

Vroom Tips

Literacy



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 0-5. 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.

Check out the pages that are relevant to you and your child, and print the ones you want. For example, ages 0-1 are on pages 2-4, etc. And if you have a friend, family, or community member that might like a few “brain builders,” please share this with them too!



Skin Sensations

Talk to your child about how things feel on their skin: “Your shirt is soft.” “The wind is cold.” “The ice cube is slippery.” See how they react and continue the conversation: “You like the warm water in your bath!”

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you talk back and forth with your child about how things feel on their skin, you’re introducing them to new words and feelings. This helps make new connections, which are the foundation for learning to use these words themselves in the future.

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

#33



Sharing the Story

When you’re reading something yourself or with your child, let them explore it with all of their senses. Allow them to touch, pat, hold, and even taste (if it’s clean) what you’re reading. Describe their actions like, “You’re patting the picture of the kitty cat. Meow!”

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Children learn through touching, feeling, and putting everything into their mouths. As you talk about their experiences, you help them make connections between words, pictures, and objects. You not only share the story, you share your joy in reading with them.

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

#82



Picture This

Do you have some books or magazines around? Show your child the pictures. They will like clear simple pictures, especially of faces. Talk with them about what you see. How do they respond? Now talk about their response!

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

One of the best ways for your child to learn about language is by looking at things with you and hearing you talk about them. When you talk back and forth with them, commenting on their responses, you build their brain!

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

#83



Sound Conversations

If your child says “Ba,” repeat the sound back to them. Then add on to it, “Ba, ba, ba.” Do they try to copy your sounds? Add a new sound next, “Ba, ba, MA.” Do they notice the change? Do they try to repeat it? Go back and forth repeating each other’s sounds and building on them.

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Having Sound Conversations with your child encourages communication, using sounds and actions to “talk” to you. Changing the sounds helps them pay careful attention to the differences between sounds—an important step in learning to talk.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #157



A Tall Tale

At their next diaper change, tell your child a silly story about the tallest little child in the world while stretching their arms over their head.

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your voice is your child’s favorite sound. Even though they can’t talk back yet, they’re already taking in your words and using them to build the foundation for language later on.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #427



Follow My Fingers

With your child on their back, fly your hand above their face. Pretend your hand is a plane, a bird, or a car. Talk about what you’re doing. Tell a story, make sounds, or sing. Do they grab your fingers, watch your hands move, or kick? Try different ideas to find what they like best.

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child is learning to pay attention and use self-control as they follow your movements. You’re also helping them learn that objects can stand for other things. Your hand can be a plane or a car. This ability is important for learning to read and write later on.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #450



Laundry Pointing

As you do laundry, let your child know what you're doing: "I'm putting white clothes in the washer so they will be clean." As you say the words, point to the objects (clothes, washer, soap). When they respond, continue the conversation by talking and pointing.

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

You help your child learn new words by talking and by pointing. Also look at what you want them to pay attention to, and then they will learn even more.

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

#497



Real Life Matchup

Match pictures to the real objects. After looking at a picture of an apple, for example, let your child touch and smell one. Describe what they're doing. "You're feeling the smooth red apple. Look, here it is in the picture!" Go back and forth and create a conversation.

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Babies take in information through their senses. When you let them make connections between real objects and their pictures by using their senses, you help them understand the world around them. You're also introducing them to new words in a fun way through a back and forth conversation.

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

#875



It's All New

Almost everything is new to your child in their first year. Describe what you see: "There goes the yellow school bus. Beep beep!" Let them see, hear, smell, and even touch things, if possible. Notice what they're interested in and have a back and forth conversation. "You see the brown squirrel. What else do you see?"

Ages 0-1



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you go back and forth with your child, talking about what they see, you help them begin to learn words. They're making connections between words and what they represent, a key element of being able to talk. By responding to their interests, you're prompting them to learn more.

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

#876



Sing, Rhyme, Repeat

Help your child recognize patterns and familiar words by singing simple songs with repetition or rhymes. For example, try “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or “Old McDonald Had a Farm.” Encourage them to join in by repeating the words or by adding their own ideas.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

The more you sing with your child, the more they’re able to predict sounds and words and join in. Songs and sound games are great activities for early literacy. They make connections between sounds and words as well as build their vocabulary in a fun and interactive way.

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

#99



Park Pointers

While you’re at the park with your child, point to things you see and say what they are. “There’s a black bird and he’s flying!” or “The little girl is jumping.” Watch where they’re looking and say what it is.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you describe what you see or what your child sees, they’re making connections between words and what they mean. Children who know words and what the words mean have a head start on learning.

