

The Edible Editorial

February 2025

The Best Educational (and Fun!) Daycare Activities to Try

Adapted from Wonderschool

Playtime isn't just about keeping kids busy—it plays an important role in a child's overall development. Playing is how children learn key social skills, develop muscle dexterity, and practice imagination and creativity.

Daycare providers can help the children in their care thrive by planning fun activities each day. This way, the kids in your care grow and discover new things daily while experiencing joy. Below, you'll find ideas for daycare activities for all ages to support the core components of early childhood development.

Focused daycare activities for fine motor skills

Little ones learn how to use the small muscles in their hands through playtime that focuses on fine motor movement and hand-eye coordination. Fine motor activities thus are important for kids of any age. These are the same skills used when six-month-olds learn to grab objects and when toddlers get a grasp on using sippy cups and spoons.

Daycare activities such as painting, threading, or playdough sculpting are a great way for students to develop fine motor movement while using their imagination. Here are some fine motor activities to inspire your next lesson plan.

- Paper plate crafts: You can find paper plate activities to fit just about any age group. Paint paper plate animals and make your own classroom zoo. If you're reading a story, have the kids create masks as one of the main characters.
- Playdough activities: Give students the chance to practice shape recognition by making circles and squares with colorful playdough. The dough is also very easy to make yourself. Building a playdough castle or skyscraper is a great way to keep kids occupied on a rainy day.

Daycare activities for gross motor skill development

While fine motor skills focus on small, delicate muscles, gross motor skills are all about using larger muscle groups. Gross motor activities thus help kids build the foundation for running, jumping, and other athletic movements. These games can also be a great way for kids to burn off extra energy in a controlled environment.

- Indoor obstacle course: Let kids explore a world of your creation with an indoor obstacle course. You can use soft household objects such as pillows and stuffed animals to create a safe, fun indoor adventure. This is a great chance for kids to practice climbing movements.
- Dance party: Clear the floor, play music, and let the kids go bananas. This is a great way to encourage self-expression while getting some healthy physical activity.

Sensory introduction daycare activities

Creating sensory activities for kids lets them explore through touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound. Games that stimulate the senses contribute to a range of developmental achievements, including memory enhancement and creativity. It's like creating a miniature science experiment that's fun for kids—and through which they develop problem-solving abilities.

- Water beads sensory bin: Use sight and touch with this fun, simple sensory activity that's great for preschool kids. Water beads grow when you put them in water, which can be exciting for kids to watch it happen. Once the beads are ready, place them in a small, tabletop plastic bin and let the kids squish them and play to their hearts' desire. Supervision is important during this activity.

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- Sand sensory bin: Get some play sand or make your own toddler-safe sand with flour and vegetable oil (you can also substitute flour for cornstarch). Once you fill the bin, kids can explore with their hands, or you can provide tools such as cups and funnels. When kids have the freedom to play around like this, they can observe and learn deductive reasoning. For instance, say they fill a bowl with sand and see that it spills out each time they turn it upside down. That's a great first step in deductively learning about the concept of gravity.

Other mentally-stimulating and fun daycare activities

The possibilities for fun kid activities are endless whether you're hoping to entertain, teach, or all of the above. The below activities don't require any arts and crafts, yet they're a hit nonetheless.

- Scavenger hunt: Creating a scavenger hunt is a great way for kids to build observational skills as they search for each item. You can do this activity entirely inside your daycare, making it a great activity for all days and times.

- Reading Books: Storytime is a great activity for all ages. You can support language development by reading to children as young as four months old. Plus, there are plenty of opportunities to tie in whatever you're reading to another activity. Let's say it's Dr. Seuss week. You can follow a lesson on Bartholomew and the Oobleck by letting kids play with a homemade version of the slimy substance.
- Board games: Age-appropriate board games are a fantastic way to build problem-solving skills. Since kids have to wait their turn and cooperate, board games help them develop important social skills.

The best daycare activities help kids have fun, while also supporting their learning & development

If you want to teach children the basics of independent thinking, muscle control, and social cooperation, daycare activities are an important learning tool. As long as you choose age-appropriate activities that are safe, the sky's the limit with finding great daycare activities for toddlers and preschoolers.

Easy Homemade Playdough

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 cup water
- 1 Tbsp. oil



1. Combine 1 cup flour, 1/2 cup salt, and 2 tsp. cream of tartar in a saucepan.
2. In a separate container, mix 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil and 1 cup water.
3. Place saucepan over medium heat and slowly stir in wet ingredients.
4. Stir constantly until a ball forms, about 3-4 minutes.
5. Remove from heat and let cool on a piece of parchment paper.
6. Knead until smooth.
7. Keep in a sealed container or plastic bag; it can be kept for months!

Customize your playdough with food coloring, scents, glitter and beads.

Cheesy Bean Tostada – Recipe for Centers

CACFP Crediting Information: Serving size 1 tostada. Serves 25. One serving provides 3/4 oz. equivalent meat alternate and 1/2 oz. equivalent grain.

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. Refried beans, fat-free, low-sodium
- 25 Corn tortillas (at least 14 gram or 1/2 oz. each)
- 6 1/4 oz. Cheddar cheese, reduced-fat, shredded

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Spread 2 Tbsp. of beans on each corn tortilla.
3. Sprinkle 1 Tbsp. of cheese evenly over the beans on each tortilla.
4. Place on ungreased sheet pan and bake for 7 minutes or until cheese is melted.
5. Heat to 140 degrees F or higher for at least 15 seconds.
6. Serve 1 tostada. Serve immediately, or keep warm at 140 degrees F or higher.



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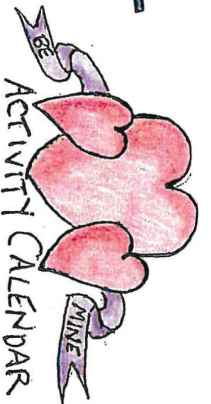
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February



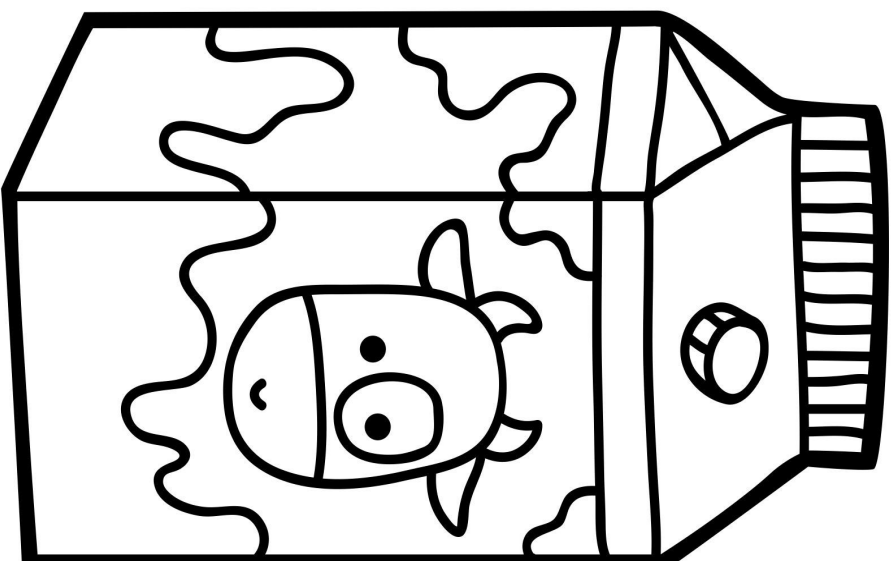
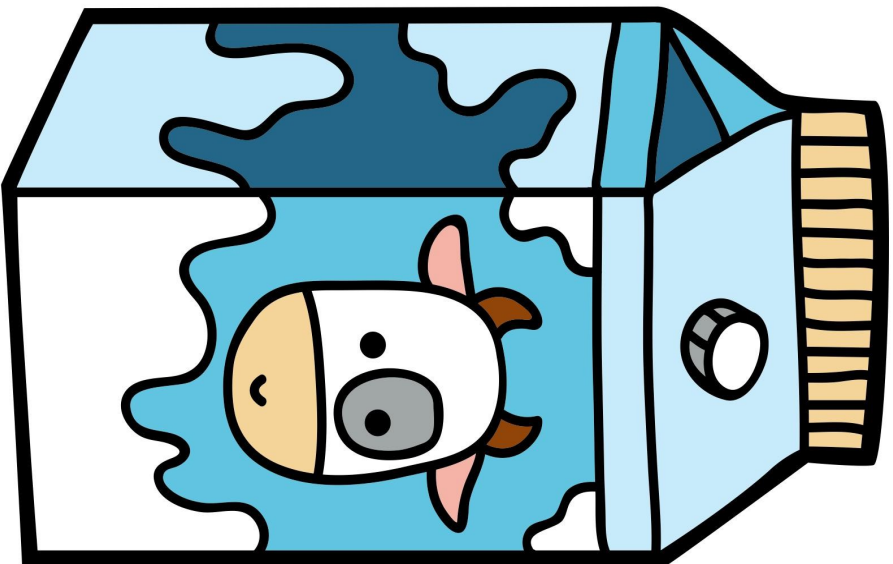
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <p>GRONDOG DAY! 2</p> | <p>play a family 3</p> | <p>Count ten 4</p> | <p>READ a book 5</p> | <p>look at your 6</p> | <p>make 7</p> | <p>draw a 8</p> |
| <p>count all 9</p> | <p>READ a book 10</p> | <p>walk on 11</p> | <p>FIND a ruler- 12</p> | <p>make a card 13</p> | <p>HAPPY VALENTINES DAY! 14</p> | <p>talk about 15</p> |
| <p>match family 16</p> | <p>President's DAY 17</p> | <p>wash day 18</p> | <p>make up 19</p> | <p>soft coins... 20</p> | <p>pay 21</p> | <p>mail 22</p> |
| <p>play a game 23</p> | <p>do 24</p> | <p>Howl 25</p> | <p>make trail mix... 26</p> | <p>check 27</p> | <p>Sing your 28</p> | |

CELEBRATE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH
- check your local library for special stories and activities

CELEBRATE
CHINESE NEW YEAR

Moo-tiful Colors

Color in the milk carton. You can use the coloring guide, or you can choose your own colors!



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Milk

LEARN IT

We all know the saying “Milk, it does a body good,” but do you ever wonder exactly what it does for your body? Milk actually provides NINE essential nutrients in one 8 oz serving: protein, calcium, riboflavin, phosphorous, vitamin D, vitamin B, potassium, vitamin A and niacin. Together these nutrients help build strong bones and teeth, promote good vision and healthy skin, and provides many other health benefits. Dairy milk far surpasses the nutrient content compared to milk alternatives like almond milk that only provides four nutrients.

CRAFT IT

The children will be able to practice their fine motor skills and have fun as they make their own dairy cow with a paper plate. You will need the following items: white paper plate, white and pink construction paper, black paint, and googly eyes.

Ask the children to paint black spots on their paper plate. Then they will glue on the googly eyes for the cow. Assist them in cutting out a large oval for the cow’s pink nose and two small ovals for the cow’s white ears. On the pink oval, use a black sharpie to add two small black circles for the cow’s nostrils and add a smile. They will glue the nose and ears on and now they have a dairy cow!



PLAY IT

Milk Jug Catch - Using your repurposed milk jug catcher and very soft balls, children can play catch by themselves or with a partner. How many balls can they catch in a row? If they’re working in partners, how far away from each other can they be and still catch the balls?

READ IT

These books are perfect to read during circle time!

No Milk! by Jennifer A. Ericsson
A boy tries to get a cow to produce milk in a variety of ways.

The Milk Makers by Gail Gibbons
Find out where milk comes from and the process it goes through to get to our homes.

EAT IT

Create your own Fruit Smoothie:

- 3 cups milk
- 3 cups frozen fruit – any kind

Combine fruit and milk in blender. Blend until smooth. Let the kids help you imagine the fruit combination possibilities!



REPURPOSE IT

Crafts with a milk jug! For all milk jug crafts, rinse jug thoroughly and allow to dry. Adults need to cut the milk jugs for children as there will be sharp edges. Use masking tape to tape over any sharp edges.

Bird Feeder - Cut windows out of each side of the milk jug. Under each window, make a hole big enough for a small dowel rod to fit through. Work with the children to glue a dowel rod in each hole as a perch for the birds. The dowel rods should be long enough to go through the hole on one side and come out on the other side of the milk jug, passing through the center. Now they can decorate the jug with any craft supplies and their imaginations. Place bird seed in the bottom of the jug up to the windows. Using the milk jug handle and string, hang the bird feeders outside near a window so the children can enjoy watching the birds.

Planter - Cut the top off of the milk jug and make small holes in the bottom of the jug for drainage. Let the children decorate as desired. The children will add small rocks to help drainage and then plant their plant in potting soil. Try beans or grass for easy growing plants.

Catcher - Cut off 1-2” from the bottom of the milk jug. The children can decorate using tape, tissue paper, glue, markers, paint, etc. When they are ready to catch, they will turn the jug upside down and hold by the handle.



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