

# FAMILY TIME

STRENGTHEN YOUR FAMILY

SPRING

PENNSSTATE



## Ages 4-6



## Your Child from 4 to 6

- Asks endless questions.
- Sees play as the big business of life.
- Imitates grownups and role plays extensively.
- Values playmates.
- Accepts the principle of taking turns.
- Likes slapstick humor.
- Wants to be “good.”
- Needs to be praised.
- Likes to be near home; family is important.
- Plays rough and tumble games all the time.
- Is doggedly independent.

## To Do Family Time You Must

- Have a firm desire to help your family grow stronger.
- Make a strong commitment to regularly do *Family Time* activities.
- Set aside time to do the activities.
- Be determined to involve all family members.

## To Get Started

- Pick an activity.
- Before the family gathers, be prepared by getting together any materials that you need to do what you have planned.
- Set aside some time each week when all family members can be together. Turn off the TV, radio, or other distractions.

## He or She? Him or Her?

**PLEASE NOTE:** In this and all *Family Time* publications, we take turns referring to children as “he” or “she.” When we use “he” or “she,” we include all children.

## A Word to Parents of Younger Children

Strong, healthy families don't just happen. They take planning and work by each member.

Strengthening your family means deepening the relationships or bonds the members have with one another. The effort required pays big dividends—the children and their parents (or parent in a single-parent family) grow closer, each feels good about himself and others in the family, and the family develops a sense of pride in itself.

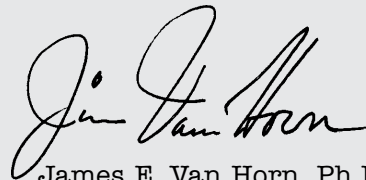
*Family Time* will help you strengthen your family. Families that do *Family Time* faithfully will grow close and will be laying the foundation for a healthy family in future years.

Every parent is busy. *Family Time* helps busy parents develop the habit of putting their families first by setting aside time to be together.

Parents in strong families plan or “make” the time they spend with their children. By repeatedly spending time with their children, parents send them a powerful message that they believe their family is important. The young child who is forming a belief system will learn to value his family.

The child will see his parents as persons who deeply care about him because they spend their valuable time and energy doing things with him. The child who grows up in a family that spends time together has a good feeling not only about his parents and his family but, very important, he feels better about himself.

You and your family will benefit from doing *Family Time*. Two-parent families as well as single-parent families can grow stronger. What is needed is your commitment and time to do the activities.



James E. Van Horn, Ph.D.

Professor of Rural Sociology and  
Certified Family Life Educator

# Let's Explore...

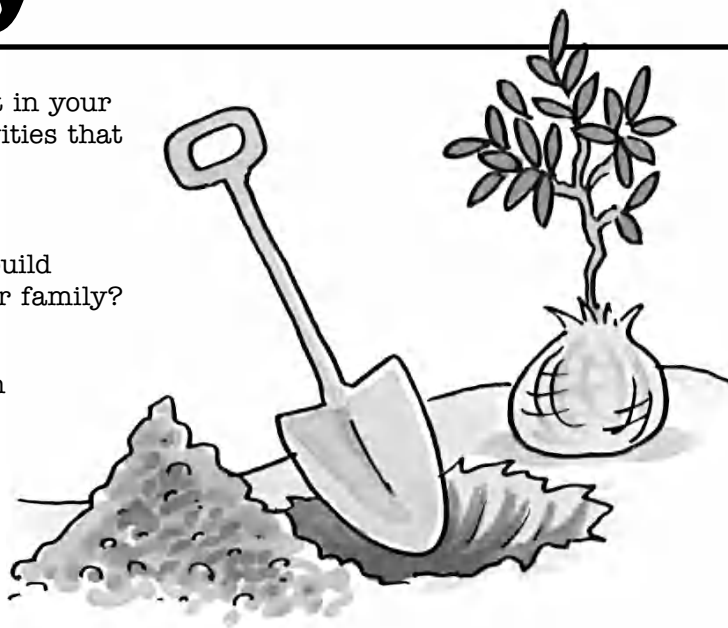
## Our Family

The family is the most important element in your child's life right now. Here are some activities that can help your family become stronger.

### Spring Flings

Are you using all the spring holidays to build special memories and traditions with your family?

- St. Patrick's Day—Wearing of the Green
- Passover—Seder service, eating matzoth
- Easter—Dyeing eggs
- Arbor Day—Planting a tree
- Memorial Day—Planning a picnic, seeing a parade, visiting a park



### A Grandparent Party

Invite your child's grandparents or aunt or uncle over for an evening or special dinner. Your child can make a picture for an invitation card, help prepare a special dish, and set the table. (See Bunny Salad in "The Foods We Eat.")

After dinner, share stories and pictures of when the grandparents or aunts and uncles were the age of your child. Take a picture of your child with his grandparents to put in your picture album or hang on his bedroom wall.

Suggest to the guests before they come that they bring a game to teach, book to read, or activity to share with your child—something they used to do when they were your child's age.



### Tracing the Family

Have one member of the family lie down on a large sheet of shelf paper or wrapping paper. Have another member then trace all around the other person's body. The figures are then cut out by each family member, or by the parent if the child can't do it. The figures can be colored and decorated with crayons, markers, and all sorts of materials. They can be displayed together somewhere in the house.

While you are working on them, you might talk about your family. Look at the color of your hair. Do your eye colors match? How about the shape of your faces, hands, feet? How are we the same? How are we different?

## **A Trip to See Daddy or Mommy at Work**

It's hard to play Daddy or Mommy at work when most children haven't any notion what their parents do all day away from home. A trip to his parent's workplace is an adventure that can bring a young child closer to the parent.

Pick a day and time when there are few pressures at work and you can spend a few minutes showing your child your work area. The visit should be short and a pleasant one for your child.

When you get home, you might want to put together a Daddy's or Mommy's Work Book (see Let's Explore...The World of Crafts) to remind your child of what he has seen and what his parent does while he is away.

## **Be Prepared**

Every member of the family should know certain things in case of a crisis. Make a game of "Being Prepared."

See who knows the following: full name, address (street and city/town), phone number. (Have it written down in case your child forgets in time of crisis. Be sure he knows where it is kept.)

Who can tell or show what to do in the following events:

- Someone wants to give you a ride home. (Don't go, run to a friend.)
- Where to go if caught in a thunderstorm. (Away from tall trees, crouch down.)
- How to cross the street. (Only with parent. Look both ways.)
- Safety in the car. (Child in back seat with seat belt or safety seat.)
- Fire in your home. (Practice having fire drills so each family member knows where everyone will meet and what routes to use to get out of the house. Practice getting down close to the floor to get out. Learn the drop and roll technique.)

## **Your Ideas, Too:**

# Let's Explore...

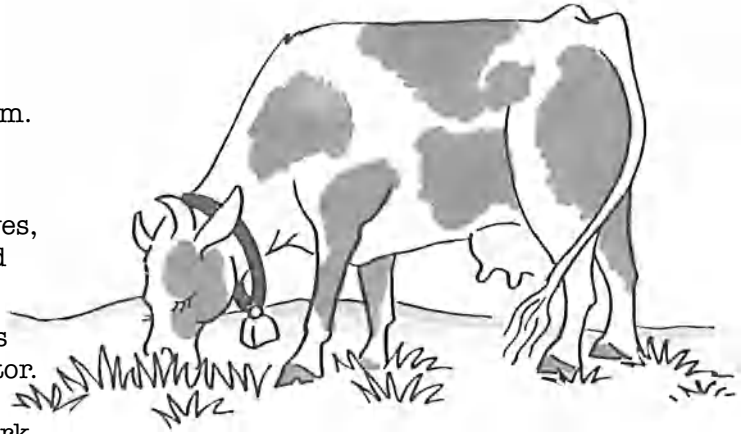
# Our Community

## Visiting a Dairy Farm

Lots of exciting things are happening on the farm in spring. Take your child to a dairy farm. Be sure to go at milking time so she can see where her milk comes from.

