



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by Lifetrack

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The Importance of Art in the Development of Children

In recent years, teaching in the United States has shifted heavily toward common core subjects of reading and math, but what about the arts? Simple, creative activities are some of the core building blocks of child development.

Some of the developmental benefits of art include:

Motor Skills: Many of the skills needed to create art are essential to the growth of fine motor skills in young children. A developmental milestone for a child around age three includes drawing a circle and beginning to use safety scissors. At age four, children may be able to draw a square and begin cutting straight lines with scissors. Many preschool programs emphasize the use of scissors because it develops the dexterity children need for writing.

Language Development: Art projects provide children with opportunities to learn words for colors, shapes and actions.

Decision Making: Art education strengthens problem-solving and critical-thinking skills which carry over into other parts of the child's life.

Visual Learning: Drawing, sculpting with clay and threading beads on a string develop visual-spatial skills.



Inventiveness: When kids are encouraged to express themselves and take risks in creating art, they develop a sense of innovation that will be important in their adult lives.

Improved Academic Performance: Studies show that there is a correlation between art experiences and achievement in other subjects.

Learning to create and appreciate art in all of its forms may be more important than ever to the development of the next generation of children as they grow up.

Source: "The Importance of Art in Child Development" retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/the-importance-of-art-in-child-development>, February 2014.

Tips for New Dads!

Becoming a father can be an overwhelming and exciting experience. As a new dad there are many activities that will help you to connect with your new baby and with the challenges of fatherhood. These activities will make your transition to fatherhood less stressful and more fulfilling.

As a new dad, you can:

- **Room with your family at the hospital.** If the hospital allows, stay with your partner and newborn until it's time to take the baby home.
- **Take turns caring for the baby.** Take turns feeding and changing the baby. If your partner is breast-feeding, offer to bottle-feed pumped breast milk, burp the baby, or put the baby back to sleep after breast-feeding sessions.
- **Play with the baby.** Men often engage their babies in noisier, more active play while women tend to provide low-key, soothing stimulation for their babies. Both types of play are important.
- **Be affectionate with your partner.** Intimacy isn't limited to sex. Hugs, kisses, shoulder rubs and other types of physical contact can help you stay connected while your partner recovers from child birth and both of you adjust to the new routine. Talk with your partner about the changes you're experiencing and what can be done to support each other as your baby gets older.

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Tips for New Dads

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- **Seek help.** If you're having trouble dealing with changes in your relationship or you think you might be depressed seek professional help. Untreated depression affects the entire family.

Becoming a new dad is a life-changing experience. By recognizing and planning for the challenges ahead, you can ease your stress and spend more time enjoying your new family.

Source: "New Dad, Tips to Help Manage Stress," retrieved from Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.org/new-dad/ART-20045880?p=1>, February 2014.

Test your knowledge about screen time...

- T F Programs for young children on TV or computers can teach babies and toddlers colors, shapes, and language.
- T F Kids who spend their early years with too much TV or computer time struggle with basic interpersonal skills.
- T F When a baby is propped in front of a TV or the caregiver is watching TV while feeding the baby, the baby misses out on critical face time with caring adults.

Answers: 1) F, 2) T, 3) T

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Screen Time and Babies

Why do experts recommend limiting screen time to almost nothing for children under age two? Babies and toddlers who spend significant time with screens fail to achieve various developmental milestones. Here are some reasons for limits:

Babies need to move! Their bodies become stronger and their physical skills develop when they are free to move. Sitting in front of a computer or TV can lead to delays in children's gross and motor skills.

Babies need back and forth interactions with loving caregivers. These interactions are the building blocks for all future social communication.

Babies benefit when they are being held. Looking at the person feeding them helps them learn important facial features and expressions which are key to communication.

Babies need a loving person to help them when they are upset. When children's cries are repeatedly left unanswered, they fail to learn how to regulate their emotions in a healthy way. You cannot "spoil" a baby by responding to their crying.

Babies learn through imitation. They are specifically wired to learn from other people. Screens do not provide the right conditions for babies to learn by imitating.



Babies love screens! Babies are quiet and content while interacting with computers or watching TV. But when babies spend time on digital devices, they aren't developing social brain connections, physical abilities and emotional regulation. So, help your baby grow up healthy by limiting screen time!

Source: "Too Much Screen Time Hurts Babies," <http://www.PricelessParenting.com/>.

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If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

Early Learning Digest is made possible through funding from:

