



Encouraging Self-Help Skills

Children have a drive to be independent and do things on their own. This is a healthy part of normal child development. As children grow, they learn to do more and more tasks.

Child care providers can help young children become independent by allowing and encouraging them to take responsibility for themselves whenever possible. It can be faster and less messy to do things for children, but they learn so much from doing things for themselves. When children practice self-help skills such as feeding and dressing themselves, they practice their large and small motor skills, gain confidence in their ability to try new things, and build their self-esteem and pride in their independence.

There are four main types of self-help skills:

Self-feeding

The best way to build independent feeding skills is to learn the normal developmental stages of self-feeding. Encourage children to practice feeding themselves from infancy on. Begin by offering older infants finger foods. Introduce a spoon and fork and give children plenty of time to practice. Let children be as independent as possible during mealtimes. Give them the tools they need to be successful. Consider bowls that attach to the table, child-sized utensils and small cups with handles and spouts (such as measuring cups) for pouring. Encourage children to try for themselves but provide help and encouragement when needed so they don't get frustrated.

Independent Dressing and Grooming

Encourage children to dress and groom by themselves; just provide minimal assistance. Begin with older infants and toddlers by encouraging them to help pull socks on and off, pull up pants after

diapering and help put their arms through sleeves. As children get older, encourage them to dress themselves but help with challenging steps such as zipping and buttoning.

Hygiene and Toileting

Look for signs of readiness for toileting. Encourage children learning to use the toilet to climb on and off the toilet seat, pull clothing up and down, and wash their hands independently. Also teach children how to brush their teeth after lunch and snacks. Be ready to provide support and help if they need it. Encouraging children to take care of everyday hygiene routines and to use the toilet independently helps them learn how to become more independent and self-sufficient, and frees up your time to help children with other activities.

Helping with Daily Chores (like table setting & picking up toys)

Encourage children to help with clean-up early on. Give toddlers responsibility for placing napkins or utensils on the table. Encourage children to begin clearing their own plates when they are old enough to carry them without dropping them. When children are involved in regular chores starting before the age of four, they tend to be more independent in early adulthood than children without the experience of helping out.



Self-help skills are worth the time and effort in a child care program. The secret to success is to give children age-appropriate experiences and provide the appropriate supports to help children be successful. Child care providers can offer opportunities for children to develop self-help skills and give them ample time to work on these important tasks. Remember that adults are important role models. We model self-help skills; children learn a great deal from watching us.

Self-Care Skills for Babies (crawlers) to 12 months

- Clean face and hands with damp wash cloth (finish up with help)
- Stow own shoes away (with help/works well to have one assigned spot)
- Feed self a snack (cereal O's, cubed soft fruits etc...)
- Hold a spoon and toothbrush to imitate parents/siblings
- Play independently for 10-30 minutes



Self-Care Skills from 12-18 months

Continue all of the above, plus:

- Wash hands (may need help)
- Brush Teeth (followed up with help)
- Start exploring how to undress self
- Start exploring how to take off-put on shoes
- Start exploring how to use hair brush
- Choose own outfit (offer limited choices)
- Explore how to drink from open cup
- Explore how to eat alone with child safe spoon/fork
- Assist in tidying up toys (with direction)
- Play independently for 10 -30 minutes

Self-Care Skills from 18 months- 2 year olds

Continue all of the above, plus:

- Undress pants/shorts
- Explore how to dress self (shirts tend to get stuck!)
- Take off and stow away shoes
- Wash face and hands (may need help)
- Comb or brush own hair (finish up with help)
- Hang up coat (provide hook that is accessible)
- Serve self a snack from a shared plate onto own bowl or plate
- Explore using a napkin
- Explore pouring water from pitcher into own glass
- Explore how to wipe up spills
- Put trash into trash can
- Play independently for 15-40 minutes

Self-Care Skills for 3 year olds

All of the skills from 1 & 2 years, plus:

- Dress self (may need some help, esp. with buttons & zippers)
- Practice using snaps, zippers, and buttons
- Explore what weather appropriate clothing means
- Put on shoes (it's helpful to avoid laces)
- Put away some of own laundry
- Explore how to make own bed
- Explore basic cooking (measuring, pouring, mixing)
- Pour glass of water/milk/juice from a pitcher (see next!)
- Wipe up own spills (helps to keep towels stored where child can reach)
- Get a snack from the pantry (keep healthy choices in reach)
- Use a napkin at the table
- Learn part of own address (city and own last name)
- Help set table (give choice of one responsibility such as napkin buddy or place mat setter)
- Remove own plate from table
- Explore using the kitchen sink to rinse fruits/veggies/cups
- Play independently for up to one hour



Self-Care Skills for 4 year olds

All of the skills from 1, 2 & 3 years, plus:

- Explore washing hair alone in shower (may need help to complete)
- Explore more cooking skills (cracking eggs alone, making simple sandwich, cutting banana slices)
- Learn house phone number
- Learn own address
- Set/remove own place setting at table
- Learn a bit about how to work the washing machine, dishwasher, etc.

Self-Care Skills for 5 year olds

- Dress independently (may still wish for help, but in general capable of doing alone)
- Brush hair independently
- Brush teeth independently
- Shower independently (may still need assistance with hair washing)
- Use toilet brush
- Replace toilet paper roll if finished
- Understand and choose weather appropriate clothing
- Explore tying laced shoes
- Explore what a balanced meal contains
- Use the kitchen sink with confidence to wash fruits, veggies, plates, cups
- Learn how to use microwave (with supervision)
- Explore more cooking skills (peeling vegetables with supervision, chopping ingredients with safe knife)
- Learn how to place item in oven using mitts (with adult nearby)
- Learn about emergency numbers (how to dial for police, fire, etc.)

Children are unique and reach the ability to complete these skills at different paces; these lists are meant

as helpful guidelines. Allowing children to explore these skills, possibly fail and try again usually is the route to true learning. Finding the balance between giving freedoms for children to learn and swooping in to the rescue is tricky at times but when we trust the process it's really amazing just how much children can do. You will have the most success with motivating self-care by using encouragement, remembering to keep expectations age-appropriate, and being supportive.

Adapted from: <http://articles.extension.org/pages/26436/ways-to-encourage-self-help-skills-in-children>
<http://www.positiveparentingconnection.net/giant-list-of-self-care-skills-for-babiestoddlers-and-preschoolers/>

Music Activities in Child Care

Music is an important part of the child care curriculum. Young children love sound. Music activities and experiences help children practice important skills, including thinking, language, motor coordination and understanding emotions.

Music and Thinking Skills

Music is a powerful tool that helps children learn new thinking skills. When children play with musical instruments, they explore cause and effect. They can see that pressing a key makes a sound. Additionally, they learn to pay attention to changes in sound, noting for example that certain keys sound deeper than others do. Exploring musical instruments also helps children learn how different instruments work and the sounds they create.

Music and Language

Singing songs is a powerful way for young children to practice language. When children sing, they practice pronouncing words and putting together sentences. Learning the lyrics to songs is also an effective way to remember information. How many people first learned the alphabet by singing the ABC song? Our brains remember language better when it is set to music.



Music and Motor Skills

Songs with motions help children practice fine-motor coordination. Doing the finger motions of a song like "The Itsy Bitsy Spider" or a finger play like "Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed" helps children practice their hand and finger control -- a skill necessary for writing and handling small objects. Dancing to music also helps children perfect their control of their arms and legs. Music and dance are fun and help children be playful with each other and with their child care providers.

Music and Emotions

Listening to music can help children learn about emotions. Music can also be soothing and comforting. Remember how babies love lullabies? Child care providers might play classical music and help the children label the sounds as scary, sad or happy. Children can also connect music with emotions by drawing or painting a picture of their feelings as they listen to a certain musical selection.

Music and Routines

Music and singing can help children follow the routine of the child care program. Clean-up songs alert children that it's time to put away their toys and move to another activity. Child care providers can use songs to signal a transition from one activity to another, or to keep children interested and occupied while they are waiting for the next activity. Playing quiet music is a clear signal for naptime. Loud, energetic music can get children up and moving or help them use up energy before they settle down to a quieter task.

Music is not just an "extra" in child care. Listening to music, singing songs and playing instruments provide learning opportunities and make both children and child care providers feel good. It's important to look for creative ways to include music in child care programs for children of all ages.

Introducing Music into a Daycare Program.

Participating in music teaches children a variety of skills, including:

- creative expression
- understanding of emotions

- learning rhythm, tone and pitch
- language development
- gross and fine motor skills
- engagement
- memory
- appreciation of different cultures and musical styles

Creating music is also an enjoyable activity. When choosing music or planning for a musical experience, try introducing children to a variety of different options. Consider the following:

- **Introducing children to a variation of recorded music styles** - Don't limit the children to just "kid" music. Research shows that children who are introduced to, and encouraged to listen to, many different kinds of music do better in school!
- **Encouraging children to move to the music** - Music and movement naturally go together. A baby will enjoy the sound of music and the movement of your body as you move to the music, while holding them. Toddlers and older children will have fun rocking and swaying to their favorite songs
- **Teaching children songs and figure plays** - children love to learn songs and to do the actions that go along with figure plays. These can be helpful in teaching children new concepts, like numbers and ABC's etc.
- **Encourage singing as a group and independently!**



- **Creating your own music by playing with instruments** - you can easily make your own (see below for ideas)! You also use your hands and feet as instruments! Clapping your hands and stomping your feet to create music or to follow a simple rhythm, or pattern. Clap or tap out rhythms for names, ticking clocks, or other neighborhood sounds.
- **Use music to help guide children throughout the day** - music creates emotions, it can help calm or even brighten someone's mood.

Taken in part from extention.org



Craft Ideas

Egg Carton Butterflies

This craft can be made by children of any age (youngest ones may need help with the antennas) and it can be customized with whatever paint colours you have on-hand.

Materials: paint (neon colours work well), paintbrushes, cardboard egg carton, pipe cleaners, scissors.

1. Cut out a section of the egg carton that has four cups. Trim the edges so that they are smooth and rounded in.
2. Add paint to the cups! You can do thick rings of paint and draw a dry paintbrush through them to create a tie-dye effect, or you can just paint them.
3. Once the paint has dried overnight, wrap a pipe cleaner around the middle, meeting at the 'top' of the butterfly, and then twist the ends together to form antennas.

Adapted from: craftymorning.com



Preschool Haircut

Materials: white paper, crayons, scissors, strips of newspapers or crinkly paper packaging material, glue.

1. Draw a large circle on to the paper. This will be the face.
2. Ask the child to decorate the face. They can add a body if they'd like to, too!
3. Glue the shredded, scraps of paper to the head to make it look like a person who desperately needs a haircut.
4. Once the glue is dry, the child can pretend to be a barber!



Source: jenspend.com



Rainy Day Painting

This craft should be done on a day with light drizzle.

Materials: cardstock paper, liquid food colouring.

1. Have the children drip the food colouring randomly on to the paper.
2. Carefully, keeping the paper level, take it outside and place in the drizzle.
3. Now watch as the rain "paints"!
4. Once the artwork is dry, children can add embellishments (i.e. stickers) or marker drawing on top of the painting.

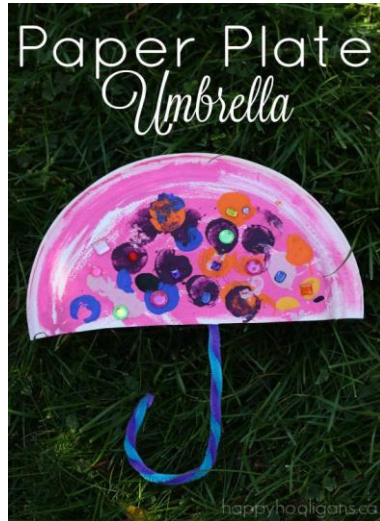


Source: littlepageturners.blogspot.ca

Paper Plate Umbrella

Materials: paper plates, paint, scissors, pipe cleaners (for handle), stickers (optional), tape.