While you are there, be sure to name the calves, cows, and other animals you see so your child can learn their names.

Ask the farmer if you can see where the cows are milked and if your child can sit on a tractor. See if you can name the farm equipment. Visit the animals and watch the farmer at work.



## Remembering the Farm Visit

When you have returned home from the farm, encourage your child to draw pictures for a farm book about what she saw. Let her explain her pictures to you. Write on them what she says. Label the animals or equipment she indicates to you.

Suggest that she make a picture to send to the farmer as a thank-you for your visit. Have your child dictate a thank-you message. If she is at a loss for what to say, ask questions like "what did you like best?" or "what did you learn?" The farmer will appreciate it and your child will begin to learn the good manners of a thank-you. She can put the picture in an envelope, put on the stamp, and help mail it after you have addressed it.

## Learning Signs

If a child gets lost in her community, she will feel safer if she can recognize familiar signs near her home. She will also be safer if she is able to read traffic signs.

Your child should notice that all signs saying the same thing are about the same shape. Point out the signs you see as you take a walk or drive with your child. Talk about the shape and color of each sign. Point out those that are round, square, triangular, or octagonal.

Look through old magazines to find pictures of signs to cut out and paste on a sheet of paper. Take the paper with you as you drive. If you can't find ones in magazines, then cut out your own. You can draw the shape on the correct color of paper. Your child can cut them out, matching the shapes.



## Make Grocery Shopping a Family Affair

At the grocery store, you can talk with your child about different colors, forms of food products, workers (butcher, baker, cashier, etc.), and shoppers.

Before you go to the store, let your child help you make a store list and plan what foods you will want to eat. Your child can help you check the shelves and refrigerator.

At the store, put your child in charge of finding nonbreakable items like boxes of cereal or crackers that he knows by the pictures. Fruit and vegetable cans have pictures, too. Use descriptive words like “big” or “little” to help him.

- As a game, count how many items from your list are on the bottom shelf.
- Let your child help choose a vegetable, a fruit, or a bread product.
- He can help put food on a checkout counter and give the cashier any coupons you might have.
- Let him help put away the groceries when you get home.



## Playing Grocery Store

Dramatic play is fun. It also helps a child learn what it is like to be another person and do what he does. Using a table and cupboards, or boxes, your child can set up a grocery store with empty food boxes, bottles, and cans. If a toy cash register is available, your child can use toy money (he can make some) to buy things from the storekeeper (or use a box to keep the money in). The customer can use a wagon or basket with a handle for a shopping cart.

### Materials

- empty cans, boxes, and fruits and vegetables
- cash box or cash register
- play money
- paper bags or basket

### Variation

Your child may enjoy setting up a toy store instead of a grocery store, using his own toys.



### Other Ideas from You:

# Let's Explore...

# The Foods We Eat

## Making Cottage Cheese

### Ingredients

1 cup milk  
2 tablespoons lemon juice

### Directions

Heat milk to boiling. Add lemon juice and stir. Strain to separate curds and whey. Eat!



Adult supervision  
is needed for this  
activity.

## Cheese-Tasting Party

Have a cheese-tasting party. Include several different kinds of cheese: mozzarella, brick, cheddar, Edam, new lower fat versions. Let your family taste each one and compare color, taste, and appearance.

“Swiss cheese has holes.”

“Mozzarella is white.”

“Cheddar is yellow.”



## Making a Milk Shake

You can use a blender or mixer, or shake a jar to make a delicious milk shake.

