# VICOM Brain building moments

Science tells us that the more we engage with our children, the better they'll do later on in school and in life. With these Vroom activities, you have what it takes to be a brain builder!

Learn more about brain building at joinvroom.org, and download the free Daily Vroom app for more activities like these.



### **Hand Talk**

Show your child how to tell you he/she is feeling hungry by touching his/her hand to his/her mouth or rubbing his/her belly. If you do this over and over and then give him/her food while saying the word "hungry," your child will pick up the symbol and learn to talk to you with his/her hands.





Children can express themselves with their hands (for example, by pointing) long before they can use words. Helping your child learn to use "Hand Talk," will help him/her learn to communicate with words in the future.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## See and Say

In the kitchen with your child, describe what you are doing, especially if you notice he/she is interested in something, like pouring water in a bowl or cup. Say things like, "Water goes in the cup." See how he/she responds. He/She might look at you and then look at the cup.





When you notice what your child is interested in, you motivate him/her to learn more about the world around him/her. As you talk about what you're doing, you introduce your child to lots of new vocabulary, and help him/her make connections between objects and words.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# Feeding Memories

When breastfeeding or giving your child a bottle, use that time to tell him/her a story of something happy you remember from your childhood. When your child has finished eating and responds to your voice, make the same sound back to him/her.





Your voice is your child's favorite sound. Even though your child can't say words yet, he/she is listening and learning what sounds go together in words, which is an important foundation for language later on.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### Mealtime Detective

How does your child tell you that he/she is hungry? Does he/she fuss? Turn his/her head toward the bottle or breast? Look at you? How does your child tell you he/she has had enough? Does he/she turn away? Stop eating? Push away? You can be a detective. Look for the clues and talk to your child about what you think the clues mean.





When you try to understand what your child is telling you and then respond, you are having a back and forth conversation. This is one of the most important ways you can build on and extend his/her learning. It's a big step to help him/her become a lifelong learner.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### Face-to-Face Time

You can talk to your child about anything! Use his/her name as you share face time. Your attention is like a hug from the inside that helps him/her focus and feel calm and settled. Pay attention to what is happening around your child and talk to him/her about it.





Your child is learning he/she can count on you to help him/her feel calm and settled. It's a big part of trust and helps him/her begin to learn to settle himself/herself.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## Finger Food Fun

Do you have a muffin tin or ice tray at home? Take small pieces of your child's finger foods and put them in different sections of the tin or tray. Leave some empty spaces so he/she can move pieces around. Describe out loud what your child is doing, "You moved the cracker over!"





You're encouraging your child's developing ability to focus on an object and control his/her body to achieve a goal, in this case picking up food. These skills will set him/her up for successful problem-solving later in life. He/She is also gaining experience with math ideas like space and shape.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### Taste and Touch

Offer your child objects that are safe to put in his/her mouth, like wooden spoons or plastic cups. Talk about what he/she is doing as he/she puts the objects in his/her mouth or moves them. Even if your child can't yet speak, he/she is supported by your voice and interest in his/her actions.





At this age, one of the most important ways that your child learns about the world is by exploring objects with his/her mouth. As you talk about what he/she is doing, as well as the color, shape, and size of the objects, you're sharing vocabulary to use for these experiences.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## Kick and Play

Does your child like to kick his/her legs during time on his/her tummy? Place different materials behind your child for him/her to kick, like crumpled paper or a rolled up towel. Talk together about how the materials might feel and the sounds he/she makes while kicking.





Your child learns about the world through his/ her senses. By naming what he/she touches and sharing words for how they feel and sound, you help him/her learn to connect words with experiences. Kicking materials helps your child begin to understand concepts like cause (his/ her actions) and effect (what happens).

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## **Baby Sit-Ups**

Place your child on his/her back on a blanket. Holding either side of the blanket above his/her head, gently lift the sides and move your child up almost into a sitting position. Look into your child's eyes, smile, and speak to him/her, then gently lower him/her back down. If your child enjoyed it, do it again!





