INFANT ACTIVITIES ACROSS DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS (0-1 YRS OLD)

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Expressive Language Activities

- Start a "conversation" by mimicking the infant's sounds
- Use sign language to express "more" and "all done"
- Make sounds such as "ma" "da" and "ba" and encourage them to repeat back
- Model animals sound and encourage them to repeat them back
- Use different voices during finger puppet play

Receptive Language Activities

- Narrate all care routines (e.g., diaper change)
- Model following directions such as "put in" and "take out"
- Look at a book and point to colors and other relevant items. Ask the infant, "Where is the yellow sun?" and point to it
- Clap your hands and encourage the infant to clap
- Play "Where is Your_____" and call out familiar items

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Cogntive Activities

- Hide objects under a cover and play hide n' seek or peek-a-boo
- Sing simple songs (e.g., patty cake)
- Put a shatterproof mirror near the infant bringing attention to their reflection
- Read a short picture book
- Play with toys that can be pushed and rolled

SENSORY DEVELOPMENT

Sensory Activities

- Offer fabrics with different textures (e.g., silky scarf) and narrate how it feels
- Play a gentle tickling game
- Massage infant with lotion and narrate how the lotion feels (i.e., cool, smooth, etc.)
- Offer infants, eating solids, a variety of food textures (be mindful of food size and consistency that may be a choking hazard)
- Offer clean and safe objects to mouth

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gross Motor Activities

- Tummy Time–place the infant on their stomach and sing songs or offer materials to look at and explore
- Place the infant on their back and put a toy within sight but slightly out of reach to encourage rolling over
- Place toys at a distance to encourage crawling
- Place toys on sturdy furniture to encourage pulling up
- Introduce rolling a ball back and forth

Fine Motor Activities

- Offer items that can be held in one hand (e.g., rattle, small lightweight scarf)
- Offer a container with items to put in and take out
- Offer soft books or board books and model flipping pages
- Offer infants who are eating solids Cheerios (or similar foods) to practice raking and scooping
- Offer finger paint and paper

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social-Emotional Activities

- Make different facial expressions and narrate the corresponding feeling (e.g., happy)
- Narrate the needs the infant may be communicating (e.g., "sounds like you're tired")
- Offer "down time" with infant-safe soft materials and quiet activities such as listening to low instrumental music or using a quiet voice to read
- Model taking turns, "your turn" and "my turn"
- Use puppets to talk about feelings

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TODDLER ACTIVITIES ACROSS DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS (1-3 YRS OLD)

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Expressive Language Activities

- While reading a book, ask the child, “What is this?”
- “Read” a wordless book and have the children add the story based on the pictures
- During mealtime say to the children, “Tell me about what you’re eating” and model descriptive language such as “crunchy or soft"
- Sing familiar songs, and allow children to finish the line (e.g., “The wheel on the bus go…”)
- Blow bubbles and encourage children to say “my turn”

Receptive Language Activities

- Encourage children to make animal sounds by asking questions like, “What sound does a cow make?"
- Sing songs like “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes” or introduce the game Simon Says
- Play “I Spy” and have the children call out the item or point to it when they find it
- Sing “If You’re Happy and You Know It”
- While reading a book, ask the child to label familiar pictures in a book

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Cogntive Activities

- Offer simple peg puzzles
- Sing songs with hand gestures (e.g., “The Wheels on the Bus”)
- Block play—challenge child to build a tower of 8-10 blocks
- Collect several items and sort by size, shape, and color
- Engage in pretend play (e.g., cooking, caring for a baby doll, etc.)

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gross Motor Activities

- Practice rolling, throwing, and kicking a ball
- Push or pull crates with balls or other items to add weight
- Chase and pop bubbles to increase balance and coordination
- Play “Follow the Leader"
- Crawl like a bear, hop like a bunny, fly like a bird, leap like a frog, etc.

Fine Motor Activities

- Offer writing tools, clay, and play dough
- Play with a variety of instruments (e.g., drums, xylophone, triangle, etc.)
- String large and small beads to increase eye-hand coordination
- Play dress up with clothing and accessories that have buttons and zippers
- Offer shaving cream, paint, or fine sand on a tray to create a design

SENSORY DEVELOPMENT

Sensory Activities

- Offer thematic sensory bins (e.g., ocean theme)
- Sand play (e.g., construction, cooking, etc.) or water play with tools (e.g., funnels, droppers, etc.)
- Start a dance party and change the music to encourage different movement by trying songs with different beats
- Explore light and shadow
- Practice walking on a balance beam or swing for vestibular input

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social-Emotional Activities

- Offer a calm down sensory bottle
- Practice mindfulness with belly breathing
- Point out how characters in books are feeling or ask the child to identify the feelings
- Use Persona Dolls stories to build empathy
- Play “Red Light, Green Light” to support impulse control

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PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES ACROSS DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS (3-5 YRS OLD)

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Expressive Language Activities

- Play "What's in the mystery bag?" by asking yes or no questions
- Pretend play with familiar roles and experiences (e.g., doctor, teacher, parent, restaurant, etc.)
- Play the rhyme game, "What rhymes with cat?"
- Show and tell—have the children bring an item from home and share a fact about the item
- Have the child retell you a familiar story in a book

Receptive Language Activities

- Play Freeze Dance or Simon Says to improve listening skills
- Scavenger hunt—practice listening skills by remembering oral instructions to find 3 items
- Play bingo with pictures to improve listening skills, attention, and focus
- Play a memory game to increase attention and focus
- Guess the nursery rhyme

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Cogntive Activities

- Offer interconnecting puzzles to develop problem-solving skills
- Play "What's the Opposite Of…?"
- Read an unfamiliar book and have the child guess what they think will happen next
- Write a letter or draw a picture for a pen pal and mail it
- Create a map of your neighborhood

SENSORY DEVELOPMENT

Sensory Activities

- Mud kitchen play—all the benefits of pretend play with a sensory component
- Pottery-making
- Make sand art in the sandbox using sand, glue, and cardboard
- Make playdough from scratch - a sensory experience with a math and science lesson
- Make musical instruments (e.g., empty paper towel roll and beans)

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gross Motor Activities

- Build forts and add tunnels that encourage the children to crawl through
- Play soccer or kickball to improve coordination, balance, and muscle strength
- Set up an obstacle course to improve problem-solving, balance, and coordination
- Play games such as "freeze tag" to build endurance, balance, and coordination
- Play hopscotch

Fine Motor Activities

- Engage in cooking activities that include pouring, whisking, stirring, kneading, etc.
- Introduce sewing, weaving loom, or finger knitting
- Practice observational drawing or painting (e.g., flower, self-portrait, etc.)
- Practice using scissors to cut pictures in a magazine and make a collage
- Use a spray bottle, sponge/brush, and soap to clean toys

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social-Emotional Activities

- Play emotion charades to develop identifying feelings through facial expressions
- Play games (e.g., board games) to encourage turn-taking
- Garden or care for a pet to increase empathy for the living world
- Role play a conflict from a book to brainstorm possible coping skills
- Encourage acts of community service (e.g., recycling, food drive, etc.)

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How brightwheel can help

Brightwheel is the #1-rated, all-in-one early childcare solution that partners with educators to streamline their centers' operations and provide high-quality education to children.

With brightwheel, administrators and educators can easily track children's growth and development:

- Lesson planning: Create custom curriculum and activity plans that can be assigned to one or multiple rooms.
- Learning and observation: Log student observations in accordance with a set of state standards or learning frameworks. Observations can be used to track progress toward specific developmental milestones.
- Learning report: Easily view and export a summary of student learning progress across any learning framework.
- And more!

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