### Ingredients

milk (whole or low-fat)  
ice cream or ice milk or frozen yogurt

### Directions

Get a jar, put in ice cream, add milk, put the lid on, shake, open, and drink!

Try different flavors: chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, banana, or cherry.

(After you have done it, ask your child to tell you the recipe. You will be amazed at how well he remembers.)

Adult supervision  
is needed for this  
activity.

## Krispy Peanut Butter Balls

Your child can make this to enjoy with the milk shakes.

### Ingredients

½ cup corn syrup  
½ cup peanut butter  
3 cups Rice Krispies cereal

### Equipment

bowl  
spoon  
waxed paper

### Directions

Mix corn syrup and peanut butter together. Add cereal and mix. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto wax paper. They are ready to eat.



## Bunny Salad

Your child will enjoy making this for a special holiday dinner or for a grandparent party.

### Ingredients (per bunny)

1 crisp lettuce leaf  
1 chilled pear half  
2 raisins  
1 red cinnamon candy  
cottage cheese  
2 pieces of carrot

### Directions

Have child place lettuce leaf on plate. On top of leaf, place chilled pear half upside down. This makes a bunny with the narrow end decorated as follows for the face:

eyes: 2 raisins  
nose: 1 red cinnamon candy  
tail: cottage cheese ball  
ears: 2 pieces of carrot

## Eggs in a Frame

### Equipment

skillet  
bowl  
spatula  
knife  
biscuit cutter

### Ingredients

egg  
bread  
margarine

**Adult supervision is needed for this activity.**

### Directions

(Let your child do as much of this as he can.) Spread margarine on both sides of the bread. Cut the center from the bread with the biscuit cutter. Put the bread in a lightly greased frying pan and brown

on one side. Turn the bread over with a spatula.

Tap the egg on the side of the bowl (you can hold the bowl for him). Stick thumbs into the crack. Open the crack and let the egg slide into the bowl.

Drop the raw egg into the center of the toast. Cook slowly over low heat with the pan covered. Cook until the white and yolk of egg are firm. Lift out toast and egg with a spatula and serve.

## Other Recipes You Know:

# Let's Explore...

# Plants and Animals

## Welcoming Birds in the Spring

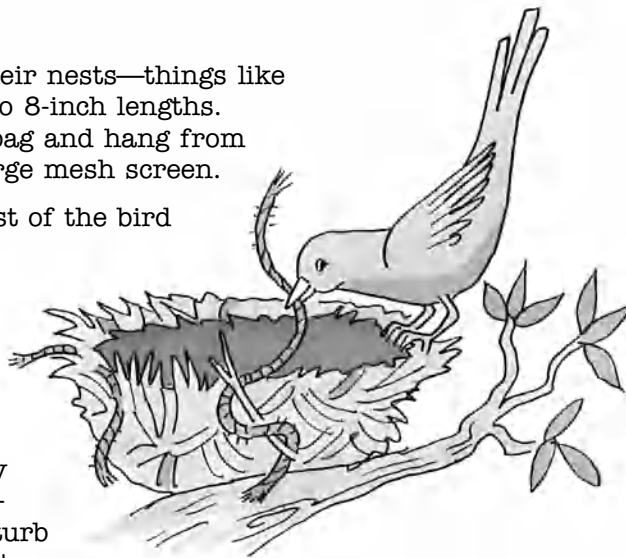
In the spring you can put out things birds need to build their nests—things like string, cotton fluff, and brightly colored yarns cut into 6- to 8-inch lengths. Place them in the crotch of a tree, place in a mesh onion bag and hang from a tree branch, or place in a shallow box covered with a large mesh screen.

If you have used brightly colored yarns, try to find the nest of the bird that has used it.

You might want to use brightly colored yarn with the things you put out for the birds to use. It can be fun for you and your child to try to find nests with your pieces of yarn in them once the birds have built their nests.

