

Activities for Dads to Do with Their Kids

under 1 yr

Walk About

Take your infant outside for a walk around a few blocks. Carry your child in your arm so he can be close to you. Talk to your child and describe what you see. Describe a car, a house, a tree, a bird, what people are doing, etc. Let him touch a few things like a tree branch or a stone but watch out! He is likely to try to "taste" everything.

Baby Hand Grab

Babies have a strong grasp reflex and love to play hand games. Lay your baby on her back (floor or lap). Let her grab hold of your fingers. Lift her arms gently, describing your motions in a "sing-song" voice. (Babies LOVE your higher-pitched voice). Sing songs you both enjoy . . . "Row Row Row Your Boat" is a great one!

Floor Time

Belly time helps a baby get ready for crawling. Lay out a blanket or carpet for the baby to lie on. Lie down on the floor in front of your baby. Encourage your baby to look at you. Play "peek a boo", make faces, blow bubbles together, sing a song, and do other things you and your baby enjoy together.

Bathtime Bubbles

Babies love water (usually). Get a nice warm bath ready in a tub. Get a bottle of bubbles for blowing. Get your baby comfortable and carefully supported in the bath with you. Begin to gently blow bubbles for your baby to catch. Aim the bubbles at your baby's arms, legs, tummy, etc., naming each part as you go.

Where's My Toy?

Collect a few boxes of different sizes. Find one of your baby's favourite toys and place it in the smallest box. "Nest" the boxes together by placing them within each other, from smallest to largest box. Ask, "Where is your toy?" as your baby opens each box, looking for it. When your baby goes through all the boxes and finds the toy, say "Here it is!" and let your baby grab for it. End with a nice big hug and tickle together, and play with the toy.

Row Your Boat

This activity gets your baby moving and helps build a nice bond between you and your baby. Sit your baby facing you while you sit on the floor with your legs in a wide "V". You may want to place a pillow behind your baby for support. Grasp your baby's hands so your baby leans forward while you lean back. Sing "Row Row Row Your Boat" slowing and gently while you move forward and back with your baby. As your baby is able, have your baby lean further and further back and forth until your baby falls on you. Give lots of hugs, tickles, and giggles as your baby lays on you.

Humpty Dumpty

This is a fun one outside, if the weather is nice. But inside it works great, too. On a rug, blanket, or on the grass, lie on your back with your knees raised. Seat your baby on your tummy facing you, leaning back against your knees. Keep your baby steady, gently swaying side to side. Start reciting: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall". Finish the rhyme: "all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again". On "together again", end with a quick tickle. Repeat for another go-round.

Baby Safety Crawl

Dad, this one is just for you. Get a "baby's-eye-view" of your home. Get down on your hands and knees and crawl around, seeing things from your baby's perspective. Look for little things you could pop in your mouth and things you could get hurt on. These are things that could affect your baby. Pick up the things you can. Look for ways to change the layout of your home. Place covers on electric sockets and padding on sharp corners.

1 - 2 years

Water Play

Fill a large tub or bucket with water. Collect containers and have your child pour water from one into the other. Talk about what is happening. Add some plastic bugs, flowers, or other toys, too.

Off to the Races

Whether its sunny or rainy, little kids always love a race. They can race inside and outside. Use a piece of string or rope for a starting line. Get another for the finish line. Start the race by counting down with your child. Race your child to the finish line. End with a great big tackle and tickle. Race again by hopping, crawling, jumping, or skipping. Change the course with some small obstacles.

Tube Talk

Take a couple of tubes and decorate them with crayons, markers, and stickers. Take your newly decorated tubes and begin to talk to each other through them. Sing some songs, make funny noises, march around with the tubes like instruments.

Dad's Clubhouse

Kids love to climb into forts. Find a place to drape the blanket over a couple of chairs, a couch, or something else that would make a clubhouse. Crawl under the blanket with your child. Let your child shine the flashlight around the clubhouse. Read a couple of stories, sing some songs, and laugh a lot. Give your clubhouse a name. Think of one with your child. Clean up the blanket when you are finished and remind your child you can build it again sometime.

Bubble Pop

Kids love bubbles and they love to run. This activity lets them run and chase bubbles. Go outside with the bubbles and blow some for your child. Let your child chase the bubbles. Encourage her to break them with her hands and her feet. Let your child try to blow the bubbles for you to break.

3-5 years**Number Stomp**

This activity gives your child a chance to learn his numbers. Print some big numbers on sheets of paper. Colour and decorate the numbers together. Place them with your child on the floor, align in a phone keypad shape. Have your child stomp on the numbers as you call them out one at the time. You can begin to teach your child your phone number by stomping on them one at the time. Have your child repeat your steps.

Scavenger Hunt

Choose a theme of items outside like leaves, rocks or snow flakes. Depending on the season, take your child outside for a treasure hunt by gathering 5 items. Bring your treasures inside the house. Once inside, learn more about what you collected together by doing an internet search.