1. Have the children cut a paper plate in half. If a child is just learning how to cut, draw a straight line through the center of the plate for her to follow.
2. Paint the 'umbrella'. You can even suggest they dab some polka dots onto their umbrella using their fingers. Note: if the child doesn't like to get their hands dirty, they can use a bottle top or a wine cork to stamp on some dots.
3. If desired, add stickers or other embellishments.
4. Twist two pipe cleaners together and bend at one end to make a handle shape. Tape the handle onto the back of the umbrella.



Source: happyhooligans.ca

Music Activities

Experiment with different ways to make music!

Tapping Glasses to Make Music

1. Fill several glasses or jars with water to different levels. The containers should be the same size and shape but with different levels of water in them.
2. Children can play notes by tapping gently on the sides of the containers with small pencils or sticks. Have children compare notes or play tunes.
3. Experiment by changing the amount of water in the glasses.



Blowing to Create Music

1. Fill several empty plastic bottles with water of different levels. The containers should have different levels of water in them. Leave the lids off.
2. Show children how to blow across the top of the bottles to get different sounds from the air streams.
3. Compare the notes with the levels of water.

Painting or Drawing with Music

1. Give children paper and some paint or crayons.
2. Turn on some music and let the children paint/draw to the music.
3. Change to faster or slower-paced music and see if it affects the little artists.

Make your own instruments using materials found around the house!

Rubber Band Banjos

Materials: 2L milk cartons or tissue boxes, rubber bands, optional items like stickers and markers can be used to decorate



1. Cut a rectangular hole in one side of an empty 2L cardboard milk carton or a tissue box.

2. Ask children to put several large rubber bands around the carton, with part of the rubber band going across the hole that was cut out.
3. Strum the banjo and compare the sounds of different thicknesses of rubber bands. Also compare the sounds made by rubber bands stretched tighter than others.

Maracas

Materials used for each maraca: 2 identical, plastic containers (yogurt, sour cream etc), hot glue, duct tape, optional items like paint and or stickers can be used for decorations

1. Take 2 identical, clean plastic cups or yogurt containers.
2. Put $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of coffee beans, dried peas/beans, macaroni, or beads in one of the cups.
3. Hot glue the two containers together, sealing the beans inside. Wrap the seam with masking or duct tape for added support.
4. Optional: paint containers or cover with stickers to decorate your maracas!

Tambourine

Materials used for each tambourine: - 2 paper plates, stapler or glue, hole punch, string, jingle bells, crayons

1. Staple or glue two paper plates together, facing each other.
2. Using a hole punch, make holes around the plates.
3. Tie jingle bells to the holes with string.
4. Decorate the tambourine with crayons.

Note: Heavy duty paper plates are more durable for this craft.

Safety note: If using a stapler, an adult should do this. When finished be sure to cover the staples with scotch tape.



Drum

Materials used for each drum: 1 empty container with a lid, (coffee tin, yogurt container etc), 2 pencils (unsharpened), construction paper, crayons

1. Before beginning, you can decorate the container with construction paper and/or crayons for a colorful effect.
2. For the drumsticks, use the unsharpened pencils.

Play games that include music!

Freeze Dance

1. Play different types of music for short and long periods of time.
2. Stop the music at unpredictable times, asking the children to freeze in the spot and action they are doing when the music stops.
3. Have children suggest actions to do during the music: wiggling, dancing, jumping, etc.

Musical Statues

1. Have the children dance to the music.
2. Stop and restart the music at unpredictable times, when the music stops have the children FREEZE in their spot, trying not to wobble or giggle!
3. After a few seconds start the music again, as it's time to get moving, again!
4. Repeat, for as long as desired.

*For older children, the game can be varied by eliminating the children that move to find one winner.

Move Like the Music

This is a great way to get children considering emotions and actions and can be played by one or more children of any age.

Listen to different types of music together and talk about how it makes you feel. Happy? Sad? Upset?

Then talk about what actions go with these emotions. A happy song can make you feel "bouncy," "boppy" etc. If the song is slow and makes you feel sad, perhaps the appropriate action would be "swaying".

*It's fun to give each child a scarf to dance along with.

