

10 Ways to Promote Your Child's Cognitive Development

Cognitive development is characterized by the way a child learns, acquires knowledge and interacts with his surrounding environment. Different cognitive skills are acquired as a child meets certain developmental milestones, but a child of any ability will benefit from activities that promote active learning. As a parent, you can encourage your child's cognitive development in the areas of memory, concentration, attention and perception by incorporating simple activities into your everyday routine.

Here are 10 easy ways you can help your child's cognitive development:

1. Sing-a-longs

Sing songs with your child and encourage him to sing along with you. Play his favorite songs and music in the house and car regularly and he may eventually start singing along by himself. This activity helps promote memory and word identification.

2. Identify Noises

Have your child identify noises that he hears throughout the day (i.e. a bird singing, a car horn, running water or the dishwasher). He will begin to understand how sounds relate to objects in his everyday environment.

3. Practice the Alphabet

Help your child identify letters by singing along to the "Alphabet Song," reading books about the alphabet and playing with alphabet puzzles.

Here is an example of an easy game to help your child learn his letters:

1. Cut out individual squares that feature each letter of the alphabet written in bright colors.
2. Mix them up and tape them on various surfaces in the house.

3. Go through the alphabet with your child and encourage him to search around the house to find the next letter and tape it to the wall in order.
4. When finished, leave the alphabet letters in order up on the wall until you're ready to play the game again.

4. Practice Counting

Identify opportunities throughout the day to practice counting. Count the number of shoes in your child's closet when he gets dressed or the number of slides on the playground when you go to the park. You may soon find that you're counting everything!

5. Practice Shapes and Colors

Identify shapes and colors when interacting with your child. You can say, "That is a round, blue ball," when playing in the yard or "That sign is a red octagon" when pulling up to a stop sign. As he gets older, you can ask him to describe objects to you.

6. Offer Choices

When you can, offer your child choices: "Would you like to wear the brown shorts or the blue shorts?" or "Would you like string cheese or yogurt with your lunch?" This will help him to feel more independent and learn to make confident decisions that affect his day.

7. Ask Questions

Another way to help your child learn to think for himself is to ask him questions: "Which toy should we pick up first when we clean up the living room? Or "Why is it important to walk down the stairs slowly?" Asking him questions helps him learn how to problem solve and better understand how his environment works.

8. Visit Interesting Places

Take trips to your local children's museum, library or farmer's market to stimulate his curiosity and provide him with "hand on" experiences. Ask him

questions while you explore and listen to his responses and reactions. These adventures can provide a learning experience for both of you.

9. Play with Everyday Items

Playing with everyday household items is educational, fun and cost effective. Encourage your child to match various-sized lids to their accompanying pots or have him look in a mirror and point to his nose, mouth, eyes, etc.

10. Offer a Variety of Games

Play a variety of games with your child to encourage problem solving and creativity. If your child is younger, the two of you can build with blocks and play “Peek-a-Boo.” As he gets older, you can engage him in board games, puzzles and play “Hide and Seek.”

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