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

#194



Sound Shopper

As you shop for groceries, point out foods you see. Play with the sounds of words as you show your child the juicy red “to-ma-toes” or the white bumpy “caul-ee-flower.” How do they respond? When they make a sound in response, copy it.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child is practicing the skill of being able to hear differences in sounds. This is a skill that will help them learn new words and over time be able to hear the differences in sounds.

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

#274



Delicious Descriptions

When shopping with your child, point out different objects you see in the aisles. Use lots of description to talk about the taste of different foods, like, “There are some juicy, sweet oranges,” or “I bet those yellow lemons are sour!” Talk about where they point and look.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

You’re promoting skills like focus and self-control when you guide your child’s attention and make connections between words and what they mean. When you respond to their interests, whether they’re expressed by a word, a sound, a point, or a look, you’re showing them what they “say” is important.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #288



Bathtime Stories

When your child is in the bath, make up a story about a child just like them who takes a bath too. You can say things like, “First, they washed their hair” while you wash their hair, or “Then they splashed in the water,” and see if they splash too.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When you make up stories, you’re introducing your child to creative ways of thinking while sharing lots of new words with them. They’re learning focus and self-control as they listen closely, and making connections when they move their body to your words.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #371



Laundry Ins and Outs

Invite your child to help you gather clothes for washing. Put them IN the laundry basket, pull them OUT, and then put them IN the machine, and pull them OUT. Use the words IN and OUT to describe your actions and see how they learn these concepts!

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Children your child’s age like putting and pulling things in and out of containers. Using this interest to help you get a chore done also helps them learn the concepts of IN and OUT, and to organize their understanding of the world.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #503



Mealtime Textures

What are all of the descriptive words you can use to describe the food your child is eating? Is the banana mushy, squishy, and slippery? Are the eggs warm, crumbly, and soft? Point as you say them and watch them respond and respond back to them.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child hears and sees new ways to describe their food, they're learning new words as well as the skills of observing their experience and communicating more effectively.

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

#568



Read to Me

Share a magazine or news article with your child. Be sure to point at what you're looking at and talking about. "Look at the blue shirt the lady is wearing—I have one too!" "This is a picture of diapers, like the ones you wear." Let them pick the next picture and talk about what you see together.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Around age one or later, babies become capable of understanding that pictures stand for real things. As you talk about the connections between pictures and real things—especially things they know—you help them understand symbols. This is a critical step in learning to read later.

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

#848



Food Rhymes

During meal or snacktime, create a rhyme or a rap about what your child is eating: "No slice, no dice, we eat rice!" or "You're no rookie, eating your cookie." They'll enjoy the sound of the words and if they respond, make rhymes from their words too.

Ages 1-2



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child hears you rhyming, and when you go back and forth making up more rhymes, they're learning to listen to the sounds of words, which is critical to communicating and pre-reading skills. Making up rhymes can also make mealtimes more fun.

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

#1023



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



Shopping List Scribble

Writing a shopping list? Talk with your child about what you need. Read aloud 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 that 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



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



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



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



Treasure Box

Give your child a small box and tell them it’s a Treasure Box, made to keep very special things. With their help write their name on top of the Treasure Box. Talk back and forth about things they might keep inside. Store it in a place they can reach so they can use it.

Ages 2-3



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your back and forth conversation about “treasures” gives your child the chance to express their ideas and build their vocabulary. With conversations like these, you’re helping them become a better communicator.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #805



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



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



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



Picture Detective

Encourage your child to be a Picture Detective. See if they look at a picture in a book, magazine, or newspaper, and talk about the picture. Ask them to find certain objects or ask questions like, “Look at that boy’s face. How do you think he feels?”

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Pictures are important at this age as your child begins to understand that words and pictures have meaning. When you encourage them to look closely, they make connections and build their skills of focus and self-control and their ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others.

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

#90



Sound Pattern Play

In the car? Take turns with your child making sound patterns. For example, say, “Coo, coo, ca, coo.” Ask them to repeat your sounds. Then ask them to come up with a new pattern, and you repeat it. See if you can make the patterns harder by going faster or adding more sounds.

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child must use their focus, memory, and self-control to pay attention, remember the pattern, and follow the rules of the game. Playing sound games like these are a great way to do early literacy activities with them in a fun way.

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

#103



Silly Speech

Invite your child to choose a word and explore different ways to say it together: use a high voice, a low voice, a loud voice, a soft voice, speak slowly, or speak fast. Have fun and keep it going back and forth! Try having a conversation or telling a story while you play Silly Speech.

