



# Ideas to Go

Here are some great activities for you to do with your child on-the-go! These easy-to-do ideas are fun ways for you to help your child learn math and literacy concepts no matter where you are — doing things around the house or running errands in your town or neighborhood.



## At Home

### Listing | Literacy

Use lists to spark your kids' imaginations. What ten things would monsters do on a weekend? What ten things would pilgrims buy to take back home if they time-traveled to today? What ten things would change if you were President of the World?

### Phone Numbers | Math

Even little kids should know how to use the phone, especially if they ever need to dial 911. Show your kid the numbers and how to make a call. Be sure your child knows his or her own phone number, just in case.

### Rewards | Literacy

Combine kids' duties with a literary reward. If they clean their room, read them an extra story at bedtime.

### Role Models | Literacy

Let your kids see you reading. You are the best role model. Reading isn't just about books. By seeing you read a paper, kids will discover that reading can help them find entertainment, news, or information about local events.

### To Do | Literacy

Create a "chore" calendar. Write your kids' chores on a calendar -- a different chore for each day -- and offer stickers as each task is completed.

### TV Time | Math

How much TV is your kid allowed to watch each day? Help your kid use a TV schedule to choose which programs he or she wants to watch. Post your kid's own weekly TV viewing schedule on the fridge or near the TV.

### Weather Report | Math

Look at the weather forecast with your kids -- online, on TV, or by looking at the paper. Help them learn which are the high and low temperatures.



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## Bathtime

### **Bath Math** | Math

Bathtub play offers lots of counting and measuring opportunities. Ask your kid, "How many cups of water do you think it will take to fill this container? How many squeezes can we get out of a wet washcloth?" Try it out!

### **Brushing Together** | Math

Dentists recommend that we brush our teeth for 1-2 minutes. How long is that? Try singing the "ABC Song" twice and "Happy Birthday" once as you brush together. Or play a favorite song and brush until it's over.

### **Measure Up** | Math

If you have a bathroom scale and a tape measure, let your kid measure and record his or her weight and height.

### **Mirror, Mirror** | Literacy

Use the bathroom mirror to experiment with reading mirror-writing. Or use a steamed-up mirror to practice writing the letters of the alphabet.

### **Shark or Pirate** | Literacy

Have kids play imagination games and role play with bath toys. Is that sponge really a shark? A mermaid? A pirate?

### **Temperature Tuning** | Math

Is the bathwater too hot? Too cold? Fill a bottle of hot water and a bottle of cold water at the sink and let your kid fine tune the temperature by pouring the right amount of each in the tub.

### **The ABC of Washing** | Literacy

Help your kids learn the names of body parts as they wash themselves. Can they wash in alphabetical order? Wash that arm before your back or chin.

### **The Smallest Library** | Literacy

Keep books and magazines in the bathroom. Your home should have reading matter everywhere. Help kids read the words on the toothpaste label and the instructions on shampoo.



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## The Car

### **Car Color Contest** | Math

Counting and sorting are good math skills. Have everyone pick a car color and then see who can find the most of each color on a single trip.

### **Daily Dose** | Literacy

Teach a new word to your child every day. Use it so he or she hears it in context. Encourage your child to use it. Even over-using it will be fun. Pick a word like 'outstanding' and use it whenever something is 'good.'

### **Drive and Find** | Math

There are numbers for your kids to look for everywhere you drive: speed limits, road signs, and the car's mileage gauge and speedometer. Have your kid look for numbers of increasing size. "You found a 10, now can you find a 20?"

### **Gas Games** | Math

Gas stations may be frustrating for grownups, but they offer tons of fun for a young mathematician. What's the price of gas today? How many gallons do you need? How many dollars does that cost?

### **How Are You?** | Literacy

Talk to your kids about their lives -- not just about what they're doing, but also about how they are feeling.

### **Plate Play** | Math

Kids need to know numbers are also useful tools. Play license plate games on long journeys. Find (and count) all the states you see or plate numbers that begin with, say, the number 2.

### **Radioheads** | Literacy

Comment on new words as you hear them on the radio. Explain the difference between news and advertisements.

### **Twisted Tales** | Literacy

Imagine a familiar story, but slightly changed. If the three pigs had fifty more brothers, could the wolf have blown down fifty-three houses? What would a story called Goldilocks and the Three Hairs be like?



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## On a City Walk

### Address Awareness | Math

Point out the street address numbers on buildings. Does every building have a number? Do the numbers get higher or lower as you walk? What happens to the numbers when you turn a corner? Point out the odd and even numbers on opposite sides of the street.