Songs and Fingerplays

Spring Song

Sung to: The Farmer in the Dell

The sun is shining bright
The sun is shining bright,
Oh how I love the warmth,
The sun is shining bright



The rain is falling down
The rain is falling down,
Oh how I love the sound,
The rain is falling down

The flowers start to bloom
The flowers start to bloom,
Oh how I love the sight,
The flowers start to bloom

Clap Your Hands

Clap, clap, clap your hands,
As s-l-o-w-l-y as you can.
Clap, clap, clap your hands,
As quickly as you can.

Shake, shake, shake your hands,
As s-l-o-w-l-y as you can.
Shake, shake, shake your hands
As quickly as you can. ...

Roll, roll, roll your hands,
As s-l-o-w-l-y as you can.
Roll, roll, roll your hands
As quickly as you can.

Rub, rub, rub your hands,
As s-l-o-w-l-y as you can.
Rub, rub, rub your hands
As quickly as you can....

**This song can be varied by adding feet actions or body actions instead of the hand actions.*

Shapes

(sung to "Do You Know the Muffin Man?")

Do you know what shape this is,
What shape this is,
What shape this is?



Do you know what shape this is,
I'm holding in my hand?

*Repeat the song as you hold up different shapes

Tasty Treats

Pizza Rolls ~Just three ingredients!

Ingredients:

- DOUGH- any kind you want: crescent roll dough from a can, pizza dough, bread dough, etc.
- SAUCE- a few tablespoons of pizza sauce or any tomato sauce
- CHEESE- 1/3 cup of mozzarella for a classic pizza taste

Also: a little flour to help with rolling.

Instructions:

1. Roll the dough until it's about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick.
2. Spread the sauce thinly over the dough. You don't want to make it too saucy or the rolls won't hold together.
3. Sprinkle the cheese evenly over top.
4. Roll up from the long edge until you have a log. Using a sharp knife, cut into 12 rounds.
5. Place rounds on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
6. Bake in preheated 350F oven, 12-15 minutes or until browned.

Source: whatlisacooks.com



Zucchini Meatballs

Zucchini meatballs can be served with mashed potatoes, rice, or with spaghetti or other type of pasta.

MEATBALLS

Ingredients:

- 1 cup zucchini finely grated
- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 egg slightly beaten
- 1/4 cup dry bread crumbs plain
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup onion finely grated
- 1-2 cloves garlic minced or 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- 1/4 tsp dried oregano leaves
- salt and black pepper to taste

SAUCE

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1 onion finely chopped or grated
- 1 medium carrot finely grated
- 3 cups tomato puree
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tsp Italian seasoning
- salt and black pepper to taste
- Tbsp optional ingredients: 1 red wine 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper (chili) flakes



Instructions:

1. **MEATBALLS:** Put grated zucchini, ground beef, egg, bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, onion and garlic into a large bowl. Season with paprika, oregano, salt and black pepper. Mix well until combined.
2. Divide into 24 walnut-size meatballs. Place them on baking pan lined with aluminum foil or baking paper. Bake for about 20 minutes in

400 F (200 C) oven, or until meatballs are cooked through.

3. **SAUCE:** While meatballs are baking, saute onion in olive oil. Add remaining ingredients and simmer on low heat until vegetables are soft, about 20 minutes. You can blend or puree the sauce to make it extra smooth.
4. Add meatballs to the sauce, cook for about 1 minute and serve over spaghetti, other type of pasta, mashed potato or rice.

Source: diettaste.com

Healthy 3 Ingredient Cookies

These make great breakfasts or after-school snacks!

Ingredients:

- 2 ripe bananas
- quick oats
- Raisins

Instructions:

1. Mash 2 ripe bananas in a bowl then mix in 1 cup of quick oats and a handful of raisins. (Don't add too many or the cookies will fall apart.)
2. Place approximately 16 small scoops on a parchment-paper lined baking sheet and bake at 350F for about 15 minutes.

Tips: add cinnamon, salt, walnuts, chocolate chips, coconut, dried cranberries, flax seed, honey, vanilla, nutmeg, or any other mix-ins of your choice. Just be sure not to mix in too much or the cookies won't stick together.

Because the size of the bananas vary, mix in additional oats if the batter seems too runny.

Source: listotic.com



Spring Weather: A Reminder for Parents

With the rainy season upon us it's important to remember to send your child to care with extra clothes in case of overzealous outdoor play time!