

Cognitive Development

33 to 48 months



Allow your child to explore, investigate, and learn about new objects both indoor and outdoor.

Ask open-ended questions about everything. Open-ended questions require more than a yes or no answer and help children construct knowledge about the world around them.

Introduce and use words such as "think" and "know" and talk about your child's thoughts and beliefs in situations.

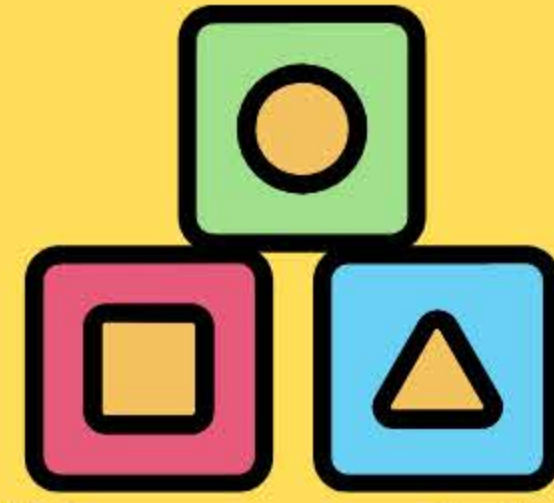
Play "We're going on a picnic. What do we need?" This will build thinking skills and decision-making skills.

Sing counting songs such as 5 Little Ducks or 5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed.

Practice rote counting to five, then 10 and up with your child.

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Practice pointing to and counting objects with your child.

Allow your child to set the table, encouraging them to count how many of each item is needed.

Put objects into two piles with one having more and ask which has more, less, fewer, or make them the same (equal). Add and take away from groups to show how they get more/less.

Build positioning skills by telling your child to put a toy on, inside, under, behind, below, and next to, an empty box or another object.

Using playdough or clay, make two-dimensional (flat) and three-dimensional shapes.

Go on a shape or color hunt inside and outside. Have your child make check marks or lines on paper as you count together. Count the total when finished: "We found five circles."

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Have your child sort by color, size, shape, or other characteristics of objects.

Introduce simple patterns by placing objects: shoe – sock – shoe – sock. Add another object after they master two objects: shoe – sock – spoon or pen – pencil – eraser – crayon.

Have your child play in water, sand, dry rice, beans, etc. with containers, funnels, water droppers, sponges, measuring cups.

Use measuring tools with objects to compare lengths, sizes, and weights: rulers, yarn, shoestrings, measuring cups, assorted sizes of containers, scales, etc.

Encourage “mathematical” thinking during daily routines by asking questions like “Who is taller? Mom or Dad?” or “Which is bigger? The couch or the chair?” or explain “The pillow belongs on top of (spatial awareness) the bed.”

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Introduce the concept of time by using statements such as: "When we are done with this, then we will be doing that," "We have three (showing three fingers) more sleeps and then we go to grandma's house," or "In five minutes, we will be cleaning up (showing five fingers)."

Play with dirt, sand, rocks, twigs, leaves, and other nature items. Observe, describe, and ask and answer questions about the earth. Talk about taking care of the earth.

Go on a walk and point out living and non-living objects. Discuss what makes them living and non-living and what living objects need to survive.

Ask who, what, why, where questions about common animals: "Who makes sure the animals are safe?" and "What do they eat to survive?" etc.

If possible, go on a field trip to a zoo, park, farm, grocery store, etc. Ask open-ended questions.

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Talk about push and pull: doors, wagons, strollers, grocery carts, etc. Explore what happens if something won't push or pull: "There is a wheel missing on the stroller. What can be done to make it work?" Allow your child to think about solutions even if they are not realistic ones.

Observe the weather and ask questions that encourage thinking: "Why is the sun not shining?" or "Where does the rain come from?" or "What does the sun do to the sidewalk and how can we protect ourselves from the sun?"

Visit different environments: library, restaurants, bakery, attend a pow-wow, or other places and events in your community.

Read books about families, people, places, and things around the world.

Make cards for family members.

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Have frequent conversations about family members such as sisters/brothers, aunts/uncles, grandparents, and others considered part of your family.

Take a walk in the neighborhood pointing to and naming different types of buildings, schools, parks, churches, statues, etc. Talk about what places you, your child, or your family are a part of.

Allow your child to experiment with different art materials: paints, clay, textured papers, etc. and introduce words such as paintings, artwork, sculptures, and drawings.

Visit a museum or an art gallery. If these are not available in your community, take a virtual tour online. Many museums and other entities offer these on their websites.