One of your child's earliest skills is his/ her ability to pay attention to something interesting—in this case, you! Your child especially likes to look at you. By smiling at and talking to your baby, you help increase his/her attention span as well as strengthen the bond between you.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### I See You

As you feed your child, tell him/her what you see. "I see your fingers picking up a piece of food. I see your mouth chewing a banana. I see you drinking with your mouth." If your child makes a sound or says a word, repeat it to create a back and forth conversation. Babbling and talking are learning!

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As you have a back and forth conversation about what you see your child doing, he/she is listening to you and learning new words, even before he/she can talk. Your child is also learning to communicate with another person and how much fun it can be.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### Feed Me!

Encourage sharing and taking turns by asking your child to feed you, too. After your child takes a bite say, "My turn!" Open your mouth and see if your child will give you a bite. Say, "Thank you!" and then prompt your child to take a turn. Your child will love having a turn at being in charge!

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When you and your child take turns, you are modeling the back and forth of communication, which will help your child as he/she learns to talk and read. He/She is also learning about relating to others in a fun way.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### The Hand Wash

Let your child be your partner as you wash up before dinner. Say, "It's time to wash our hands, yours and mine." Put soap on both your hands and lather up. Be silly as you dry your hands off together. Do you shake dry? Toss the towel back and forth? Make a hand jumble? What else?

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Making your child your partner in hand washing helps him/her learn about this important routine. A back and forth conversation with words and gestures, builds your relationship too. Say, "You can wash your hands!"

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### **Mealtime Textures**

What are all of the descriptive words you can use to describe the food that your child is eating? Is the banana mushy, squishy, and slippery? Are the eggs warm, crumbly, and soft? Point as you say them and watch your child respond and respond back to him/her.

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When your child hears and sees new ways to describe his/her food, he/she is learning new words as well as the skills of observing his/her experience and communicating more effectively.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## **Expressive Eater**

Watch your child during mealtime. Comment on his/her reactions to how the food tastes and feels, and copy his/her facial expressions. Does your child make a happy face when eating something sweet like fruit? Say, "You liked that juicy strawberry!" and then comment on your child's response.

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By describing your child's experiences and responding to him/her with words, you're helping your child make connections between objects and language, and between feelings and actions. Interacting with your child makes your relationship stronger and engages him/her in learning.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## **Dance Copy Cat**

Put on a song both of you like and watch your child move. As he/she dances, copy what he/she is doing. When he/she stops, you dance around and let him/her watch you. See if you can create a back and forth dance, taking turns copying each other.

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As your child copies your dance, he/she is paying attention to your movements, using his/her working memory, and controlling his/her actions—all important for learning the skill of focus and self-control.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## **Exercise Buddy**

Invite your child to help you do some exercise. Hold him/her and do sit-ups fast and then slow and talk about the speed with him/her. Do leg lifts and raise your leg above your child's head then back to the ground, talking about his/her size as you do. What else can you do?

Ages 1-2





Exercise and other physical play provide ways to deepen your relationship with your child and build the trust and love between you. Your loving relationship is the fuel for your child's brain.

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#### Little Parrot

Play a pattern with your hands and let your child do his/her best to copy. Try different patterns of sounds and lengths, like clapping or opening and closing your fist. Then you can take a turn to copy what your child does. See how long you can go back and forth.

Ages 1-2 joinvroom.org



As your child watches you and copies your movements, he/she uses his/her memory and focus. These skills will help him/her learn to take in new information and use it as he/she gets older. Children learn best when there is a back and forth interaction, like when you watch your child and respond to what he/she is doing.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# Play Kitchen

Work together with your child to create a play kitchen by offering him/her pots, spoons, and other safe kitchen items. Use the top of a table as a stove and ask your child what he/she needs to make food, like soup. Pretend to put in ingredients and take turns stirring and "tasting" your creation!