Watch the birds with your child and see how they make their nests. Talk about why birds need nests. What do they use them for? Later on you can look for eggs, then eventually baby birds. Teach your child to be careful and not disturb the baby birds. Watch the birds feeding their babies and later on teaching them to fly.

Spring is a great time to teach children about life cycles. There is so much for them to observe outdoors this time of year!



## Sprouting Alfalfa

Growing alfalfa sprouts is rewarding because they grow quickly and can be eaten for a snack in a few days.

Buy alfalfa seed at a health food store (not seed for alfalfa tea, which won't sprout, or seed for planting, which may be treated with insecticides.) Soak seeds in water overnight. Spread out on a plate or tray, and keep covered with a wet towel. The seeds will sprout in one or two days and can be eaten for a snack.

Steam them before eating, as some people are allergic to raw sprouts.

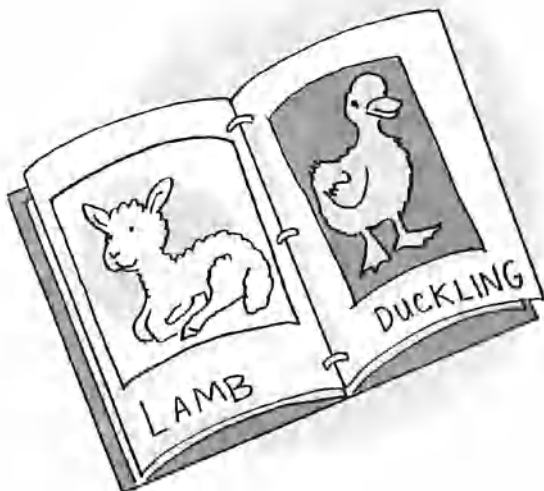
(Sprouts can be stored in the refrigerator for several days.)

## Animal Babies

Spring is the time that many animals have their babies. Be on the lookout for new calves, lambs, foals, or chicks as you drive around your neighborhood. If you live near a zoo, plan a trip to see if there are new babies or other new zoo members.

At the library try to find a book such as *Animal Babies*, which shows pictures of baby animals, and name them.

Make a scrapbook of baby animals from pictures you have cut out of magazines. Your child can cut and paste them in. You can print the name of the animal (calf, lamb, duckling, chick, etc.).





## Going to the Greenhouse and Seed Store

Everyone in the family will enjoy a trip to buy the seeds for the family garden. Even if you do not plan to plant a garden this year, take your family to see all the new plants being prepared for sale.

- If you have a magnifying glass, take it along so you or your child can study the little plants in detail.
- Take some time to do some “looking” and “smelling” where the potting is being done.
- Look at the differences between plants. Talk about the differences in color, leaves, smell, and size.
- Let your child help decide which pack of plants to buy. He can choose one package of flower seeds to plant.

## Growing a Garden in an Eggshell

Save washed eggshells that are broken like the drawing shown here.

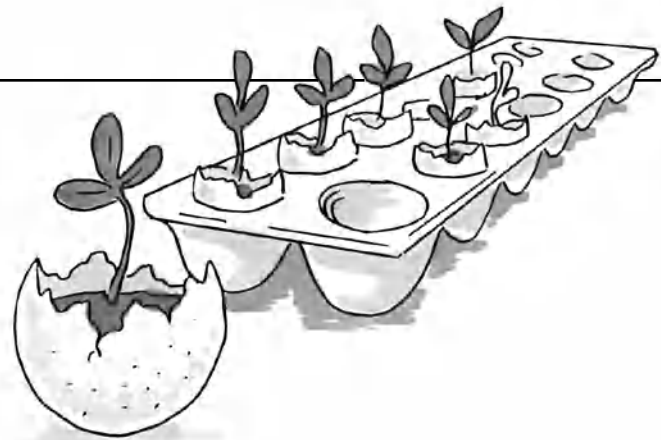
### Materials

- eggshells
- egg carton
- soil
- seeds
- pin
- spoon

Stand the shells in an egg carton (lined with aluminum foil if made of cardboard). Prick the bottom of each shell with a pin. This makes a pinhole for draining. Put a bit of coarse sand or pebble into each shell. Then fill it with soil to about a half inch from the top.