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing with word sounds is not only fun, it provides a foundation for your child’s language and literacy learning. As they explore different ways to use their voice, they’re paying attention and thinking flexibly, a skill that enables them to come up with new creative ideas.

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

#148



Letter Shapes

Encourage your child to point out letters on signs around them. Help describe the shapes of the letters, like, “Look. The letter A is pointy, like a triangle. What about the letter O?” See if you both can find all the letters of the alphabet and describe their Letter Shapes.

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child is using focus to find letters, self-control to keep playing the game, and memory to use what they know about letters and shapes to make new connections. When you have fun with language and shapes, you help them enjoy learning.

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

#253



Grab Some Words

Shopping? Give your child a copy of your shopping list or a few of the store’s coupons, talking back and forth about what they’re looking at. Point to a word or picture on your list or on a coupon and say, “Look, we need bananas. Let’s go find some together!”

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

You’re helping your child learn to develop self-control when you give them the opportunity to use words and pictures as a way to focus. When you involve them in tasks like shopping, you give them a sense of responsibility, something they will need in school and in life.

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

#286



Wait and See

Waiting in line at the store is a great chance to be a brain builder. Point to a picture on a magazine and ask your child, “How do you think that man feels?” You can also look for different letters like, “Look, here’s a B just like in your name. It says ‘baseball’ on the magazine.”

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This game gives your child an early reading experience. They’re learning to “read” the meaning of pictures, to see how pictures and words work together, and how letters sound. Not only are you developing literacy skills, you’re showing them how to manage the boredom of waiting in line!

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

#290



Truck Talk

When you're out for a walk or drive, point out all the different trucks for your child. See if they can guess what's inside by the pictures on the outside of the truck. Try to imagine together, where the contents come from. Do the veggies come from a farm? Or the fish from the sea?

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

This kind of game helps your child think like a scientist by looking for clues in pictures. If they make a mistake, point them to a picture with a better clue. "See the apple on the truck? Does that help?"

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

#614



Listening Game

When you're out with your child, talk about sounds that are all around you. When you hear a sound, tell them what you hear and describe where you think it is. "I hear a bird and I think it is in that tree." Ask what they hear and where they think the sound is coming from. Take turns being the leader.

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

When your child listens and identifies what they're hearing, they're paying attention and learning to connect words with sounds, which promotes language skills. By going back and forth together, you're reinforcing their learning.

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

#657



Wheel Watch

While on foot, on the bus, or in the car, encourage your child to point out the different kinds of wheels they see. Talk with them about what you both notice. Do they see big wheels on a truck or two small wheels on a bike? What else can they think of that has wheels?

Ages 3-4



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

By supporting and responding to your child's explorations, you're helping build their vocabulary and ability to focus on a task. Being able to put things in categories (thinking about what's the same and different), also helps them become better at making connections.

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

#737



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 he/she sees 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 his/her environment and teach him/her 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



Word of the Day

Come up with a word of the day, like “play.” As you and your child go through your day, point out moments or things you see that remind you of the word of the day. You might say, “Look, those dogs are playing!” Encourage them to find their own examples of the word of the day.

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Your child must use their memory to remember the special word all day, and use focus and self-control to play the game. They’re also exposed to many words and learns about the different ways that words can be used, important parts of learning to read and write.

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

#105



Same Letter Sentence

Choose a letter, and see if you and your child can think of a sentence using as many words as you can think of that begin with that letter. For example, if you chose the letter M, you might say something like, “My mother made meatballs.” What other M words can you both come up with?

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing with letters and sounds is a great way to help your child’s literacy and communication skills, since it helps them make connections between sounds and words in a playful way. These games also draw on their memory, focus, self-control, and flexible thinking skills.

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

#131



One Letter at a Time

Is your child curious about spelling familiar words, like their name? Take turns going back and forth spelling a simple word like “cat”: you say c, they say a, you say t. Make it even harder and challenge them to try and spell the word backward with you!

Ages 4-5



Brainy Background powered by Mind in the Making

Playing with letters and sounds encourages your child to use what they already know to make connections between letters and sounds. Spelling backward helps them to think flexibly and not just go on autopilot. Spelling games like this one also help prepare them for later reading and writing.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #146



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



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



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



Double Vision

Have your child look for doubles of letters or numbers on signs and license plates. You can say, "Can you find two E's on one sign outside?" 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 also use self-control when they wait for their turn.

For more activities like these, check out the free Vroom app! #707



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