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Pretending is essential to learning. In addition to learning more about everyday life like cooking, children are learning that one thing can "stand for" something else (a table is a stove), an ability they will use in learning that letters stand for sounds or numbers stand for quantities of things.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# **Cooking Lessons**

No matter what you're cooking, your child can be a helper. Give your child a play-by-play of the ingredients you're using and if it's safe, let him/her touch, smell, or taste them. Have a conversation about what you're making: "Red pepper makes the beans spicy."





Talking about everyday activities as you do them helps build children's communication skills—and their brains! Be sure to point to objects as you say their name to help your child learn new words.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### Little Independence

Does your child want to do everything by himself/ herself? Whether it's eating with fingers or trying to use a fork, give your child ways to be more independent. Talk to your child about what he/she is doing. If he/she needs it, help him/her a little. When your child is done, notice how he/she responds with a smile or an "I did it!" Celebrate with him/her!





It may take longer and be messier, but you're helping your child to feel good and develop new skills. This will give him/her a sense that he/she can try something new and succeed.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# **Animal Kingdom**

Turn your living room into a wild animal kingdom! Make an animal noise. Can your child guess the name of the animal? Can he/she copy the sound back? Now it's his/her turn to make a sound for you to guess. See how many times you can go back and forth: "Woofff! Hissssss! Rooarr!"





Back and forth conversations, whether they're with words, sounds, or faces, help your child learn to pay attention, listen carefully, and not go on auto-pilot, but still follow the rules.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# Homemade

### **Obstacle Course**

Make an obstacle course today! Line up a few pillows for a jump or use the table as a tunnel. Lines on the floor could even become a tightrope. Try one or two of these and then add on some of your own! Talk to your child about what he/she is doing as he/she does it!





As your child moves around the obstacle course, he/she is learning concepts like over, under, into, along, up, and down—all through his/her senses. Your child is also gaining control of how and when he/she moves, which is an important step in building self-control.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# Sweep Together

Include your child in everyday chores. "It's time to sweep! Can you hold the dustpan for me?" Let him/her dump the dirt into the trash. Don't be surprised when your child asks you to hold the dustpan for him/her. Go back and forth. Taking turns is how your child learns best and makes him/her feel included.





Not only is your child learning by imitating you, he/she is learning by doing. he/she is also figuring out how things work—that things get dirty and need to be cleaned up. More importantly, your child is learning to be helpful and considerate.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!

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### Homemade Play

What can you find in your house to play pretend with your child? Offer him/her clothes, blankets, empty boxes, and clean and safe kitchen objects to use. Include his/her ideas in what you come up with. You can give him/her prompts like, "Should we build a boat or pretend to cook dinner?"





Playing pretend is a great way for your child to explore ideas and practice language skills. He/She also gets the chance to "try on" different roles, like being a parent or a baby, and to see the world through other people's eyes. This is an important skill for getting along with others.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### Calm Down Kit

Using an empty shoebox or other container, have your child put special items inside that help him/her calm down, like a book, a favorite toy, or piece of clothing. Have your child decorate the box and when he/she is feeling upset, remind him/her to use the Calm Down Kit.





By creating a Calm Down Kit before upset feelings happen, you are helping your child plan for how to handle stress so he/she can take action in a difficult situation. This gives your child more control and builds his/her skill in learning to take on challenges.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## Piece-by-Piece

Offer your child a whole fruit or vegetable, like an apple. Ask questions about what the apple looks like, feels like, and smells like before cutting it. After you cut it, talk about what you both notice. What does it look like, smell like, and feel like now? Does it always taste the same?





It takes flexible thinking to understand one thing can look different but still be the same, like how an apple can be whole or sliced and is still an apple. This ability is important for learning and creativity. Talking back and forth is the best way to develop your child's language skills too!

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### **Animal Bites**

Sometimes mealtime can be a challenge. Encourage your child to eat by offering him/her choices about how he/she eats. You can say something like, "Do you want two big dinosaur bites or four little mouse bites?" Count the bites together and ask him/her to think of his/her own Animal Bites eating ideas.





