

# Learning from A to Z

Looking for an answer to the complaint “There’s nothing to do”? Use these ideas to help beat the boredom blues—and build the skills your child needs to succeed in school.



## Action math

Have your youngster turn math word problems into mini-skits to act out. For “Annie had five apples. She gave three to Dan. How many does she have left?” she could gather five apples, use dolls to represent Annie and Dan, and create a dialogue.



## Block out

Use graph paper to boost spelling and vocabulary skills. Draw a 15 x 15 box on graph paper, and take turns writing words crossword-style until no more words will fit. Score one point for every letter you fill in. High score wins.

## Coin counter

Practice money skills when dining out. *Example:* How many quarters does the chicken dinner cost? Your youngster can use paper and pencil to find the answer. (If the dinner costs \$5.75, he would divide 5.75 by .25 for an answer of 23 quarters.)

## Describe this

Choose an object, set a timer for one minute, and have everyone list words that describe it. For a rock, your child might write “gray, hard, round, rough.” When time’s up, players compare

lists and cross off duplicates. Whoever has the most words left is the winner.

## Eavesdropper

Try this game to practice listening skills with a radio or an audiobook. Pick a fairly common word (page, music, table). The first person to hear the word raises her hand and says the word to pick the next word to listen for.

## Firsts and lasts

Name an animal (alligator). Ask your youngster to name another animal that starts with the last letter of the first animal (rabbit). Continue (tiger, rattlesnake) until one of you is stumped. Then, choose a new topic (movie titles, foods), and play again.

## Growing science

Cut a half-inch off the tops of two carrots. Put the carrot tops in separate saucers of water. Keep one in a sunny spot and the other in a dark spot. Have your youngster check them daily and add water as needed. Which one grows faster?

## Hand signs

Use sign language to home spelling words. Pick words from your child’s spelling list or a favorite book, and have her sign the letters instead of saying them aloud. Borrow a sign language book from the library or go online to learn the sign language alphabet.

## Inside, outside

Teach your youngster classification skills. Secretly think of a category (school supplies), and have him figure out what it is by guessing various objects. If his guess belongs in your category (pencil), say, “Inside.” If it doesn’t (tomatoes), say, “Outside.” When your child names the category, he gets to start a new round.



## Jumped numbers

Work on place value and addition with this three-dice game. Take turns rolling three dice and making the largest three-digit number possible. Write down your numbers on a piece of paper as you go. *Example:* If your youngster rolls 2, 5, and 1 on her first turn, she would write 521. At the end of five rounds, add up your numbers. Whoever has the largest total wins.

## Knock five

With a permanent marker, write the numbers 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 on five separate paper cups. Stand the cups on the ground 10 feet away. Take turns rolling a small ball toward them, and score the total on the cups you topple. Then, reset for the next roll.

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