

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 4-5. 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.



Face Off

Make a face that expresses a feeling and ask your child to make a face that expresses the opposite feeling. If you make a happy face, they should make a sad face. Talk about when they remember people making these faces. Then take a selfie together with your goofiest faces!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game helps your child learn empathy, by practicing to understand the emotions of others, and express their own feelings. It's an important skill that we use every day as adults!

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

#11



Letter Lookout

Pick a letter with your child and try to find it everywhere you go. Take turns calling it out when you see it. If they see an apple for the letter A, then you have to find something next. See how many things you can find. Four? Ten? More?

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

“I Spy” games like this one are great brain builders. They make your child aware of their environment and teach them to make connections between similar things. You can try this game with letters, colors, shapes—anything really!

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

#12



Today's To-Do

Talk back and forth with your child about the plans for the day. Talk about what you're having for breakfast, where they're going for the day, what you might do, and what they hope to do today.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

There is no better way to learn how to plan than practicing. When you give your child the chance to think ahead about the day, you invite them to call on what they already know and apply it in flexible ways to a new situation.

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

#23



Tomorrow Talk

Today's the perfect time to talk to your child about tomorrow. Find out what they hope tomorrow has in store for them: "If you could do anything tomorrow, what would you most want to do? What next?" It's a good way to learn about their hopes for the future.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Asking your child to think about the future helps them make predictions and think flexibly. These types of questions also allow them to make up their own answers, encouraging them to be creative.

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

#24



Super Secret Handshake

Invent a super secret handshake for you and your child. Take turns adding a step (like shaking twice). Repeat it until you both have it down. Now change one of the steps. How do they respond? Go back and forth between the new and old way.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Creating and learning a super secret handshake helps your child remember and do what is needed to achieve a goal. This is a big step in learning self-control.

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

#28



Practice Positivity

Practice saying things in new ways with your child. You can take turns saying something negative then try to talk about the same thing in a positive way: "I don't like loud noises" can become "I like quiet sounds."

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child learns how to describe things and people in different ways, they're learning communication skills and how to understand others' perspectives. These skills are helpful in having good relationships now and in the future.

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

#40



Love Connections

Take turns talking to your child about love connections. “I love you as much as a bee loves flowers.” “I love you as much as ants love sugar.” “I love you as much as a car loves gas.” Ask them to come up with one. Keep going back and forth.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child is challenged to find connections and make comparisons, they’re learning new ways to sort and categorize information. These skills are important in math, reading, and science. You’re also promoting creativity and a sense of humor.

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

#42



Winks and Smiles

Smile at your child, wink at them, and encourage them to copy you. When they can do this, then ask them to do the opposite—if you smile, then they should wink and if you wink, they should smile. See how long you can have fun playing this game.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing Winks and Smiles helps your child learn to pay attention to what you’re doing, remember the rules, and copy you. When you ask them to do the opposite, they have to resist the temptation to go on autopilot and not copy you. These are important skills for school and life.

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

#56



Acting Out

When your child does something they should NOT do, tell them why they should not have done it. Then ask them to draw a picture of what happened on a piece of paper. On the other side of the paper, have them draw what they could have done in a better way. Talk about why this new idea would be a better choice.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Using this strategy changes your approach from “dealing with misbehavior” to “promoting learning skills.” When your child comes up with new solutions, they’re learning not to go on autopilot and instead think of more effective ways to deal with problems.

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

#60



Letter Language

Use a letter, like B, to begin every word you say. Instead of “Hello, how are you?” say, “Bello, bow bar boo?” Encourage your child to use the same letter to begin the words of their response: “I am fine, how are you?” would become “Bye bam bine, bow bar boo?” How long can you keep it up?

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

To keep the game going, your child must focus and think flexibly to switch the letters in the words they say. It also helps them to think hard about what each letter of the alphabet sounds like. Making these connections between letters and their sounds is important in learning language.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #166



Skipper

If you are near water (a pond, river, or the sea), skip rocks into the water, talking back and forth about how differences in the shapes and sizes of the rocks affect how they skip. If you're near a big puddle, you can do a similar experiment with rocks, sticks, or leaves.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game helps your child learn to create science experiments—to focus on understanding the evidence (how the size and weight of the rock affects how the rock skips) and to make predictions based on that evidence. Your child is learning critical thinking skills.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #195



Nature Patterns

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

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Noticing and recreating patterns requires your child to use their focus, memory, and ability to make connections. These are all important skills for learning. Playing with patterns also gives them practice with math ideas like numbers, shapes, and comparing sizes.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #199



Name Game

In a waiting room or just hanging out in the living room? Flip through a magazine with your child and take turns making up names for the people in it. Start naming people with A, then B. Then go backwards and start with Z, then Y.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing this game involves remembering, thinking creatively, and not going on autopilot. These are all important skills for learning new things.

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

#214



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, "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star?" Take turns inventing waiting games.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Waiting games are not about right or wrong answers. They're actually about developing strategies for waiting or delaying gratification. Studies have found that delaying gratification helps children thrive now and in the future.

