

# Early Learning Parents' Pages



## April 2016



The spring season has arrived and Florida's weather is perfect for families to get outside and enjoy some of April's fun events.



## Gardening with Children

What is your child's favorite fruit or vegetable? Can it be grown in your area during spring?

If so, encourage your child to help you plant a garden to grow his favorite fruits and vegetables. Your child can learn a lot from planting and caring for a garden. If you do not have enough room for a garden, plant single seedlings in small containers and place them near sunlight in your home.

Young children love to dig, play in the dirt, pour water and get messy, but can become impatient waiting for a plant to grow. Carrot and bean seeds grow faster than most vegetables in large gardens, but if you are looking to plant in small containers, try tomatoes and peppers or herbs, such as basil, rosemary and thyme. Strawberries are a great, fast-growing fruit that can be planted in a house or garden.

Keep your child active in gardening by having him water plants, check for insects and weeds and measure the plant's height or length. Have your child keep track of the plant's growth. Create a daily tracking calendar and have your child draw what the plant looks like each day. You can include the measurements on the calendar too.

When the fruit or vegetables are ready to be picked, allow your child to help pick and wash them. Being part of the entire process will get your child excited to eat a food he grew for lunch or dinner.

When feeding your child the fruits or vegetables you grew together in your garden, try some sensory activities.

Ask your child the following questions to get him thinking about the food he is eating:

- What color is the food?
- Is the food hard or soft?
- Does the food taste sweet, sour or spicy?
- Is the food hot or cold?
- Is the food a fruit or a vegetable?



A garden is a wonderful experience for children of all ages. In a garden, infants can explore using their senses; toddlers can dig with a purpose; preschoolers can learn more about plants, patience and responsibility; and older children can learn about different types of plants and their life cycles. The garden is the perfect place for an entire family to enjoy their time together.

[Learn more](#) about different types of plants and how to choose the correct gardening tools or build the perfect [toddler garden](#) with your child and discover fun gardening activities and types of vegetables to plant.

When the fun is over in the yard, read a fun [gardening book](#) with your child and talk about the experience you shared.

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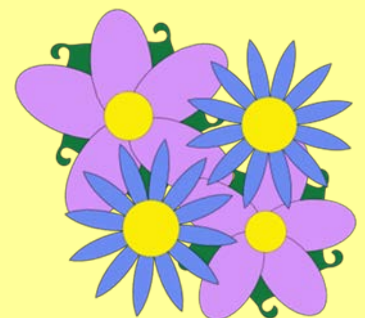
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## Child Proofing Your Home

It is an exciting time when your baby begins to crawl, and before you know it, she will be walking through the house and you'll be trying to catch up and keep track of her whereabouts. Before she could navigate on her own, it was easy to keep your child away from dangerous objects or places where she may fall or pull objects down.

"Child proofing" your home is a never-ending task for parents and requires daily awareness to ensure your child's safety. This task can be overwhelming because hazards could be lurking around every corner of your home and you may not notice. Start your child proofing by sitting on the floor in each room and look around for objects that are sharp, such as the edges of furniture or small objects that your child could possibly fit in her mouth or nose.

It is important to remove small objects from each room and place "bumpers" or wrap "cushions" around the corners of furniture. Slippery rugs or slick surfaces can also cause problems for your child as she begins to walk. Removing rugs or having your child wear non-slip shoes is a great way to combat potential falls.



While "child proofing" your home is extremely important, you should always keep a close eye on your children as they become increasingly active. A parent's awareness is the first step in creating a safe home for your entire family.



While trying to prevent falls as your child prepares to walk is important, it is imperative that parents pay attention to objects that could fall on top of their child if she pulls or bumps into furniture or other objects. Chairs and furniture throughout your home should be steady and heavy enough that if your child tries to pull up on the object, it will not fall over or on top of her. Remove chairs and furniture that are not heavy enough for your child to pull up on and move objects that could fall out of the way or out of reach.

Put electronics with long cords that could electrocute or possibly wrap around your child out of reach. Secure any equipment, such as computers, printers or television sets, so they will not fall on your child if she runs into a desk or television stand. Child proofing your home can seem daunting, as there are many objects and areas to consider and check to ensure your child is kept safe in your home.



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## Take Action During Safe Kids Day

The leading causes of death among children in the United States are often preventable. Accidents, such as car crashes, fires, falls and drownings, can all be prevented by taking action to keep kids safe.

April 24, 2016, is Safe Kids Day. Enacted by Safe Kids Worldwide, Safe Kids Day focuses on engaging with families and communities throughout the nation to take action to protect children. This spring, more than 10 communities across Florida will celebrate Safe Kids Day. To participate, [find an event near you](#) or take the following steps:

- [Take action](#) to make your home safe for children.
- [Spread the word](#) about Safe Kids Day.
- [Learn more](#) about Safe Kids Worldwide.



Keeping your children safe year-round is important. It is also vital you know how to keep your children safe at every age or when you are at home, in the car or playing outside. Give a "[High 5](#)" to your child when you use a safety checklist provided by Safe Kids Worldwide. The checklists are perfect for children [0- to 12-months-old](#), [1- to 4-years-old](#) and [5- to 9-years-old](#).

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## Celebrate Poetry Month

April is [National Poetry Month](#) and it should come as no surprise that young children are fascinated by sounds, rhythms and rhymes. Reading poetry to young children can help them fall in love with words. Poetry focuses on the sounds and rhythms of language and engages children in celebrating words.

Babies and toddlers can also enjoy rhythm because of the playful words and sounds of poems. Reading poetry to young children helps them focus on phonemic awareness and the smallest sounds of speech, which are the foundations of early reading.

