

Common Household Objects in Early Intervention: Activity Cards

This resource can be shared with caregivers and families of young children with, or who are at-risk for, disabilities and developmental delays. The cards provide activities that use **FOUR** common household items to support children's speech, occupational, physical, and/or developmental goals.

Designed by Crystal Williams

Activity Cards

These cards can be shared with caregivers and families during home visits. A provider may want to explain or demonstrate the activities prior to leaving the activity cards with a caregiver. The cards are organized by discipline, allowing providers to easily select those that are most relevant to their practice. However, families may benefit from having copies of all the cards to further support their child's development.

Instructions:

- Print pages
- Cut along the dashed line to create cards
- Bind cards using a hole punch and binder ring if desired

Speech and Language Activity:

A Plastic Jar

- Plastic jars such as peanut butter containers can be used to encourage babies to begin making noises with their mouth. The container projects the noise and the child can hear his or her vocalizations more clearly.
- After the jar is clean and dry, model how to make noises into the jar.
- Begin with sounds that are easy for the child to make such as the “ahh” sound.
- Hold the jar to the child’s mouth while continuing to model the sound.
- Multiple containers may allow other family members to participate at the same time, or take turns passing the container and making noises into it.
- The involvement of family members, especially siblings, may encourage children to vary or increase their use of sounds.

Speech and Language Activity:

A Laundry Basket

- Ask the child to gather their favorite toys and objects to fill a laundry basket.
- When the child brings an item for the basket, label it by name and point to the object.
- Encourage the child to say the word, first syllable, or beginning sound depending on their ability. Praise the child for their attempt.
- Hold the object near your mouth while saying the word to draw attention to the sound and shape of your mouth.
- After practicing the sound, place the toy in the basket.
- Continue until the basket is full. If the child is interested, dump out the laundry basket and begin again.

Speech and Language Activity:

A Cereal Box

- Snacks items can be a great motivator for children who may be reluctant to engage in an activity.
- Snack time can also be a great time to practice signs, words, and gestures to communicate wants and needs.
- Pour some dry cereal into a bowl and give a few pieces to the child. Demonstrate the gesture, word, or sign the child should use to request "more."
- Signs for "more" or "please" are good signs to start teaching. After the child masters the signs individually, encourage them to combine them to say, "more please."
- If the child is working on longer utterances (i.e., I want more, More cereal please), encourage them to keep trying by offering more than one piece of cereal the closer they get to completing the full phrase.
- Continue increasing the expectation as the child improves. However, if the child is progressing slowly, adjust expectations to meet the child where they are.
- Always encourage the child by providing descriptive feedback following their attempts (i.e., Yes, you can have more Cheerios.)

Speech and Language Activity:

A Pot or Pan

- Banging on pots and pans is often a favorite activity for children and can be used to facilitate a child's ability to make noises or sing words to a song.
- Using an overturned pan and two wooden spoons the caregiver can model how to make a beat using the spoon on top of the pan.
- Vocal noises such as "boom," "bang," and "ding" while hitting the pans with the spoon can encourage the child to mimic the caregiver's sounds.
- Sing a song that is familiar to the child and beat on the pan in the same rhythm, periodically pausing the song and banging during parts of the song the child may know.
- Encourage the child to finish the lyrics to the song.
- Remember to praise the child's attempts.

Occupational Therapy Activity:

A Plastic Jar

- Plastic containers such as bottles or peanut butter jars can be used to make sensory bottles. Children can explore their senses by touching, looking, and listening to the bottle. Sensory bottles also can help children self soothe.
- Fill a clean, empty bottle a third of the way with clear glue, baby oil, or vegetable oil.
- Add any combination of glitter, pompoms, beads, sequins, small objects - such as buttons, paint, and food coloring to decorate the bottle.
- Fill the bottle the rest of the way with hot water and seal the cap using tape or glue.
- The whole family can assist in creating bottles while monitoring small children who may attempt to put materials in their mouths.

Occupational Therapy Activity:

A Laundry Basket

- For children who may need and/or enjoy spinning, a laundry basket can be used to spin them in a safe manner.
- A caregiver can help the child climb into the basket or place them inside a basket with their legs crossed.
- If children need support sitting up, pillows and blankets around their body may stabilize them.
- Count down or call out "Ready, set, go" to prepare the child to spin.
- Spin the laundry basket in a circular motion at a speed the child enjoys. Multiple people can sit around the laundry basket and help spin the laundry basket.

Occupational Therapy Activity:

A Cereal Box

- Cereal can be used for sensory exploration with young children. It is safer than other sensory materials because it can be ingested.
- Fill a large container with different types of cereal varying in size, shape, texture, and color.
- Encourage the child to use their hands to explore the cereal.
- Provide clean measuring cups, funnels, spatulas and other materials for them to experiment with as they explore.
- Talk about the way the cereal feels and looks with the child (i.e., hard, circular, rough).
- Model ways to mash or crush the cereal, fill containers, or pour from one container to another.
- Be aware that some cultures or individual families may discourage 'playing with food.'

