



Activities to Do at Home to Nurture Critical and Creative Thinking for Twenty-First Century Learners

Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.
Socrates

To encourage *curiosity*:

- Read, read, read! Read the classics and award winners aloud with your child, choosing books above his or her grade level that lend themselves to discussions. The librarian at your local public library can suggest great read-alouds as can web sites such as *A Book and a Hug* at <http://www.abookandahug.com/>
- Encourage questions and respectful challenges. Keep a list of questions for the family to explore.
- Research a topic of interest. Encourage your child to “show what they know” in a creative, fun, and meaningful way. Suggested ideas might be to:
 - Create a mini-museum of artifacts and notes about the topic using pictures and objects as they relate to the new findings.
 - Create a video about the topic to share with family and friends.
 - Illustrate a cartoon or a painting to help others understand the topic.
- Visit National Parks and local parks to find out the history and wildlife that live there. For example, after a visit to the Outer Banks, learn about real pirates and privateers who spent time on these barrier islands, or research the importance of the ecosystems there.
- Grow something! Plant a small garden and care for it. Even if it is on a windowsill, go for it! Children learn so much from watching and caring for plants. Even better, grow something you can eat! Explore gardening centers, web sites, and gardening books to learn more. Visit a farm to learn more about growing foods and learn about interdependence.
- Note all of the wildlife in your own backyard or local park. Have your child keep a scientist’s notebook with photos and notes about each creature and plant.

To encourage *communication*:

- Write book reviews and share on sites such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Goodreads. Work with your child to write the review and then, using your parent account, put the review online. It will be validating for your child to see his or her thoughts in print. (Do not identify your child other than by a nickname. Real writers often write under pseudonyms, so this will be fun.)
- Read a book that has been made into a movie and compare the two. Cinderella has over 900 versions around the world and has been made into several motion pictures. Many Disney movies were first tales or stories, and it is fun to read the original versions and compare. Decide which you like better and give an opinion based on details from the movie and the text.
- Provide time, space, and materials for your child’s oral and written responses to everyday experiences; consider having your child keep a journal to record thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Keep the journals so you and your child can see growth in writing over time.
- Encourage oral language that describes and explains everyday situations and new experiences.
- Engage in conversation with your child about what is seen and heard. Model active listening and responding to others.



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- Encourage your child to write thank-you notes and create cards for others for special occasions.
- Find a pen pal and correspond with him or her. This offers children an opportunity to learn about someone else in our world.
- Allow your child opportunities to recite poems, sing songs, or put on a performance for a small audience. They will learn that communicating with others in this way can be fun and rewarding.
- Have your child interview a relative or friend about a particular experience they went through. Write it down and (possibly) illustrate it and review it with the interviewee. It could be an experience about moving to a new house, growing vegetables, a pet they had, babysitting, living on a farm . . . any experience big or small.
- Have your child write a story about his or her family and illustrate the story with photographs or drawings. Write about family traditions, funny stories, pets, important things that have happened, and put them together as a book at the end of each year.

To encourage *reasoning*:

- Join your child in observing patterns and details, and sort the ways in which things are alike and different in our world. (These same concepts can be found in reading, writing, math, music, art, and science – as well as everyday life.)
- Cook and bake with your child! Children can learn so many wonderful concepts including mathematical principles, how to read a recipe, how to solve a problem, and where their food comes from, as well as a sense of responsibility in helping.
- Have your child go shopping with you and total your expenditures as you shop. You can use a calculator or estimate the expenses as you go. Compare your totals at the checkout. How close were you?
- Include your child in a problem-solving experience such as “Where should we go on vacation?” “How can we fix this object?” Brainstorm different ways to solve the problem. Decide on the best idea and try it. If it doesn’t work, model this as learning, too, and try another one of your child’s possible solutions.
- When you go to a museum, ask your child what s/he likes and doesn’t like about a particular exhibit and/or how the exhibit is the same or different from a neighboring exhibit. Take a sketch pad with you. Also, encourage doing puzzles (jigsaw or otherwise).

To encourage *perseverance*:

- Encourage a “stick to it” attitude by providing a few extracurricular activities for your child that require regular attendance and participation. If the “going gets tough,” help them to see the value in continuing on or making other arrangements, if needed. Assist them in understanding the reasoning behind the decisions.
- Support your child along the way with encouraging words, a pat on the back, or a listening ear.
- Keep activities challenging, yet easy enough to be completed with a positive attitude.
- Allow time for your child to become absorbed in a project.



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To encourage *creativity*:

- Provide a variety of materials in a personal space to create.
- Visit museums and exhibits with your child and discuss the artist's process.
- Read plays and books together using different voices to portray the characters.
- Build, paint, write, sing! Allow time each day to create something new.
- Encourage your child to use familiar objects in new ways. Recycle old objects and invent something new!

To encourage *collaboration*:

- Join a team. Collaborative activities are important as children learn the value in working together as a team. Soccer, T-ball, choir, dance, etc., all build confidence and allow for a controlled competitive experience.
- Provide opportunities for your child to be included in problem solving with the family.
- Encourage your child to elaborate on a basic idea that encourages considering the needs and wants of others, such as planning a party or a trip.

To encourage *leadership*:

- Spend time alone with your child to encourage self-worth and importance.
- Give your child responsibility for certain tasks. Make sure they follow through, but give them time to complete these tasks without being reminded. Let your child know you trust him or her to do what is responsible.
- Allow time for your child to share or teach a skill, game, or song he or she learned at school.
- Encourage discussions about the attributes of good leaders in our world. Read books and watch documentaries highlighting these attributes.
- Encourage your child to take the lead on a project at home that is all his or her idea. Allow them to delegate responsibilities through collaborative planning.
- Teach your child to read a map/GPS. If they are very young, ask them to draw a map of their bedroom or home or if they are older, ask them to draw a map of their area – their home and the area right around their home, marking driveways, roads, yards, parks, corner stores, houses/apartment buildings, etc. Have them use their map, or a printed map or GPS, to lead the way in the neighborhood on a family walk. Another option is using a geocaching app such as www.geocaching.com/mobile/ in order to have children lead a family hunt for hidden treasure.

**Most of all, remember to enjoy this time with your growing child.
Best advice: Have fun, make wonderful memories, and learn something new!**

*Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment
until it becomes a memory.*

Dr. Seuss