

The Tutor Times™

March 2011



**Fun Learning
Activities to do
with Your Child**

**The Building
Blocks to Literacy**

**Is Your Child
MusicSmart™?**

**Tutor Time's
Word of the
Month Program**



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Bring the Learning Experience Home

Tutor Time® is committed to providing an enriching learning experience to every child in our care. But we also know how important it is for families to incorporate educational activities into their home as well. Here are some great things to do with children of all ages!

Infants

Play this fun game when your baby is alert and curious. Hold onto a set of keys, shake them a little so they jingle and say to your baby, “One, two, three, drop the keys.” Drop the keys. Does your baby watch them fall down? Pick them up again and place them in your baby’s hand. Help her try to drop the keys by opening her fingers.

Toddlers

Sit on the floor next to your child. Place 3-4 building blocks (or you could use empty boxes or containers instead) on the floor and start to make a tower with them. Place a small toy on top of the tower and say to your child, “The (name of toy) is ON the tower.” Knock the tower over so the toy falls down and say, “The (name of toy) is OFF the tower.”

Preschoolers/Pre-K

Place an empty box or basket on the floor. Have your child gather and roll up socks into balls. Ask him to place the sock balls in the basket. Place the basket on top of your child’s head and encourage him to balance it. Challenge him to not drop

any socks! Remind your child not to hold onto the basket while balancing it on his head. Can your child walk around the room while balancing it?

School-Agers

Play this card tossing game with your child. Divide a deck of cards equally between you. Stand several feet away from a wall and take turns tossing cards at its base. The object of the game is to get a card to lean upright against the wall instead of falling flat on the floor. When a card falls flat, it stays where it is. When a card leans against the wall, whoever threw it gets to collect all the cards lying on the floor. Play until one of you has all of the cards, or whenever you want to end the game.



Music is in the Air

At the age of seven, Stevie Wonder sat down and taught himself to play the piano. Five years later, he wrote and performed a song that sold a million copies. People stared in amazement as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart toured Europe as a concert pianist at the age of six. These are just two examples of people who seem to have an innate ability to express themselves through the music they create. At Tutor Time, we call these people MusicSmart™.

Perhaps you know some people that you might describe as MusicSmart. These are people who hear a song once and can sing it back note for note. They can play a recognizable tune on a variety of instruments, even though it may be their first experience with that instrument. At their desks, they tap their pencils and hum as they work.

It is also easy to find MusicSmart children in a Tutor Time classroom. They are drawn to music, and they mark a steady beat on anything they can find. You may see a child using the long sticks from the Tinker Toys set as drumsticks. Or you might notice another child unconsciously bopping a head to the rhythmic sounds coming from a game in the Computer Center. These are the children who are always eager to share a new song with the class.

How do Tutor Time teachers support your child’s growing MusicSmarts?

MusicSmart children need many opportunities to explore and make music. At Tutor Time, we have a designated space in the classroom for children to actively discover music and rhythm. Teachers surround children with a rich variety of engaging music and talk to the children about the sounds and tones they hear. Children have opportunities to explore instruments and even create their own. We give children time to compose their own music and the opportunity to share with others their wonderful melodic creations.

Teachers also support MusicSmarts in other areas in the classroom. In the Art Center, children listen to music while creating. Teachers may focus children’s attention on how the music makes them feel. They may invite children to reflect those feelings in their art or in their journals. A teacher might also help a child explore how music is made when a rock is rubbed against a stick in the Nature Center or when hearing crickets “sing” to each other.

Music is an integral part of all early childhood classrooms, but to the MusicSmart child, music takes on even more importance. At Tutor Time, we creatively make the world of music come alive for your child everyday.

Spreading the Word about Literacy

The foundational understanding of literacy is that the words we say can be broken down into sounds which are represented by letters that we write. When other people read these letters, they come together to form words, which build sentences, which create wonderful worlds of stories and ideas.

Before we begin to break literacy down into small parts, such as identifying and making letters, we want children to build this foundational understanding. In the Tutor Time classroom, we strive to create literate environments that open this intriguing window of literacy to your child.

When designing classrooms, we look at environmental conditions that support literacy development defined by early childhood expert, Brian Cambourne. We also encourage you to look for ways that you can incorporate some of these principles into your daily lives with your child.