Children can learn many new words as you read poems about different ways to describe colors, people, animals, plants and ordinary objects. Rhyming storybooks such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* and *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin, Jr. or *Commotion in the Ocean* by Giles Andreae and *How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?* by Jane Yolen are favorites of young children.

Nursery rhymes are great for introducing the concept of rhyming words to children. You can have your child "act out" nursery rhymes, such as *Humpty Dumpty* or *Jack Be Nimble*, as you read. You can also search for short poems to read with your child each day. Soon, your child may be able to recite the poems with you from memory while you are riding in the car or waiting for an appointment together.

There is an endless number of benefits for exposing your child to poetry. Reading poetry aloud will give your child the tools necessary to become an enthusiastic reader at an early age. While you are at home, on the road or at the grocery store, pick up items that have words that are easy to rhyme with, such as bat, cat, hat and rat. Getting your child interested in rhyming and reading with poetry can help open his eyes to a new world of rhyming objects.

For younger children, it is important to choose playful, rhyming poetry based on topics that are familiar to your children. Children as young as kindergarten age will appreciate humorous poems about topics they can relate to. Your baby, toddler or preschooler will appreciate and enjoy bouncy, playful sounds of rhyming poems, even if he does not understand exactly what each word means. Use [fun rhyming books](#) to create vivid images in your child's head.

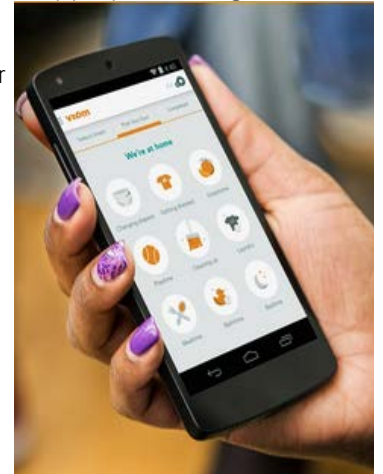
## You Can Be a Brain Builder

During their first three years of life, babies and toddlers are forming the foundation for all future learning. Parents need to make the most of early learning opportunities throughout the day to help their children learn words and concepts.

According to researchers and early childhood experts from [Zero to Three](#), "a baby's brain architecture forms as connections for important functions such as hearing, language and cognition peak during their first three years. Later, higher level brain functions will be built on top of these foundational connections, like a scaffold. Early experiences influence which connections are reinforced and which fall away unused, and thus whether this important foundation will be strong or fragile."

As a parent, you may be thinking you do not have the time or resources to teach your child all the basics that will help his brain development. In addition, you may not be familiar with ways to engage your child in learning or know the appropriate things he needs to be learning at his age.

Now, there is an app available so you do not have to worry about time or your knowledge of early learning. With [Daily Vroom](#) you can start teaching your child age-appropriate learning activities right away. The free app is available to download on your smartphone or mobile device, and will send you a daily learning activity specifically for your child. Vroom gives the option to include all of your children, birth to age 5, so you can receive daily activities created for each child. The app is a great tool for parents, grandparents and caregivers who are invested in your child's early learning and interact with him daily.



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## Keep a Poem in Your Pocket

Keep a poem in your pocket  
and a picture in your head  
and you'll never feel lonely  
at night when you're in bed.

The little poem will sing to you  
and the little picture bring to you  
a dozen dream to dance to you  
at night when you're in bed.

So—  
Keep a picture in your pocket  
and a poem in your head  
and you'll never feel lonely  
at night when you're in bed.

Beatrice Schenk de Regniers



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## You Can Be a Brain Builder

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Parents can search the app to find tips to use when feeding or bathing their child, riding in the car together, doing laundry, going for a walk, shopping, changing diapers and during many routine activities throughout their day. Each tip is followed by the science behind each activity that helps your baby learn, known as the "Brainy Background."

Using Vroom tips can help you turn any moment into a brain-building moment any time of the day. You can nurture your child's growing mind during mealtimes, bath times, bedtime or any time in between.

# Vroom

Brain building moments

Learn more about how to become a brain builder at [joinvroom.org](http://joinvroom.org) or download the free Daily Vroom app available for iPhone and iPad in the App Store and for Androids on Google Play and Fire.

## Child Proofing Your Home

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Are you unsure of where your child proofing should begin? Check out these five suggestions from [safekids.org](http://safekids.org).

- Use approved safety gates at the top and bottom of any stairs. Be sure to read the manufacturer's instructions to ensure you set up the right gate for your child and [learn more about preventing falls](#).
- [Learn more about poison safety](#) and store poisonous items out of reach or use safety locks on cabinets within reach of your child. Items, such as liquid packets for the dishwasher or laundry, can also be hazardous to your child.
- Install stops on dresser drawers to prevent your child from pulling them out. Multiple open drawers can cause a shift in weight, making it easier for the dresser to fall. Learn more about television and furniture [tip-over prevention](#).
- Keep toilet lids closed with toilet seat locks to prevent drowning. Go one step further and keep bathroom doors closed and [learn more about water safety](#).
- Sit on the floor and see the world from your child's point of view. Learn more about [removing items that could harm your child](#).

## Look for These Events and More in May

- May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. Getting your children interested in sports and remaining active can help them learn how to play on a team and stay physically fit.
- May 2 through May 8 is Screen Free Week. Step away from the digital world and see what the real world has to offer by getting outside.
- May 8 is Mother's Day. Discover ideas to help your children create beautiful Mother's Day cards and other artwork for their mother.



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