When you guide your child to make his/ her own choices, you show him/her that you believe he/she can do things, even when they're hard. This helps your child develop confidence and encourages him/her to take on challenges. Counting Animal Bites together is a fun math experience for your child too!

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### **Snack Senses**

Take turns with your child coming up with words that describe what he/she is eating. If he/she has a carrot ask, "What does it look like?" Your child might say, "orange," and you might say, "pointy." Ask: "What does it feel, smell, and taste like? What does it sound like when you eat it?"





When you use lots of different words with your child, you help build his/her vocabulary and develop his/her understanding of the connections between words and what they mean, an important skill for learning to read. Your child is also practicing tuning out distractions to focus on one thing—an important skill for learning.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# **Snack Sampler**

At snacktime, exercise your child's five senses. Let him/her taste a piece of his/her snack and ask him/her how it tastes, then have him/her smell it and tell you what he/she smells. Talk about the shape of it and how it feels to the touch. You can smell and taste it too.





The more your child can experience the world through his/her senses, the more he/she will learn.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# Daily Favorite

At dinnertime, ask your child what his/her favorite part of his/her day was. Make sure you follow up with questions. "Why did you like that? Was it more fun than the last time you did that? Why?" You can make this a dinnertime tradition.





Asking your child questions that require more than a simple "yes" or "no" help build language, communication, and reasoning skills. Repeat what he/she says back to him/her in more complex sentences. Don't be afraid to use words he/she doesn't know!

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### **Toddler Chef**

Get your child thinking as he/she "helps" you prepare a snack or meal. Ask him/her, "Do you think all these noodles will fit in this bowl?" or "Should we use this big red tomato or the little one?" or "Would you like to peel these two bananas for the fruit salad?"





As you "cook" together, you're teaching your child basics about the world around him/her—colors, sizes, numbers—and you're also helping him/her see that he/she is a "thinker" and that thinking is fun.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### **Dance Moves**

Playtime can become a dance party. Turn on some tunes on your phone or radio and start doing a silly dance: shake a leg, wiggle your hips. Can your child copy your moves? Next song, it's his/her turn to lead. Go back and forth until you're danced out!





Believe it or not, dancing games can be great brain builders! This one in particular teaches your child to pay attention to sounds and rhythm and to imitate you using his/her body. It also gives him/her the chance to be the leader and that's a good feeling.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!

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#### **Musical Mazes**

Using items in your home like chairs, tables, and pillows, work with your child to build a maze. Then, while singing or playing music, have your child walk through the maze. When the music stops, he/she should stop. See if he/she can move to the music when it gets faster and slower.





Building a maze takes creativity and problemsolving. Being able to start and stop, and move fast and slow, all require your child to think on his/her feet, to focus, and to resist the temptation to go on autopilot, but instead use self-control to respond to the changing music.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### **Build a Fort**

Build a fort with your child out of pillows, blankets, and anything else you can think of. Talk with him/her about what you will build and make a plan. Ask him/her to help you figure out how to build it. Your fort can be a hideaway to pretend, dream, and imagine.





When you ask your child to come up with an idea and figure out how to make it, he/she is learning to set goals and use critical thinking and reasoning skills. He/She is using her communication skills as he/she expresses himself/herself.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### Measure Me

Show your child how to use string or yarn to "measure" parts of his/her body. Have your child put out his/her arm and hold the string along the length of his/her arm. Cut the string and hold it out: How long is it? Can your child compare it to other body parts? Can he/she measure your arm?





Your child is building a strong foundation for learning when you help him/her understand how one thing, like string, can stand for something else, like the length of his/her arm. Your child is exploring math ideas, like measuring and comparing, by actually doing them—the best way for children to learn.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### Stories in Action

Come up with a short story for your child to act out. Say something like, "There once was a child who loved to climb trees," and encourage your child to pretend to climb. Add on to the story with more actions. See how creative you can get. Let your child have a turn to tell a story while you pretend.