### City Sites | Math

Look for numbers as you walk along a city street with your kid. You'll find them on street signs, in shop windows, on buildings and billboards. You might want to look especially for your kid's favorite number.

### Following Fun | Math

Before you start your walk, draw a simple map for your kid. Talk about some of the places you'll pass. Take the map with you and follow it as you walk. Add some of the things you notice on the walk to the map.

### Kings and Queens | Literacy

Get kids used to reading signs around them. One game you can play is to ask your kids to look for store signs that include the words "king" or "queen," or the first names of people they know. Make up silly or rhyming last names for them.

### Mystery People | Literacy

Make up stories about the people you see around you -- passing by in cars, walking in the street, waiting at the bus stop. Are they secret agents? Superheroes? The next president of the United States?

### Rhyme Time | Literacy

Make up rhymes together. Take turns thinking up words and challenging each other to find words that rhyme with them. Keep away from orange and purple! They're pretty hard to rhyme.

### Shape Up | Math

Look for shapes in the city: circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles. Look at traffic signs, buildings, and vehicles. Which shape do you see the most? Which is the hardest to find?

### Stop | Literacy

Look for STOP signs, and ask your child to tell you what letters he or she sees. Talk about the letters in other signs. Then practice crossing the road when the Walk sign says it's OK.



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## On a Country Walk

### After "The End" | Literacy

Start with a story you know, and imagine what might happen if the story continued rather than ended. Have your kids imagine themselves in these stories.

### Collective Stories | Literacy

Take turns making up stories, or building the same story. Each person adds a sentence to continue the story.

### Common Colors | Math

Look for objects of different colors. Point out and name all the green objects you see, then all the objects that are blue, orange, etc. Which colors are the most common? Which are the rarest?

### Save a Tree | Literacy

Talk about how different things are made, many of them from materials in nature. For example, paper is made from trees. Can your child guess how gasoline and plastic are related? Or even wool and sheep? Sand and glass?

### Silly Struts | Math

Make up some silly walk patterns with your kid, for example: big step, big step, hop; big step, big step, hop. Or zig (to the left), then zag (to the right). Chant the words as you do the actions.

### Sound Walk | Literacy

Look for things with names that start with the same sound. For example, dog and door. Ask your child to say the sound the letter "d" makes. What other things can he or she find that begin with the same sound?

### Stick Tricks | Math

How many things can your kid do with a stick? Toss it, use it to draw in the sand, balance it on his or her head, use it as a drum stick... Brainstorm with your kid, but let your kid take the lead. Keep count of the ideas.

### The Autumn Collection | Math

In the autumn, collect and sort fallen leaves into groups. How many different kinds of leaves can you find? In what ways are the leaves within a group different (size, color, etc.)?



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## Mealtime

### **Be Like Martha** | Literacy

Serve alphabet soup, and see what words your kids can make. Can they spell their names in an edible way?

### **Cucumber Numbers** | Math

The USDA recommends that half our dinner plate be filled with fruits and vegetables and that kids eat 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit every day. How do your family meals measure up? Let your kid help you figure it out.

### **Eat Together** | Literacy

Have at least one meal a day when you all sit down together and talk about your day. Conversation builds vocabulary and togetherness.

### **Get Cooking** | Math

Cooking is a great activity for math learning and practice. Let your kid count and measure ingredients, then help set the oven temperature and the timer.

### **Sharing Treats** | Math

Have your kid figure out how to divide snack food into equal portions -- for example, 1 banana for 2 kids, 6 cookies for 3 people, or a bottle of juice into 4 glasses.

### **Table Tips** | Math

Let your kid help you set the table. How many people are eating? How many plates, napkins, forks, spoons, or knives will you need? Can your kid place the napkin and silverware in the same position you do?

### **What's for Dinner?** | Literacy

Make your own menus. Write down some favorite meals on paper. Include appetizer, main course, and dessert.

### **Where Do I Sit?** | Literacy

Make place labels with everyone's name. You can make these out of simple rectangles of scrap paper.



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## On the Bus, Subway, or Train

### People on the Bus | Math

Ask: How many people are on the bus? How many empty seats are there? Guess how many people will get on at the next stop and how many will get off.

### Subway Study | Math

Study the subway map with your kid. How many stops until you reach your stop? Do you need to transfer to another line? Point out and talk about other places you have traveled to on the subway and let your kid trace the route.