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

#215



Find the B's

While waiting at the doctor's office or drugstore, look around you and try to spot things that start with a B sound. Take turns with your child spotting B's (like babies, bottles, and baskets) and calling out the words to each other.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

By using waiting times for learning, you're helping your child learn to wait as well as to make connections among letters, words, and sounds—all laying the foundation for reading.

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

#217



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.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child learns opposites and distances (near and far), they're learning concepts 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.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #218



Faces and Feelings

Next time you're stuck in a waiting room with your child, pick up a magazine. Point out a face in one of the pictures and have them copy it. Ask them what they think the person is feeling. Discuss with them when both of you might have felt this way too.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you talk about your own and others' feelings you're helping your child learn to take a new perspective, which is helpful in getting along with others.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #219



Pick A Hand

Play a game by hiding something small in your hand behind your back. First, show your child the object, like a coin or a pen, in your hand. Put it behind your back and change hands or leave it in the same. Ask them to guess which hand the object is in. Let them hide the object and you guess.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child guesses which hand the object is in, they're focusing, looking for clues, and making predictions. This game helps build an understanding of math concepts. And taking turns is important!

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #224



List Master

When you're out running errands, put your child in charge of the list. Have them help list out a few things you both have to do that day. When you finish each task, cross it off the list together!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you make a list and cross things off the list together, it helps your child learn that written words represent real-world activities.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #259



Shopping Search

When shopping for groceries (or anything really), call out something you're looking for on the shelf and have your child help you find it. Give them a clue: "It's in a red box." Can you do five in a row before you reach the end of the aisle?

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Helping your child pay attention and follow your clues improves their focus and self-control.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #260



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?

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child is managing the food and the space for the items, they're using math concepts to sort the items. Sorting is important for learning math.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #265



Food Finder

At the store? Ask your child to find one orange, two apples, and three bananas. 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.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

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.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #293



Secret Letters

As your child lies down at night, slowly draw a letter on their back with your fingertip. Can they guess what it is? Repeat the letter again. The more you practice this together, the better you will get! Soon you will be ready to write whole words!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child learns about the world through their senses and through back and forth conversations. In this game, you're giving them a chance to make connections between not only how letters look but also something new—how drawing a letter on their back feels!

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #312



Shut Eye

Try getting dressed for bed in a new way. Ask your child, "What if we closed our eyes while we put on our pajamas for bed tonight?" Stay close by them to make sure it's safe. Afterward, share what it feels like to get dressed "in the dark!"

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child is challenged to not use their eyes, they're using different senses and different parts of their brain.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #313



Getting Sleepy

At bedtime, invite your child to close their eyes and imagine relaxing just one toe, then one whole foot, then one leg, and keep going through their whole body. Afterward, talk together about how they feel and give them a turn to lead you through relaxing.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

As your child focuses on slowly relaxing the body, they're practicing skills like paying attention and controlling behavior. You're also supporting them in learning strategies to help them relax in other situations.

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

#339



Bathtime Leader

As your child gets older, encourage them to take the lead at bathtime. Ask them: "What will you need for your bath? A towel? Clean clothes?" When they're in the bath, you can ask, "What will you do first?" Invite them to choose which body part to wash and do it together.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Encouraging your child to take the lead in daily routines shows them that you believe they can do things independently, which helps them feel confident and capable. This helps them to actively take on challenges and solve problems now and in the future.

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

#380



Off Beats

When you're doing the dishes, use one of the clean pots and a spoon to make a drum. When you hit the drum twice, have your child hit it once, making a different beat.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game calls on very important learning skills: paying attention, remembering how many times you hit the drum, and then not going on autopilot.

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

#396



Dressing Mix-Up

When you're helping your child get dressed, play Dressing Mix-Up, by asking things like: "Do your socks go on your hands? Do they go on your feet? Put them on your hands, and pretend your hands are feet."

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

By playing this game, you're turning dressing into a routine that's easier to manage and fun for both of you. You're also helping them learn where different clothes go as well as the skill of matching things that go together.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #469



Dinner Bites

At dinner, have some fun with your child by counting each bite they take of dinner. After the first bite, announce "one!" in a silly voice. If they know numbers, make a mistake ("one, three") and see if they can spot your mistake!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Children learn about numbers when they match them with real things, like bites of food. They're also learning numbers go in a certain order, especially when you make a pretend mistake and they try to catch your mistake

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #546



Playful Dinner Prep

Try to prepare dinner in a new way. Ask your child, "What if we only used one arm to make dinner tonight?" See what you can do easily and what's really hard. Share ideas back and forth about how you manage with only one arm. Then try, "What if you use your right arm and I use my left arm?" What is easier together?

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you try to do things differently, you can't go on autopilot. The process of setting challenging goals and finding ways to achieve them promotes skills that are very important to learning.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #557



Menu Maker

Involve your child in meal planning. Ask them to choose how to organize the meal, like by color or family favorites. For example, you could have them ask family members to choose their favorite foods and then help your child draw or write a menu based on everyone's favorites.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child must use their skills of organizing, making connections, and putting things into categories in order to create a menu for mealtime. They're also practicing early literacy skills and learning about the importance of language in everyday life.