Ages 3-4





When children pretend, they are listening, remembering, controlling their behavior to fit the story, and being imaginative. Learning that words can "stand for" actions helps later on with the understanding that written words can stand for ideas—a skill children use in learning to read.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## Mini Chef

When you're cooking, have your child help with simple tasks like adding an ingredient. Ask him/her what he/she thinks will happen when you add the ingredient (like pouring a cup of milk into flour) and then talk together about what actually happens.





This is a real-life science experiment. Guessing about what might happen promotes your child's curiosity, which is critical to learning.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# Five Faves

Tonight at dinner, talk about favorites. "What is your favorite color (animal, food, place, book)?" You start and then let your child have a turn. Keep going back and forth until you each name five favorites!





When you talk about favorites, you're helping your child learn about a category of things—things he/she likes. See if you can notice similarities in what he/she likes ("you like adventures"). You are helping your child learn to make connections in her thinking.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### Menu Maker

Involve your child in meal planning. Ask him/her to choose how to organize the meal, like by color or family favorites. For example, you could have your child ask family members to choose their favorite foods and then help your child draw or write a menu based on everyone's favorites.





Your child must use his/her skills of organizing, making connections, and putting things into categories in order to create a menu for mealtime. Your child is also practicing early literacy skills and learning about the importance of language in everyday life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### Mealtime Check-In

When eating together, invite your child to think about his/her day by asking, "What was the BEST part of your day?" Have each person at the table answer. Then ask, "What was the WORST part of your day?" Go around the table again. Share your day with your child and encourage him/her to ask others.





When your child hears about others' experiences, he/she begins to learn how to understand another person's point of view—an important skill for life. Your child is also practicing the back and forth of conversation and evaluating the day's experience, which build family connections and make mealtime meaningful.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



### Thoughtful Eating

Encourage your child to use self-control and focus while eating a favorite treat. First, have him/her look at the snack and describe what he/she sees. Then he/she can smell it, touch it, and finally take just a little taste. Talk with your child about what he/she notices with his/her senses.





Being able to wait for something he/she really wants, like a yummy snack, helps your child learn self-control to manage feelings and actions. Thoughtful Eating also helps your child learn problem-solving strategies, like slowing down and taking a step back from a challenging situation.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## Silly Charades

Play a game where your child has to guess what you are. Make different facial expressions and body movements and see if he/she can get it. Sound effects are allowed too! Then ask your child to be something and you try to guess. You can pretend to be animals, objects, or people you both know.





When your child is guessing what or who you are, he/she is using observational skills and memories of past experiences. When your child is acting and pretending to be someone or something else, his/her perspective taking and communicating skills are promoted.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



#### Freeze Frame

Clap your hands and ask your child to stop and freeze in a pose when you stop clapping. When you begin clapping again, your child should move, then stop in a different pose when the clapping stops. First, clap slowly. Then get faster so your child has to keep changing poses. Take turns, letting your child be the clapper while you pose.





You're helping your child think on his/her feet and not go on auto-pilot to change positions in response to your clapping. Your child must pay attention and use self-control to stop and go, while also remembering what poses he/she has already used.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



# Home Shopping

Using packages of food or other items, encourage your child to set up a store at home. He/she can make a list, find a bag, and pretend to go shopping while you act like the cashier. Talk about what he/she is shopping for. Then switch and you can shop and he/she can be the cashier.





Pretending is a fun way for your child to practice skills like focus and self-control. He/She is following directions, thinking flexibly to switch between roles, and using what he/she already knows about shopping to pretend with you.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!



## **Alphabet Moves**

With your child, go through the alphabet and make the shape of each letter with your bodies. The letter "A" can be a triangle with your arms above your head and your legs standing wide. Ask your child to make the letter "B" with his/her body. Take turns making the other letters!





Your child must use focus, self-control, and memory to recall the shapes of letters to represent them with his/her body. Through firsthand experience, he/she is learning about language and literacy.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom app!