



Parents' Pages

The Official Newsletter of the Division of Early Learning

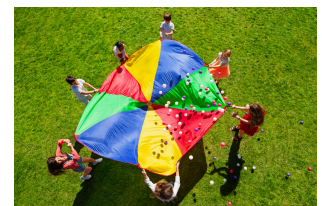
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Spring Into Action

Outdoor play offers a world of benefits for young children, from helping them build social skills to supporting physical health. For children of all ages, outside activities provide a chance to explore nature, develop coordination and improve their mood. Best of all, outdoor activities do not require special equipment. With just a few simple materials and some creativity, families can enjoy hours of fun together.

Outdoor Activities for You and Your Children:

- **Bubble Fun** – Blow bubbles and watch your children chase them around. Bubbles are a great way to improve hand-eye coordination and inspire laughter. Infants will be fascinated by the floating bubbles, while toddlers can practice running or jumping to pop them.
- **Sidewalk Chalk Art** – Use sidewalk chalk and create a drawing together. For infants, try simple shapes or talk about the color of the chalk while you trace their handprint. Toddlers can practice writing their names or creating more detailed artwork. This activity helps with development of fine motor skills and encourages creativity.
- **Parachute Play** – Locate a large piece of fabric or a colorful blanket and ask your child to hold the edges and gently shake it to make the “parachute” move. Infants love seeing the motion and bright colors, while toddlers and older children can play games, making the parachute rise and fall or hiding underneath it.
- **Reading Outdoors** – Reading can be a relaxing and enjoyable way to spend time in the fresh air. Set up a cozy spot with a blanket and a few of your child’s favorite books. As you read, talk about the pictures and encourage your child to point to things they recognize. For infants, you can start with board books that have bright pictures and textures. Toddlers can enjoy stories with simple words, rhymes and fun illustrations. Spending time reading outdoors strengthens language skills and gives children the opportunity to connect with nature while learning.



Whether it’s through unstructured play, simple games or just spending time together outdoors, you can create opportunities for learning, bonding and joyful exploration.

Find a Quality Summer Camp

Summer camps can be found in schools, parks and recreation programs and churches, or as part of youth service agencies, specialty camps, family child care homes and child care centers. With various program options such as academics, gaming, sports, music and arts, you are sure to find a summer camp your child will enjoy. Here are tips to consider:

- Determine which days/weeks care is needed, fees for services offered and the deadline to submit your application.
- Ask if enriching educational experiences are provided, such as off-site learning opportunities.
- Assess if the location is convenient for you and your family.

A [checklist](#) is available to assist with selecting the best summer camp for your child. You may also visit the Department of Children and Families' website for information on [Choosing a Safe Summer Camp](#). The [Child Care Resource and Referral program](#) can also provide a list of summer camps in your community.

Summer Bridge as Next Step

Could your child use additional literacy instruction over the summer? Check with your Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) provider regarding eligibility for the Summer Bridge Program. This free summer program is offered to help eligible VPK students get ready for kindergarten. Contact your school district to enroll.

Florida **VPK**



Foster a Love for Reading

The foundation for reading begins at infancy. You can stimulate your child's brain growth when talking about a favorite book or role playing the characters. Early language and literacy development helps them express themselves, understand others and build essential skills for future learning.

You can find valuable information to support your child's language and literacy development at the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) website. Look for age-appropriate resources and activities you can use every day, model good language and be patient and supportive as your child grows and learns about their surroundings and interests. By incorporating these practices into daily routines, you can create a language-rich environment that encourages your child's communication skills and overall development.

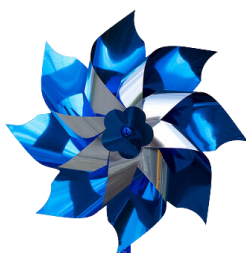
Explore these helpful tips from Just Read, Florida! to prepare your child for reading:

- Describe and point out objects: As you play and go about daily activities, point to objects and describe them.
- Use sounds, songs and rhymes: Incorporate sounds, songs and rhyming words to help your child learn about language and its various uses.
- Highlight printed words: Point out printed words in your home and other places you visit, like the grocery store.
- Read daily: Start reading to your baby every day. This is one of the best ways to introduce vocabulary and nurture early literacy skills.
- Model reading: Show your child that reading is important by setting a good example.

April Upcoming Events

[30th Annual Children's Week Florida, April 13-18, 2025](#)

Hundreds of children and child advocates will be on the grounds of the Florida Capitol Complex in Tallahassee for this annual week-long event. It begins with Hanging of the Hands inside the Capitol Rotunda on Sunday, April 13. Children's Day follows on Tuesday, April 15. It is an exciting and fun day of engaging activities, including a complimentary breakfast and lunch with stories brought to life in Storybook Village and so much more.



Child Abuse Prevention Month – You will likely see blue pinwheels planted throughout Florida's communities as part of the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign, held during Child Abuse Prevention Month each April. This event is coordinated by [Prevent Child Abuse Florida](#), the [Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida](#) and the [Florida Department of Children and Families](#). It is an important time to focus on protecting children, specifically those at risk of abuse or neglect and to promote family wellness. You can show your support by displaying blue pinwheels in your community.

new worlds reading



Voluntary Prekindergarten Opportunities Available

Registration for the 2025-26 VPK education program is open! VPK is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for success in kindergarten and beyond. Children must reside in Florida and be 4 on or before September 1 of the school year in which they enroll.

The New Worlds Reading Initiative is a free Florida literacy program for VPK students and K-5th grade public school students, including charter school students, not scoring at grade level on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) assessment. This statewide book delivery program is a collaborative effort with the Florida Department of Education, school districts, University of Florida Lastinger Center and other local and state organizations. Don't miss the chance to discover more about the New Worlds Reading Initiative. Enrollment flyers are available in [English](#) (PDF), [Spanish](#) (PDF) and [Haitian Creole](#) (PDF). [Enroll today!](#)

Parents whose children are born between February 2 and September 1 may postpone enrollment until the following year when their child is 5. To register your child for VPK, visit the Division of Early Learning Family Portal. For more information on the [VPK Program](#), visit the [Division of Early Learning website](#).



Family Fun Activities

- **Hopscotch:** Draw a hopscotch grid with chalk, numbering each square. Have your child hop through the numbers in order from least to greatest and vice versa. Toss a rock onto one of the numbers and hop past the number it lands on.
- **Obstacle Course:** Create your own outdoor obstacle course using household items. You can incorporate items like laundry baskets, buckets, hula hoops, blankets, chairs or even pool noodles.
- **Dance Party:** Play some favorite music and dance around with your child. Play a game of freeze dance where they stop moving when you pause the music.
- **Ball Games:** Engage in hand-eye coordination playing simple games such as catch, kickball or rolling a ball back and forth.

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