Put in two or three seeds. Cover them with a little more soil. Place your eggshell garden in a sunny window. Water the garden every day. When the weather is warm and the seeds have sprouted, you can plant these—shell and all—outside.

What a beautiful gift this would make!



## Other Ideas about Plants and Animals:

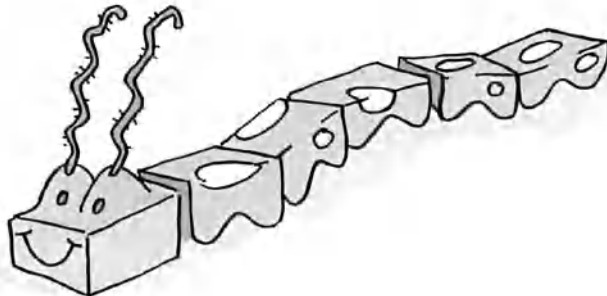
# Let's Explore...

# The World of Crafts

## Egg Carton Animals

### Materials

- egg cartons
- glue
- fabric scraps
- pipe cleaners, etc.
- scissors



### Directions

Cut egg cartons into sections your child can glue together to make round bodies and attach yarn, pipe cleaners, and other materials to add features.

These make neat caterpillars.

## Daddy or Mommy's Work Book

After you have been to see where Daddy or Mommy works, you can help make a "Daddy or Mommy's Work Book" by cutting out magazine pictures and pasting them on pieces of cardboard.

Make these into a scrapbook by tying them together with shoelaces or yarn.

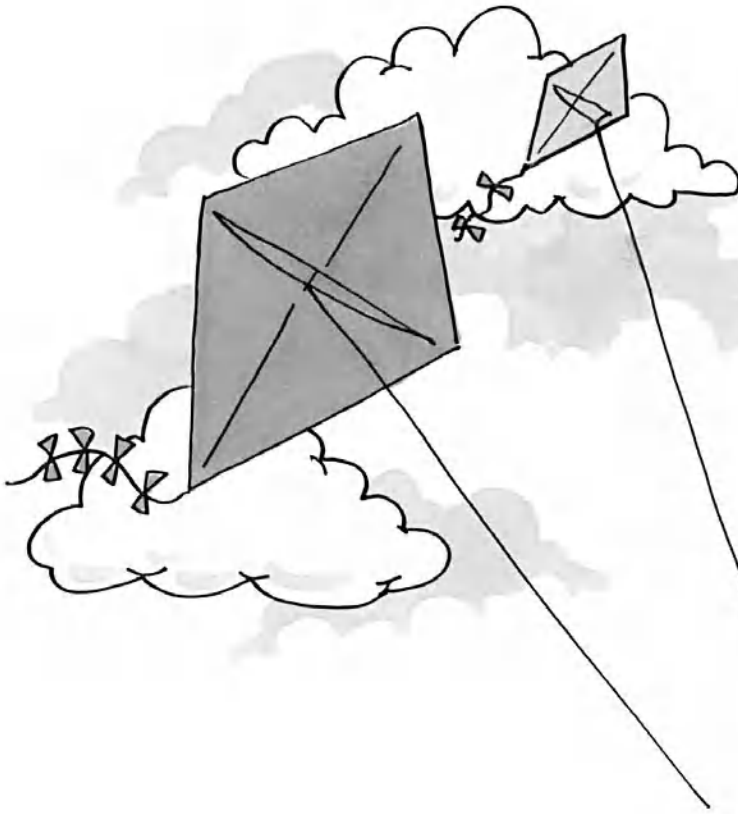
Start the book with breakfast and follow Daddy and/or Mommy through the day, at the wheel of his truck or at her desk, until he or she drives home. On each page, write down his or her comments about each picture based on personal observations. In this way, an important experience is turned into something a child can hold in his hand and relive.