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

#590



Sign Game

When you're out and about, point out simple signs and ask your child what they think they mean. If they get it wrong, remind them it's a good try, and ask them to keep trying. Point out clues! (There is a barber inside, so the sign says "Haircuts").

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Helping your child look for clues about what words mean is an important step in learning to read, write, and communicate, as well as developing critical thinking skills.

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

#619



Fortune Teller

When driving somewhere, talk with your child about what they think will happen when they arrive: Who will you see? What will you do? What will you do after that? Make it like a conversation by continuing to ask what will happen next.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Back and forth conversations are important in helping your child develop their language and communication skills.

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

#623



Stamp Collection

Take your child with you to get the mail. Check out the different stamps and help them compare them. Ask them, “Are these two stamps exactly the same? How are they different?”

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Figuring out what’s the same and different helps your child pay attention and create categories. For example, both of the stamps have blue in them but one’s a bird and one’s a flower. Creating categories is important in math thinking!

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #629



Near and Far

When you’re outside, you can start a fun game with your child. Give them a place to stand and have them estimate how many steps they’re from you. When they walk back, together count their steps aloud. Try all different distances!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Young children can tell there is a difference between large and small quantities! By doing fun, back and forth games like this, you’re building on this capacity and helping them understand more about what numbers stand for.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #630



Follow the Leader

Walking somewhere? Turn your trip into follow the leader. Ask your child, “Can you do what I do?” while you pat your head. Then switch it up. If you pat your head, have them pat their stomach. Keep switching!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

The game of doing the same and then opposite actions helps your child remember the rules of the game, think flexibly, and not go on autopilot. This helps them learn to pay attention and exercise self-control—essential skills for school and life success.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #639



Car Clap Off

Find a certain color car and clap once when you see it. When your child gets it, change the rules and clap twice when you see it. Then add another color and clap three times when you see it.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game calls on your child to pay attention, to remember the rules of the game, and to think flexibly when you change the rules and not go on autopilot—which are all important learning skills.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #676



In the Right Order

Have your child look for letters or numbers in a specific order on signs and license plates. You can say, “Can you find a one and a two next to each other?” or “Can you find an A and an E next to each other?” Take turns and see who can find the most.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child must pay close attention to their surroundings to find letters or numbers and keep track of what they have seen and how many times. They’re also using their working memory to remember the correct order to look for.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #708



Dance Duet

Let your child pick a fun, fast song to dance to. Take turns making up dance moves. They can start, then you copy them. Keep going back and forth by repeating the moves and adding new moves. Before you know it you will have a whole dance routine!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you and your child build on each other’s moves, they’re using their memory and focus to follow and remember the moves as well as their flexible thinking skills by making up their own moves. These skills are important for creativity and learning.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #824



Silly Charades

Play a game where your child has to figure out what you are. Make different facial expressions and body movements and see if they can get it. Sound effects are allowed too! Then ask them to be something and you try. You can pretend to be animals, objects, or people you both know.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child is guessing what or who you are, they're using observational skills and memories of past experiences. When they're acting and pretending to be someone or something else, their perspective taking and communication skills are promoted.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #826



Shelf Help

Ask your child to help you organize a shelf in the kitchen. You can suggest categories like, "boxes, cans, cereal, and crackers." Let them organize and categorize. You can even give them a towel to wipe out the shelves to help you get started.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Children typically love to do grown-up things. When they categorize and organize, they're making connections that will help them with math, reading, and science. They're also putting themselves in your role, which promotes perspective taking skills.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #827



Prepare a Pattern

Do you have a muffin tin or an empty egg carton? Look for things that can fit inside each hole, like pen caps. Make a pattern, like one red cap in a hole, then two blue caps in another, then another red cap. Then give the caps to your child. Can they match the pattern?

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Making and re-creating patterns asks your child to focus and use their working memory to keep the pattern in mind, even when it isn't there anymore. Being able to recognize patterns is an important skill for math, science, and language learning.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #908



Find the Key

Is your child interested in your keys? While you watch, offer them a turn to try and open doors with them. Can they fit the key in the door? Talk with them about what they're doing like: "You're turning the key but the door won't open. What else should we try?"

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Offering your child opportunities to solve problems builds their independence, encourages them to follow their interests, and to find answers to questions on their own. Your support, with your words and actions, motivates them to keep trying even when things are hard.

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

#975



Home Museum

Invite your child to collect special items and display them around the house. Ask them to lead you through the museum and share with you why the items are meaningful. Then you take a turn to choose favorite things to share with them.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

As your child takes time to think about what they want to say and how to say it, they're practicing important communication skills and using memory to recall past experiences. Celebrating their words, feelings, and actions sets up a positive learning environment.

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

#1002



Alphabet Moves

With your child, go through the alphabet and make the shape of each letter with your bodies. The letter A can be a triangle with your arms above your head and your legs standing wide. Ask them to make the letter B with their body. Take turns making the other letters!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child must use focus, self-control, and memory to recall the shapes of letters to represent them with their body. Through firsthand experience, they're learning about language and literacy.

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

#1006