Occupational Therapy Activity:

A Pot or Pan

- This activity can take place outdoors, on the kitchen floor, or in a bathtub.
- Partially fill several pots and pans with water and provide the child with spoons, eye droppers, measuring scoops, and small cups.
- Model ways the child can use each object with the water.
- Encourage them to freely manipulate the materials and explore the water.
- This activity provides sensory input for children through the exploration of the water.
- Adding ice could extend the activity or provide more sensory input.
- By using scoops, spoons, and droppers children are able to practice various motor skills.

Physical Therapy Activity:

A Plastic Jar

- Plastic jars can be used to encourage sitting upright, reaching, crawling, cruising, and walking in infants.
- Fill a clean jar with beads, dry corn, rice, or other small material that makes noise.
- Place the jar in front of the child while seated and shake it to capture the child's attention.
- For children working on crawling, caregivers can sit in front of the child shaking the jar to entice the child to move towards them.
- Reward a child's efforts and attempts by giving them the plastic jar to play with and shake.
- Continue the activity as long as the child maintains interest.

Physical Therapy Activity:

A Laundry Basket

- A laundry basket can be used to encourage and stabilize walking and build strength.
- For children beginning to cruise, turn the laundry basket over and help the child stand behind it. With both hands on the laundry basket, encourage the child to push the basket.
- If the child has begun to walk but needs continued practice, put a few heavy books in the bottom of the laundry basket along with a favorite stuffed toy or doll.
- A few heavy items will help keep the basket from tipping as the child holds onto one edge and pushes the basket. However, the heavier the laundry basket, the more difficult the task will be for the child.
- Have the child put both hands on the laundry basket while standing behind it. Encourage the child to push the basket forward. This helps strengthen leg and arm muscles while facilitating a child's ability to move.

Physical Therapy Activity:

A Cereal Box

- Empty cereal boxes can be saved to make games for the child.
- Cut apart four of five cereal boxes and save the front and back pieces. Glue shelf liner paper to the blank sides of the box faces.
- Place the decorated cereal box pieces on the ground to create a path for the child to crawl, walk, jump, skip, or hop on, depending on their ability.
- A caregiver can assist the child as needed to move across the path. Caregivers can model actions for the child, verbally prompt them, or provide physical assistance.
- Encourage the child to follow directions by calling out actions such as hop, jump, crawl, stomp, etc.

Physical Therapy Activity:

A Pot or Pan

- Place a pot on the floor a short distance in front of the child. Hand the child a small foam ball, bean bag, rolled up sock, etc. and encourage them to toss it into the pot.
- This activity provides the child with an opportunity to use large muscles involved in throwing and bending.
- Use bigger or smaller pots and vary the distance of the pot from the child to make the game simpler or more challenging.
- To add additional fun, caregivers can hold the pan and try to catch the ball in the pot. By including other family members, a child can also practice turn taking skills.

Developmental Therapy Activity:

A Plastic Jar

- Jars can be used to practice filling and dumping which can increase hand-eye coordination, strengthen fine motor skills (i.e., pinching, picking up small objects), and provide practice taking turns.
- Provide the child with a clean plastic jar and various small objects that will fit into the jar such as cotton balls, small blocks, or small toy animals.
- Model how to put an object into the container and encourage the child to try. Turn-taking skills can be practiced by including a caregiver or sibling in the activity with the child.
- Caregivers can guide the child's hands when placing an item in the jar as needed. Additionally, consider allowing the child to guide a caregiver's hands to add variety and help maintain interest.
- When the jar is filled, encourage the child to dump out the contents and fill the container again if they are still engaged.

Developmental Therapy Activity:

A Laundry Basket

- This activity may encourage a child to clean up items around their home.
- Place a laundry basket in an area of the home where there are items to be picked up and create a game of putting objects away.
- For example, when picking up clothes or soft items, encourage the child to toss the objects into the basket by modeling this for them.
- If the child is putting away toys, encourage them to race with a caregiver or sibling to get items to the basket fastest. The child also could practice hopping, crawling, tip-toeing, etc. when putting an item in the basket.
- Another enhancement of this activity could also include sorting objects by color or type (i.e., put all the red toys in first, etc.).

Developmental Therapy Activity:

A Cereal Box

- Cut apart a cereal box and save the front piece.
- Cut the face of the box into four pieces to make a "puzzle." The face of the box can be cut into more than four pieces depending on a child's ability.
- Invite the child to help their caregiver put the puzzle back together.
- This activity is more appealing to the child if they recognize the box of cereal and know the character (i.e., Tony the Tiger or the Lucky Charms Leprechaun).
- This activity encourages problem solving and fine motor skills and can be adjusted to be more difficult by cutting the box face into more pieces.

Developmental Therapy Activity:

Pots and Pans

- This activity should take place on the floor with room to move around and reach for materials.
- Place pots and pans of various sizes with lids around the child.
- Remove the lids from each pot or pan and model how to put them back on.
- Encourage the child to match each lid to the corresponding pot, as if they were doing a puzzle.
- As the child makes an attempt to match a lid with a pot, use language such as "too big/small" and "on/off" to help the child label the characteristic or action.
- If a child starts to become frustrated, guide their hands to match the lids and gradually decrease the amount of support provided.
- Provide positive descriptive feedback as the child makes attempts to match the lids (i.e., "Nice job putting the big lid on that silver pot.").