### The 411 about 911 | Literacy

Teach your kid how to dial 911, and how to speak their name and address clearly. If you have a portable phone or cell phone, show them how it works. There are usually more buttons to press, and these phones can be very tricky for little kids.

### The Right Route | Math

Show your kid how to look for the correct route number on the bus. Make a guess — how many buses, or how many (red) cars do you think will go by before your bus comes?

### The Train Now Leaving | Literacy

Pretend to be an announcer on the public address system. Hold your nose and say things that no one can really understand, and see if the others can guess what you're saying. Take turns, otherwise your eyes might water too much from holding your nose.

### The Writing is on the Wall | Literacy

Look for signs and labels, especially ones in your neighborhood, to show that reading for meaning (not just for fun) is important. Talk about the "environmental print" (the words around you) whenever you travel with your kids.

### Transit Transaction | Math

How do you pay for the bus or subway? Do you swipe a card or buy a ticket at a machine or booth? Let your kid help with the transaction. Talk about process and price.

### Who Lives There? | Literacy

Look at the cities on the destination board and talk about what life is like in those other places. What do the kids there do for fun? What's the weather like? What names are popular there? If you don't know the answers, guess!



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## The Playground

### **Include the Kids** | Literacy

Include kids in your conversations with other adults by mostly using words they can understand. They'll learn new vocabulary by using the surrounding sentence to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

### **On Balance** | Literacy

Use the word "balance" as your child runs around and uses different kinds of playground equipment. "Wow, you are doing a great job balancing yourself on the swing!" or "How long can you balance yourself on one leg?"

### **Opposite Day** | Literacy

Talk about opposites. Describe your child's movements as he or she goes up and down the slide; or swings backward and forward and high and low; or goes over and under a bridge.

### **Play Ball!** | Literacy

Play a game of catch with your child, and use words that describe the movements of the ball, such as bounce, roll, and fly. Then invite your child to move the ball in different ways, such as throw, hit and kick.

### **Sandbox Steps** | Math

How many steps is it around the sandbox? How many steps from the swings to the slide? Have your kid estimate, then try it out. Try it yourself as well. Did it take you the same number, more, or fewer steps? Ask your kid, "Why is that?"

### **Shape Spotter** | Math

Look for shapes. How many triangles can you see? Not many at first, but look at fences, corners, and edges, and you may find a lot more. If your phone has a camera, let your kid take photos of as many triangles as he or she can find.

### **Sharing Solutions** | Math

Kids can use math reasoning to figure out fair ways to share playground toys and equipment. Encourage your kid to come up with a variety of solutions. Can all the kids play together with the toys or should they split them evenly or take turns? How long should a turn on the swings last?

### **Toy Take Away** | Math

Count the toys in the sand box. Announce you'll take one away. How many will there be? Have your kid count to find out if he or she doesn't know.





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## Shopping

### **Cart Count** | Math

Got a young kid? Have your kid guess how many items are in the cart. At the check out, count them out onto the conveyor belt together.

### **Cost Counter** | Math

Got an older kid? Have your kid guess the total cost of the items in the cart. At the check out, see who came closest to the correct total.

### **Coupon Cutting** | Literacy

Ask your kids to search for coupons and then cut them out.

### **List It!** | Math

Here's a simple data collection activity, and a useful one: write a shopping list together and number it. Have your kid mark off items that you find.

### **Love the Label** | Literacy

Read food labels and talk about nutrition.

### **Price Checker** | Math

Look for written numbers: on grocery items, on the aisles, and also look at prices. The grocery area is great for having your kid look for the best prices per pound of fruit and veggies.

### **Recipe for Success** | Literacy

Read a recipe together. Plan a grocery list. Put the groceries away. Cook!

### **Treasure Hunt** | Literacy

At the supermarket, ask your kids to find some typical words like bread, milk, fruit, and vegetables.



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## The Library

### Before the Door | Math

Don't just ask your kid to walk through a door -- make it a number game. For example, "Go through the door that has four windows..."

### Book Guesstimate | Math

How many books are there? Count ten books in one section of shelving, then count in tens together to guesstimate how many books there are in a whole section -- or the whole library!

### Choose a Book | Literacy

Check out books on topics that you know your kids are interested in. You and your kids can then have conversations about these topics, which will help them build their vocabularies.

### Cover Story | Literacy

Ask your kids to look at a book cover and name any objects and characters they know. Read the title and the author's name. See if the cover, title, or author remind you of any other books you've read together.

### Decoding | Literacy

Help your child learn to read the words on the pages of a book. Point to the letters and say the sounds they make. Look for the same words in other places. See if you can spot the spelling patterns in other words.

### Library Match-up | Math

The library is full of numbers. Help your kid learn how the numbers on the sides of books match the catalog numbers on the shelves.

### Page Pointing | Math

Books are full of important numbers, especially page numbers. Point them out when you're reading together.

### Prediction | Literacy

While reading a book with your child, point to each word as you read it. Ask questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" Stop once or twice to compare what is happening in the story to what your child guessed would happen.



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## The Zoo

### Feeding Time | Math

Give your kid a reason to learn how to tell time. Look for events like feeding times and have your kid work out how long until each begins.

### Imaginary Animal Lives | Literacy

Make up stories about the animals.

### Map It | Literacy

Let kids use the map of the zoo to guide your whole group.

### Map It Out | Math

Use the zoo map to write down how many animals you see; this is how all scientists start their careers!

### Pacing Spaces | Math

There's often lots of walking to do at the zoo. Count how many paces are between each exhibit.

### Signs | Literacy

There are signs all over the zoo. Point them out to you child and read what they say together.

### Silly Sizes | Math

Imagine comparing sizes: how many zebras tall would a giraffe be? How many tigers long is an elephant?

### The Lure of the Gift Shop | Literacy

If you buy something at the gift shop, consider buying a book instead of a stuffed animal.



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## In a Waiting Room

### Counting Challenges | Math

Stuck for something to do? Try counting backwards from one hundred or forwards in twos or fives.

### I Spy | Literacy

Play alphabet "I Spy." Choose an object, and then tell the other players what letter it begins with. "I spy with my little eye something that begins with the letter 'T'!" The first player to guess correctly goes next.

### Millions of Billions | Math

Kids like to play with huge numbers. Use basic counting skills but instead of counting "1, 2, 3..." try "One billion, one billion one, one billion two..." or explain that one billion plus two billion is three billion.

### Mississippi Minute | Math

Got a minute hand on your watch or a stopwatch on your phone? Take turns to see who can get closest to estimating a minute. Try "One Mississippi..." all the way to sixty.

### Old Friends | Literacy

Talk with your kids about a friend or a relative who you haven't seen for a long time -- maybe even someone who is no longer alive. Ask, "What would you tell that person about something you've done that would make them proud of you?"

### The Future | Literacy

Talk to your kids about what they might like to be when they grow up, and then ask them why.

### What's the Wait? | Math

Waiting anywhere can be boring, so try to play counting games. How many people are waiting ahead of you? How many animals can you find in the waiting room magazines? How many minutes have we been waiting?!

### You Be Me | Literacy

Get your kids to imagine being you. Ask them to talk like you, and say the kinds of things that you say. Then, it's your turn. Pretend being one of your kids. Have fun!



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## Your Backyard

### All Kinds of Trees | Literacy

Comparing different kinds of trees is a great way to introduce new vocabulary. Some trees have smooth bark and some have rough or bumpy bark. Ask your child to compare two different kinds of leaves and tell you how they are alike and different.

### Alphabet Hunt | Literacy

Look for things that begin with each letter of the alphabet. For example, A--ant; B--bark; C--clover; D--dragonfly, etc. Can you find the whole alphabet in your backyard?

### Go Big | Math

Look for tiny and huge things in your yard. Have your kid first search for objects that are about the same size as his or her fingernail, then for objects that are taller and wider than his or her body.

### Here is the Weather | Literacy

Look at the weather reports and forecasts. Talk about why reading the forecast helps you plan outings or what to wear. Look at the international reports and talk about what it's like to live in very hot, very cold, or very wet places.

### Joke Time | Literacy

On a nice day, sit in your backyard and tell each other jokes. If you don't know any, make up silly reasons why chickens cross roads, or what people in restaurants might say to waiters about unwelcome things in their soup. "Why is there a cat in my soup?" "It was trying to get the mouse."

### Street Sketch | Math

Math and maps go well together. Can your kid draw a map of the backyard or the street where you live?

### Thermometer Monitor | Math

Got an outdoor thermometer? Keep a chart of the temperatures on a calendar -- you'll give your kid practice at counting days as well as telling temperature.

### Treasure Hunt | Math

Construct an obstacle course with your kid. Decide which things you need to go under, over, between, and around. Write clues for a treasure hunt, leading kids from clue to clue and finally to the treasure: Walk 5 big steps towards the porch. Look on the 3rd step.