## Putting Shoes on the Right Feet

You can help your child get her feet in the correct shoe. Help her learn how to do it herself by:

- Making a print of both your child's feet by tracing around them and cutting out the prints. Make multiple copies and tape them to the floor like footprints.
- Having her walk on her "feet," being sure to match her feet to the ones on the floor. Point out to her the way each foot curves, and show her how her shoes do the same.
- Letting her put her shoes on her hands and practice "walking" them on her footprints.





## Making Kites

March winds bring a good time to make kites and see what happens when the wind blows.

### Materials

- construction paper
- scissors
- crayons
- tape or notebook reinforcements
- yarn or string cut into 24-inch lengths

### Directions

Draw a diamond shape outline on a piece of construction paper or let your older preschooler trace the design or draw his own, which need not necessarily be this shape. Cut them out and decorate with crayons. Take a piece of yarn or string and tape to the kite or punch a hole at one end, reinforce with reinforcement ring, and let your child tie the string if he can.

Your child then can run outside with the kite, or on a very windy day, stand and hold it while the kite blows in the wind.

Then buy a kite at the store and take the family out kite flying.

## Bottle Sandwiches

Bottle sandwiches are collections of dry foods put into large or small bottles. The completed project can be a decorative work of art.

### Materials

- corn kernels
- dry macaroni
- cereal
- seeds
- beans
- bread crumbs, etc.

### Utensils

- clean bottle
- measuring cup
- funnel
- spoons

### Directions

Organize the dry food you have gathered into separate groups. Start with one and either piece by piece or by spoonfuls, fill the bottle about one inch deep. Then take a food of a contrasting color and fill the bottle a little more. You decide how much you want to put in, but remember, you want to create a pattern with different layers of food.

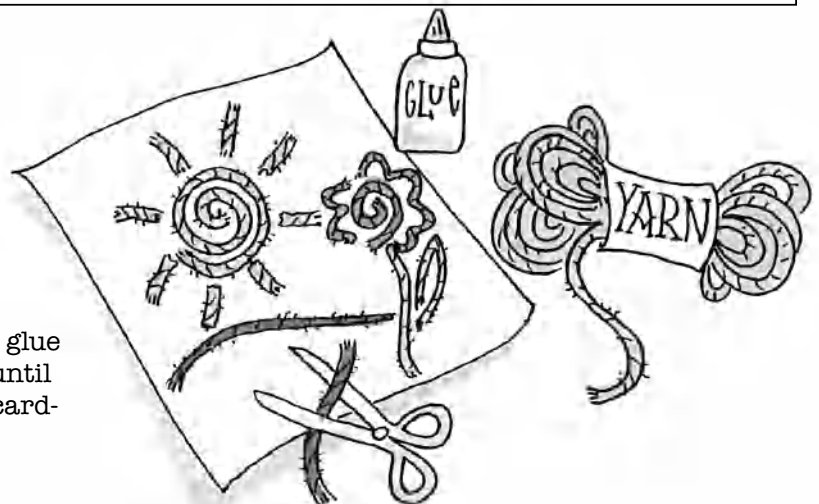
## Yarn Pictures

### Materials

- white glue
- yarn (several colors)
- cardboard
- small bowls or plastic containers

### Directions

Cut yarn into different lengths. Pour glue into bowl. Dip yarn pieces into glue until coated. Lay yarn in a design on the cardboard. Repeat and let dry.



# Let's Explore...

# Other Fun Things

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## Singing Together

Children love to sing. You don't need a piano, or even a tuneful voice, to help the family enjoy making music. Children enjoy playing with vocal sounds and rhythms and repeating musical refrains. It's a good way for you to introduce language into their world.

