



## 3-4 Years

Here are some ways that you can help your child learn and grow in all of the areas covered in the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS). You may see some ideas in different areas that are almost the same. That's because children are learning a lot of different things as they learn more about the people and the world around them. These ideas don't have to be all you do with your child! You can think of new ways to build on everything included here. Just as your child is learning, you can keep learning ways to support your child's growth. The most important thing to remember as you use these strategies is to have fun and find ways to help your child learn every day!



Connecticut Office  
of Early Childhood



## Cognition

### Solve Problems

When you face a simple problem, ask questions such as, “What can we do to fix this?” or “How can we solve this problem?” For example, when food or a drink spills or a toy rolls under the couch, think of ways to solve the problem together and find tools that you can use to help. These questions can help your child develop important problem-solving skills.

### Explore cause and effect

Daily routines can be a chance to explore how actions make something happen. At bath time, talk about what happens when they pour water on a dry washcloth or sponge. Make statements such as, “When you stand in the sun, you get hot,” and “You were running a lot and now you are breathing very fast.” These statements tell your child how an action causes an effect.

### Plan an activity

Do an activity with your child that requires more than one step, such as cutting and gluing, or mixing then pouring. Before you begin, ask your child what they should do first, second, etc. When you talk with your child about the steps in an activity or routine, it helps develop planning skills.

## Social and Emotional Development

### Plan a small challenge

Pick an activity or game that interests your child but also challenges them just a little. If they show frustration, talk about what they are feeling. For example, “I see you are frustrated because the tower fell down,” or “I notice you are getting upset.” Then work together to find a solution. By doing this, you teach your child emotion words, let them that know it is okay to feel frustrated or upset, and help them think of solutions. This helps children learn that it is okay to be upset, but that they don’t have to stay that way!

### Practice taking turns

Play a game that involves taking turns or ask your child to share a favorite toy for a short time. Help them take turns by letting them know they will get a chance to play soon. Focus on the skill of waiting rather than what they are waiting for. Waiting is often hard for children, so start with quick turns. They may need reminders that they will have a turn. It can help to have something else to do while waiting. Say aloud, “Now it’s your turn,” to ease the stress of waiting and help with switching turns.





## **Physical Health and Development**

### **Practice using several household tools**

While watching, give your child a chance to practice using household tools, such as scissors, markers, crayons, forks, spoons, etc. Show or help them to hold the tools the right way by adjusting their fingers and encourage them if they get frustrated. Using different utensils will strengthen your child's hand muscles and help with hand-eye coordination.

### **Challenge your child's physical abilities**

Whenever possible, ask your child to use different movements. Plan a small obstacle course for your child that requires them to practice climbing stairs, crawling under something, and jumping over something low to the ground. Opportunities to move in your home or in an open outdoor area will help in developing your child's mobility, large muscle movements, and coordination.

### **Talk to your child about health and safety**

During daily routines, talk to your child about why these habits are important. Help them understand why washing your hands before you eat and after you use the restroom is important for your health, and protects you from getting sick. Explain why brushing your teeth after every meal is important for your teeth. These meaningful conversations will help your child understand why we do these things and will teach them safety, responsibility, and healthy behaviors.

## **Language and Literacy**

### **Show your child the importance of reading**

Share pictures or books with your child. Point out when you see others reading. Let your child know when a sign or words give us important information. Showing your child that printed words are everywhere and that these words tell us important things will help them understand print concepts, learn new words, and build their early literacy skills.

### **Make books fun**

Look at books together. Talk about what is happening in the books and ask your child questions about what they think might happen next. Show a genuine interest in the things they might point out and comment on them. These activities will help your child understand language structure, the meaning of stories, and will help them develop an interest in books.

### **Practice writing letters**

When your child is writing or drawing, make comments about the marks they make. For example, stating, "That looks like the letter X," will help your child understand how the marks they make can have meaning while also encouraging them to try writing more letters.





## Creative Arts

### Teaching about materials

Talk with your child about the things they used in a project they did (e.g. a picture, sculpture, or building). Use details to describe what they used (e.g. thick paper, construction paper, fabric, pom-poms, sequins, etc.). These conversations will allow your child to see the value in using different objects to create artwork and will help develop their creative skills.

### Music appreciation

Play different kinds of music that reflect your taste or culture. Let your child listen to different genres of music (e.g. classical, pop, reggae, rock) and ask them to describe what they hear, feel, or how they want to move when they hear that kind of music.

### Dramatic arts

Play pretend with your child. Act as a character (e.g. doctor) to get them involved in playing a role, or allow your child to say who they want you to be and what you should do. Your child might decide to be the doctor and let you be the patient. Get creative with props and materials (e.g. using a cup as a stethoscope or a banana as a telephone). Go along with your child's creativity to build upon their imagination.

## Mathematics

### Talk about shapes

Talk with your child about the shapes of various objects around your house. Ask your child how they know that a plate is a circle or what makes the napkin a square. Use words such as *lines*, *angles*, *corners*, and *edges* to help them think about different shapes. Use something in your house that is long and thin (e.g. chopsticks, dried spaghetti noodles, straws) to build rectangles, squares, and triangles. Problem-solve with your child by talking about how you could build a circle with its curved lines.

### Measure things

Allow your child to use a measuring tool (e.g. a ruler, measuring tape) to practice measuring items around the house. Children also enjoy using household objects (e.g. a piece of paper), their hands, or even their own feet to measure items. Find out how many inches or hands long the table is. Use measurement words such as *inches*, *wide*, and *length*. Compare measurements (e.g. "Which is longer?"). This activity will help your child identify numbers, understand why we might measure things, practice using new tools, and learn new measurement words.

### Number names

Practice counting with your child. Use numbers to count small groups of objects, but also find times to just use the number names to count as high as you can. This provides your child with the chance to practice number names even if they can't quite keep track of counting that many items yet.







## Science

### Talk to your child about daily observations

As you and your child are outdoors or in your home, talk about the things that you see happening. Ask your child to tell you what they see, hear, and/or touch. Encourage them to ask questions about how things work. Conversations like this help young children understand the world around them, and help them develop the inquiry skills needed to explore and experiment.

### Provide your child with a variety of tools

When taking a bath or playing in the dirt, supply your child with different objects to use. For example, giving your child several different sized containers, cups, or tubes will allow them to explore how water fills and flows in different containers. Providing your child with a cup, a shovel, a stick, and an old spoon will give them the opportunity to discover how each tool digs through the dirt differently. Ask your child about their choices and their results.

### Experiment with shadows

Shine a light on the floor or go outside into the sun. Look at the shadows made by different objects, or make your own shadows by putting things between the light and the floor. If possible, put a piece of paper down and trace the shadow. Try moving the object closer and farther away from the light to change the size. Re-trace the shadow to see the change. Talk with your child about why there is a shadow and why it might change (e.g. when the object is closer to the light it blocks more of the light).

## Social Studies

### Same and different

Talk to your child about your family and the different roles you play. Talk about other families that might be different from yours. When you talk about families that are different, also mention what is the same. Talk about who takes care of your child's friends at home, who works, who goes to school, the food your family eats, etc. Learning about individuals and groups helps children understand the value of themselves and others around them.

### Time and change

Show your child pictures of them and of your family over the years. Talk with your child about how individuals change and grow over time—from a baby, into a child, to a teen, and then an adult. Talk about close family members and how they used to be young like they are. Share a picture of this family member if there is one available. Notice what is the same and different across the ages, and try to answer your child's questions about time and change.

