



Cognitive Development

Preschool Age Children

Cognitive development focuses on children's ability to acquire, organize, and use information in increasingly complex ways. Check out these strategies to support your child's cognitive development!

Thinking and Reasoning

Give your child a chance to collect, sort, and organize objects and materials both indoors and outdoors.

Take pictures of events your child attends. Ask them to draw pictures and re-tell the events in order.

Ask open-ended questions that encourage your child to think about what they are doing and possible next steps, like "I wonder what would happen if you...?".

Play games that involve imitation such as "Simon Says" and "Follow the Leader".

Mathematical Thinking and Expression

Measure using a variety of non-standard objects, such as blocks, crayons, beans, or paper clips. Try asking "How many steps does it take to walk to the kitchen?".

Play pattern games with your child, such as "clap, clap, tap your toe, clap, clap, tap your toe".

Talk about "adding to" and "taking away" from blocks and other toys as your child plays with them.



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Scientific Exploration and Knowledge

Take a walk and talk about which things are found naturally in the environment and which things people have made.

Read and discuss non-fiction books about animals, insects, plants, weather, space, and other science topics.

Encourage your child to wonder and ask questions. Model your own sense of wonder.

Social Studies, Family, and Community Connections

Discuss jobs in the community and support dramatic play involving these jobs.

Involve your child in helping others, such as making cards for the elderly or donating their toys or clothes.

Model pleasant, polite interactions with family members and others. Your child will imitate you.

Creative Arts and Expression

Provide a variety of sensory materials such as play dough, goop (cornstarch and water), clay, finger paint, chalk, fabric, sand, mud, leaves, small rocks, and wood pieces.

Use puppets and stuffed animals to act out songs, rhymes, and stories.

Play a variety of music and encourage children to move and dance to music in different ways (march, clap, stomp, gallop, jump, sway, etc.).



This information was adapted from the South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines. To learn more, talk to your childcare provider or visit sdstepahead.com.