

Early Years

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As a busy parent it is not always easy coming up with your own ideas on how to help your young child learn and develop whilst keeping it engaging, interesting, time effective and fun ... so I have devised some fun and practical ideas, hints and tips for parents to follow.

1 Play Time

It's no secret that children learn through play, especially when interacting with a parent or guardian. The more you play at your child's level and engage with them in their toys or activities it will automatically boost your child's social skills, vocabulary, concentration and attention span.

2 Talk, Talk, Talk

Children are born communicators, from the moment they are born they are listening, mimicking and trying to understand the world and language around them. Reading books with your child only helps to develop their vocabulary, but also subconsciously teaches them about story language, structure and develops their imaginations. Try to include some questions about the story or if they are too young to answer questions do a "look and find" throughout

the book (for example - can you point to the sunshine? Can you find the duck?) This helps to progressively build up their comprehension skills for later on in life and simply develop an enjoyment of books.

3 Build those muscles!

Before a child can hold a pencil and write, they need to build their gross motor muscles (these are movements of the large muscles of the arms, legs and torso). Playing at a local park is a great way to develop these or creating an obstacle course at home using whatever you have around the house. Climbing, throwing, kicking, catching and dancing activities are all great ways to develop those all important gross motor muscles as well. Fine motor skills (the ability to make movements using the small muscles in our hands and wrists) are built on the gross motor skills; without developing your child's gross motor first, you may struggle to get your child to be interested in writing, drawing or colouring.

4 Get messy!

Not what every parent wants to hear! But messy play is actually a great way to develop those all important coordination,

concentration and sensory skills. I find that most children absolutely love playing in water and sand. Having a sand and water tray at home will keep your child focused for hours. You can also fill them with safe products you can find around the home, such as corn flour and water, flour and salt, children's foam soap or even mashed up cereals or dry pasta. Add some toy animals, plastic measuring jugs, large spoons and child friendly cups to add to the enjoyment.

5 Sing

Nursery rhymes and songs are fantastic at building children's language development. The repetition and rhyme of nursery rhymes will contribute to your children's language, counting and listening skills ... And do not be embarrassed if you cannot sing in tune! Your child will not care and will love the fun interaction it brings - try fun action songs such as 10 sausages sizzling in a pan, 5 little speckled frogs, 5 little ducks or 1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive to build on their mathematical development too.

For more ideas please have a look at my facebook page [@HayleyCreative TeachingIdeas](#) for more fun ideas and tips.