literacy and the mirrored actions teach left to right tracking, another pre-reading skill. The vocal play will engage your child and make the interaction more interesting and fun.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #844



Be a Fixer

Pretend to fix things with your child. With a plastic spoon, pretend to fix a hinge on a kitchen cabinet. “I’m fixing this broken hinge on the cabinet door. Now it’s your turn to Be a Fixer.” When they have had a turn, hold out your hand. “My turn.” Keep taking turns, smiling while you work.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Pretending is an important way that children make sense of their experience—that broken things need fixing. And, when children pretend, they learn that one thing (a plastic spoon) can “stand for” something else (a tool to fix a broken hinge). That is the basis of understanding symbols, which is important to literacy and math.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #846



Sweep Together

Include your child in everyday chores. “It’s time to sweep! Can you hold the dustpan for me?” Let them dump the dirt into the trash. Don’t be surprised when they ask you to hold the dustpan for them. Go back and forth. Taking turns is how they learn best and makes them feel included

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Not only is your child learning by imitating you, they’re learning by doing. They’re also figuring out how things work—that things get dirty and need to be cleaned up. More importantly, they’re learning to be helpful and considerate.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #847



Can You Find It?

Use your cell phone to take pictures of things in your room like a chair, a table, or the refrigerator. Ask your child to look at your cell phone picture and say, “Can you find it in the room?” As they get good at this, you can make it a little harder.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game helps your child make connections between pictures (symbols) and real objects. This skill is a basic for reading (where written marks stand for words) and math (where numbers stand for quantities of things), and is essential in learning.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #886