

## HELP YOUR CHILD THRIVE: ENGAGE AND PLAY

Parents and families, you are your child's first teacher! Research shows that a caring relationship with at least one adult is key in the first few years for the development of lifelong skills such as memory retention, self-control, and focus.



The more relaxed days of summer can be a great time to strengthen the relationship you have with your child and help them build these important skills, known as executive functioning skills. By giving your child time and attention and engaging in back and forth ("serve and return") interactions, you can support your child's development.

Much like a game of volleyball, you make "serves" to your child by talking, reading, or singing about the different sights and sounds around you. Even if your child is not able to talk yet, they may "return" these "serves" by smiling or clapping. These shared moments can happen anywhere and at any time.



Talking, reading, and singing with your child develops communication skills and helps them learn to make important connections with the world around them.

You can find tips on our parent page at [mississippithrive.com](https://mississippithrive.com) or visit [toosmall.org](https://toosmall.org) and [talkwithmebaby.org](https://talkwithmebaby.org) for fun ways to spend time with your child.



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# MISSISSIPPI THRIVE!

Supporting your child's development does not require expensive toys. A game such as Simon Says sharpens executive functioning skills like following directions, focusing, and using working memory. See Vroom Tips™ below for ways to support your child's physical, mental, and emotional health.

## YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT!

### DANCE PARTY (AGES BIRTH - 12 MONTHS)

Your child may not be walking or talking yet, but with your help, they can definitely boogie. So, turn on some music and hold them as you dance around. When you sit down together, shake your arms to the music and see if they can do the same!

### BRAINY BACKGROUND

Paying attention to sounds and movements is an early step in listening for sounds—a reading skill.



### RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT (AGES 2-4)

Tell your child to run when you say, "Green light!" and stop when you say, "Red light!" Once they can do it, encourage them to try the opposite: run when you say, "Red light!" and stop when you say, "Green light!" Try other colors and other actions (skipping, hopping). You can even change the rules and have them do the opposite.

### BRAINY BACKGROUND

When your child plays this game, they're holding an idea in their brain to remember the rules and what they're supposed to do. Scientists call this working memory. They must also use self-control as they stop and go, or when you change the rules. These are important skills for school and life.



### FAST DANCE (AGES 2-3)

Let your child pick a fun, fast song to dance to. Ask them to make a dance move, and then copy what they do. Take turns going back and forth, copying each other's dance moves.

### BRAINY BACKGROUND

When you and your child copy each other, they're learning to focus and connect what they're seeing and what they're doing. Following along and learning to focus are important skills for learning new things.



Time away from preschool or child care for any reason is a great opportunity for parents to use fun activities to continue supporting their children's development and get them ready to return to routines. Any game or activity that involves following step-by-step instructions or listening can benefit future classroom time by building executive function skills.



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