You probably know lots of songs your child will enjoy.

**Lullabies:** Hush Little Baby, Kum-Ba-Ya

**Songs for movement:** Hokey Pokey, Farmer in the Dell, Mulberry Bush, In and Out the Windows

**Songs to teach body parts:** If You're Happy and You Know It

**Story songs:** The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly, Froggy Went a Courtin', Jimmy Crack Corn

**And others:** Old McDonald Had a Farm, The Bear Went Over the Mountain, Michael Row Your Boat Ashore



## Snacks from Books

Read a book together and then enjoy a snack that was eaten in the story or about which the story was written.

*Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey—blueberry muffins

*Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter—carrots

*My Friend the Cow* by Lois Lenski—milk

*Pumpkin Moonshine* by Tasha Tudor—pumpkin pie

*Bread and Jam for Frances* by Russel Hoban—bread and jam

*Little Bear's Pancake Party* by Janice Berenstain—pancakes

*Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown—vegetable soup

## My Very Own Place

Every member of the family, even the youngest child, needs his own private place somewhere. It may be only a drawer in a shared chest, but each child should have someplace to store his treasures where others may not trespass. Why not make a special box together for his special things?

### Materials

- scissors
- paste, glue, or tape
- cardboard boxes, paper to cover

Let the child decorate his box. Print his name or help him put his name on it. Then decide where to keep it.

## Oiling Tricycles, Bicycles, and Wagons

One way a child can help and work with her father or mother is to prepare the “rolling stock” for spring and summer. Using an oil can with a small opening, a child can put a few drops of oil on the moving parts. You might suggest she listen to where the squeaks come from and apply oil to those parts. Turn the wheel carefully and listen again. Notice if the wheel turns with more ease.

**Note: This requires careful, adult supervision.**

Besides the oiling, your child can take an old, clean rag and carefully wipe off the dust and dirt of the winter.



## Newspaper Night

Spend an evening exploring what you can do with old newspapers.

### Materials

- old newspapers, magazines
- tape or paste
- crayons, markers, or water paint
- scissors (optional)

### Directions

- Tear long, narrow strips and make people or animals by pasting shapes together.
- Tear long, narrow strips and weave them over and under each other. You may need to help your child fasten the ends so they won't slip.
- Color the comics or advertisement pictures.
- Cut or tear them out and make new pictures (don't expect your preschooler to color inside the lines).
- Mix with flour paste and mold into shapes.
- Sit down and look at them together.
- Crumple into balls. Play a “toss game” using an empty pan and balls. Count them as you throw.



## Other Fun Things to Do:

Here is a listing of activities for you to do. Tape this sheet to your refrigerator and check off the activities you do together as a record of your good times. Consider starting a notebook or scrapbook of your *Family Time* together. Include some artwork, stories, or photographs of your family.

### **Let's Explore...Our Family**

- Spring flings
- A grandparent party
- Tracing the family
- A trip to see daddy or mommy at work
- Be prepared

### **Let's Explore...Our Community**

- Visiting a dairy farm
- Remembering the farm visit
- Learning signs
- Make grocery shopping a family affair
- Playing grocery store

### **Let's Explore...The Foods We Eat**

- Making cottage cheese
- Cheese tasting party
- Making a milk shake
- Krispy peanut butter balls
- Bunny salad
- Eggs in a frame

### **Let's Explore...Plants and Animals**

- Welcoming birds in the spring
- Sprouting alfalfa
- Animal babies
- Going to the greenhouse and seed store
- Growing a garden in an eggshell

### **Let's Explore...The World of Crafts**

- Egg carton animals
- Daddy or mommy's work book
- Putting shoes on the right feet
- Making kites
- Bottle sandwiches
- Yarn pictures

### **Let's Explore...Other Fun Things**

- Singing together
- Snacks from books
- My very own place
- Oiling tricycles, bicycles, and wagons
- Newspaper night

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