A-Z Around the Room

On a piece of paper, list all the 26 letters of the alphabet. Sign the song with your child while writing them down. With your child, look for things around your home beginning with each letter of the alphabet. On a piece of paper, write down your discoveries. For added fun, take your child outside and redo the activity.

Shape Hunt

Cut some shapes out of paper with your child. Draw the shapes all onto one piece of paper as a guide for your child. Give the guide to your child and ask her to close her eyes. Hide the cut out around your home and then have your child find them, matching their guide shapes to the cut out shapes. For added fun, have your child hide the shapes and YOU try to find them.

Sock Flag Football

Whether inside or outside, playing tackle with a soft football is something most kids get a kick out of. Have your child stuff a couple of socks into another sock to make a football. Have your child put a sock into the waist of her pants and you put one into yours. These are the "flags" that each of you will try to grab. If you can, mark out some boundaries for the game. Give your child the sock football and then chase her trying to pull out her flag. When you catch her, it's your turn with the football and she chases you, trying to pull out your flag.

Sheet Parachute

This works well with two of you, but the more people the more fun! Hold onto the sheet together, stretched out as far as possible. Make waves, shake the sheet, lift it as high as you can, or put some cotton balls on it and make popcorn. Crawl under the parachute for a snuggle and story time. Sing some songs together. Talk about the fun stuff you just did.

Balancing Act

Place a plastic cup upside down on the floor. Put an aluminum foil pan face up on the cup. Ask your child to put the blocks or the letters on the tray, one at a time. See how many your child can put on until it falls with a crash! She will love the noise it makes. As your child puts the letters on, say the letter or the colour of the block with her. Try this with different objects around your home.

Where I Live

It is great for kids to learn about where they are from and how other people around the world may live. This activity gives you both a chance to learn about the world. Find the country you live in and show the city you live in. Mark it on the map. Talk about other countries that are interesting or important to you. Ask your child what country they might like to visit. Do a Google or Wikipedia search for a country or area that you are both interested in. For added fun, colour the map together using different colours. Talk about other things that you know about the world.

Celery in Water Experiment

Take 3 or 4 stalks of celery and cut them short. You want the ends with the leaves for this activity. Put water in 3 or 4 glasses. Have your child add food colouring to each glass of water. Use different colours if possible (red and blue work best). Put each stalk in its own glass of coloured water - with the leaves sticking up. Leave them over night. Next day, check to see what has happened. The celery should have changed colour by absorbing the coloured water.

Build a Bird Feeder

Find an empty water or pop bottle and keep the cap. Go outside together and collect three or four small twigs at least 20 centimetres long. With your child, poke two or three holes on each side of the bottle so that a twig or stick can be put through one side and out the other. Attach a wire to the top of the bottle that will be used to hang the bird feeder somewhere outside. Fill the feeder with bird seed and hang it up outside. Over the next couple of days, watch for the birds that start to use your feeder.

Building a Toad Home

Toads love a dark, moist home. You can make a home that can attract a toad in your yard, the woods nearby, or hidden in a park. Find a moist, shady spot in a garden, in the park, or some woods. Lay the pot on its side and bury about one-third of it in the soil. Fill the lid or saucer with water. Toads "drink" by absorbing water through their skin. Place it beside the flower pot. Toads love small flies and insects. If possible, place small piece of banana or orange or some other fruit by the toad's home. This will attract food for the toad. Be patient. Toads will decide where they want to live - you can't force it. But keep the ground moist, the saucer/lid full, and change the fruit every 3-4 days.

Hammering Nails

Hammering nails is a good skill to learn. It teaches hand-eye coordination, determination, and motor skills. Have your child hammer some nails into some wood. And there is a process for straightening bent nails. Jam the nail between the claws of the hammer. Twist the hammer sideways to straighten the nail - twist left if the nail is bent right, and right if the nail is bent left.

10 - 12 years

Whistling Through a Blade of Grass

Go outside and find a nice long, thick piece of weed-like grass. It works best if at least 10 cm long and about half a centimetre wide. Hold the blade between your thumbs so that the bottom of the grass hangs below and the top goes above the thumbs. There should be an opening between the thumbs, right below the knuckles. The blade should be stretched along that hole. Blow nice and gently across the grass to make it vibrate. The buzzing sound will come with persistent practice.

Tied Up in Knots

Knots are always a fun thing to learn and come in handy at the most unexpected times. Have some fun with your child learning how to tie some knots. Do an internet search to find an image of different knots, how to tie them, and what they may be used for. Working together, practice tying some knots with the rope. Talk about ways that you may be able to use these different knots.

Bake a Cake

Grab a favourite cake recipe and bake away together. Allow your child to lead the procedure. Let them measure and pour and stir everything, unless he asks you to. But keep the conversation going. Enjoy the fruits of your labour together. Share the cake with others, too.