

Ideas for keeping your 3-4 Year-Old Busy, Happy and Learning

- **Check your child recognises their name:**

Write their name on strips of paper, using just a capital letter at the beginning. Write 4 or 5 other names that begin with the same letter. Hide them around the room and give your child a few minutes to find them. Arrange them in a row and ask your child to find their name. Talk about the shape of the individual letters. Repeat with your surname.

- **Ensure your child can securely touch and count amounts to 10.**

Give your child a 'collecting bag,' ask them to find 10 small objects that will fit in the bag from particular rooms around your home. Set rules beforehand! Get them to count out 5 objects from their bag, then '3 more.' How many are left in the bag? Vary the amount to suit your child's ability.

- **Go on a number hunt around your home.**

E.g. on the washing machine/ thermostat/ remote control. This is a good opportunity to check your child recognises the difference between numbers and letters. If your child finds this tricky, show them a specific number beforehand, e.g. 3 and look just for that number. Acknowledge if your child finds a different number, but simply describe it as "not three" to keep the focus on the particular number.

- **Count actions and amounts as much as possible.**

Throw and catch a ball to each other 10 times in a row. Pop 10 bubbles in the bath. Roll a dice and perform 6 jumps/ 3 hops/ 1 twirl, etc.

Throw 10 balled-up odd socks around the room. Give your child a pillowcase to count and collect them in before the alarm on your 'phone goes off. Then separate the socks, count them all and pair them correctly.

- **Go for a shape hunt around your home.**

Take photos together of objects that are circles/ squares/ rectangles/ triangles. Extend it for looking for diamonds and ovals. Count the sides and corners.

- *Practise manipulation skills.*

Tear a newspaper page. What's the smallest piece you can tear? Who can tear the longest strip? Can you tear a square shape?

Peel an orange in under a minute. Cut out favourite toys from a catalogue. Squeeze out a cooled teabag and cover a sheet of paper in tea. Let the paper dry and draw a treasure map.

- *Encourage your child to draw.*

Demonstrate how to draw simple shapes to represent features in a drawing. Give your child an old tee-shirt to draw on with felt-tip pens. Add hats/ lipstick/ earrings to photos of people in magazines. Make a house/ castle/ car out of a cereal packet by cutting out doors and drawing on features.

- *Play listening games.*

Sit quietly for one minute and listen to the sounds around. Can you hear birds/ a car driving/ footsteps?

- *Help your child distinguish the first sound in words.*

Play 'I spy'. Hide objects around the room that all begin with 'b', then 's', etc.

- *Help your child to write their name.*

Write your child's name first so that they have something to copy. Show your child how to write each letter individually and only just a capital letter at the beginning. Ensure you show them how to form each letter correctly, e.g. using anti-clockwise movements when needed. Talk to them about the pencil 'sticking' to the paper, so your child doesn't write a letter with several strokes. Then find somewhere interesting to write it! E.g. use an old lipstick to write it on a mirror, write it in bubbles in the bath.

- *Share a story every day.*

Ask your child questions about the characters and to make predictions. Read it again and make up an alternative ending.

- *Play simple turn-taking games.*

Put bricks in a bag and take turns to pull out a brick to build a tower. What's the tallest tower you can build? Do the same with jigsaw pieces.