- **Immersion** means that you fill your house with examples of meaningful print. Meaningful means that your child can connect it in some way to their daily life. This might be posting (with pictures and words) the process your child follows for getting ready for bed. Or, creating a checklist of things you need to remember to take to school everyday and placing it where your child can see.
- **Demonstration** means that you model for children how reading and writing works. This includes running your finger along words as you are reading stories or saying things like, “I reached the end of this line, so I am going to start the next word on this line,” while writing a note. These simple cues make literacy less mysterious and more accessible for children.
- **Engagement** means showing children the many ways that literacy can be useful in life. When you say, “I don’t want to forget anything when I go to the store; I better make a list” or “Let’s type your friend’s name and number into my phone so we remember it,” you are engaging children in literacy.
- **Expectation** means helping children see themselves (and behave) as literate human beings. When you hand your child a favorite story and say, “Now you read it to me,” you are setting the expectation that your child is a reader. Even if she doesn’t get the words right, you are helping her see herself in a certain way.
- **Approximation** means creating an environment in which children know it is okay to make mistakes. When children learn to walk, they need to fall down. As they learn social rules, they will sometimes hit their friends. As children make sense of literacy and all of its complexities, they will make mistakes. The more free they feel in making mistakes, the quicker and easier the learning process will often proceed.
- **Response** means being a partner with your child as he goes through his days in a literate world. Take advantage

of teachable moments. Look for familiar words and letters as you drive home from school. Make a game of matching actual items to pictures on coupons while shopping. Introduce interesting words into your conversations. Read stories (even the same ones over and over and over). All of these are important in helping your child conquer this complex world of sounds and symbols.

Once children develop the foundational understanding of literacy, the other stuff (identifying letters, matching sounds and letters, putting words together to make sentences) comes easier. For young children, we want literacy to be fun and engaging. We want them to aspire for the day when they can read stories on their own or write their own messages to friends.

Too often, when adults push reading and writing too early, we kill that yearning to learn. Reading becomes just one more task that is coerced and dreaded. The countries that have the highest literacy rates in the world are those that wait to teach formal reading until children are at least seven years old.

By incorporating the suggestions above, you help Tutor Time build that strong foundation of literacy. Together, we set your child on the path to love reading. And, ultimately, isn’t that what we want, for children to enjoy and use literacy in all aspects of their lives?



Creating Character

One of the books we will use this year is There’s a Nightmare in my Closet by Mercer Mayer. Children are still figuring out the world, and there can be a lot that is confusing and scary for them. It is important that they know that being brave does not mean that one is not afraid, it just means that the person is not paralyzed by that fear. In this story, a young boy musters his courage to confront a nightmare that has been hiding in his closet (a common childhood fear) with surprising results.

If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you’d like to see explored in future issues of this monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at education@tutortime.com. We would love to hear from you!

A SMART Choice For Summer.



REGISTER FOR SUMMER TODAY!

- FUN**
Tons of field trips and activities*
- CONVENIENT**
Over 7 sessions at our school*
- EDUCATIONAL**
Special school readiness programs*
- SAFE**
Policies and procedures implemented all year long
- PROGRAMS**
For children ages 6 weeks-12 years*

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Join us for an Open House!*

Thursday, April 14th • 4:30pm - 7:30pm

*Available at participating locations only. Rules and restrictions apply. See school for 0-5-year-old and 6-12-year-old summer details and restrictions. Sessions, programs, field trips, and hours vary by school.

We want to ensure our families are benefiting from our electronic newsletter.



Tell us what you like and what you don't, what you would like to see featured and how we can make it better. Just send your feedback to newsletter@tutortime.com.

We value your feedback and thank you for your input!

Tax Savings for You!

Did you know that you may be eligible to reduce your tax bill by thousands of dollars this year? You can save up to:

- \$2,100 with the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit
- \$5,666 with the Earned Income Tax Credit
- \$800 with the Making Work Pay Credit
- \$1,000 for each of your children with the Child Tax Credit

Many states also have their own tax credits, helping you save even more money. To figure out which options are available to you, visit <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/state-tax-materials-english> and click the link to your state.

Need help completing your tax forms or figuring out which tax credits you can claim? Just call **1-800-TAX-1040** and the IRS will give you information on where you can get free assistance.