

Vroom Tips™



These print-at-home tip sheets include a mix of Vroom Brain Building Activities™ for children ages 0-5. Share them, put them up on your fridge, or carry them around—whatever helps remind you that brain-building moments are all around you.

Brain Building Basics™

We've made the science of early learning simple! Remember these 5 actions to help build your child's brain anytime. They're color coded for easy finding.

Look

Children use their eyes to learn. See what catches your child's attention and talk about it. Or connect eye-to-eye, then smile, chat, hug, or make funny faces!

Follow

Young children learn best when you follow their lead. Tune into your child's words, sounds, movements and ideas! Then respond with your own words and actions.

Chat

Children's brains light up when you talk, sing, or make sounds back and forth with them. Chat about your day, food, and what's around you, or string sounds together for a fun conversation!

Take Turns

Children learn from taking turns when you play, talk, or explore. After they go, take your turn. Then repeat: they go, you go, they go, you go!

Stretch

Children's brains grow strong when you help them stretch their learning further. Keep a moment going: ask your child a question that starts with what, when, where, how or why!

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Eye Gazing

Take a few minutes and look into your child's eyes. As they look back, smile and talk with them. Do what they do. If they blink, you blink. If they look left, you look left. Let them see your eyes too, and have fun keeping eye contact.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background™



When your child looks at you, and you respond, they're making new connections in their brain. Children learn best through loving relationships. When you look at each other and react to each other, the bond you have is growing stronger.

#44

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Blowfish

After you change your child, puff up your cheeks like a blowfish and then place their feet on your cheeks to push the air out till you go "pop!" What other sounds or faces can you make together—like sticking out your tongue? Can they copy some of these?

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background™



The back-and-forth game you're playing with your child when making faces and noises may seem silly, but it's not! They're learning to watch you and respond, which are important skills for communicating now and in the future.

#438

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Gab and Go

When you're getting ready to go out, talk about what you're doing and how your child might be feeling. Maybe you could say, "We're getting ready to go to the store. You're wriggling and have a smile on your face. You seem excited. Let's go and see what we find there." How do they respond? Follow their lead!

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background™



When you talk about their world, your child learns to connect what they're doing with words. When you talk about their feelings, it helps them understand their emotions and who they are. Following their lead helps them learn best.

#689

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Real Life Matchup

Match pictures to the real objects. After looking at a picture of an apple, for example, let your child touch and smell one. Describe what they're doing. "You're feeling the smooth red apple. Look, here it is in the picture!" Go back and forth and create a conversation.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background™



Babies take in information through their senses. When you let them make connections between real objects and pictures by using their senses, you help them understand the world around them. You're also introducing them to new words in a fun way through a back-and-forth conversation.

#875

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It's All New

Almost everything is new to your child in their first year. So describe what you see. "There goes the yellow school bus. Beep beep!" Let them see, hear, smell, and even touch things, if possible. Notice what they're interested in and have a back-and-forth chat. "You see the big tree? What else do you see?"

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background™



When you chat back-and-forth with your child, you help them begin to learn words. They're making connections between words and what they represent. This is an important language skill. By responding to their interests, you're prompting them to learn more.

#876

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Bouncing Baby

Does your baby love to bounce when you hold them on your lap? Bounce them up and down. Try going fast and slow as well as stopping and starting. How do they respond? Follow their lead and respond to their sounds and movements. Continue doing what they like best.

Suggested Age

0 - 12 months

Brainy Background™



Giving your baby experiences with different ways of moving helps them learn how their body works and will help develop self-control in the future. By following their lead—watching if they smile or turn away—you're helping them learn to communicate with you.

#993

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Dance Speeds

Dance with your child and ask, “Should we dance slow?” Pick them up and gently move as you hum a slow tune. “Should we dance fast?” Change your tune and dance faster. Watch how they use their arms or move to tell you which they like and respond to what they’re telling you.

Suggested Age

0 - 18 months

Brainy Background™



“Dance Speeds” gives you a chance to do something fun together in a loving way. It also allows you to respond to their movements to begin to help them connect words to their feelings and thoughts. It’s the way your child will learn to talk and communicate later.

#851

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Hand Talk

Show your child how to tell you they’re feeling hungry by touching their hand to their mouth or rubbing their belly. If you do this over and over and then give them food while saying the word “hungry,” they will pick up the symbol and learn to talk to you with their hands.

Suggested Age

0 - 18 months

Brainy Background™



Children can express themselves with their hands (for example, by pointing) long before they can use words. Helping them learn to use “Hand Talk,” will help them learn to communicate with words in the future.

#1026

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Just the Two of Us

In a calm moment together, take the time to look at your child’s face. Point to their nose and say, “your nose.” Then point to your nose and say, “my nose.” Respond to what they do. Do they point too? Do they smile or repeat your words or sounds? Try this with different parts of your face.

Suggested Age

0 - 2 years

Brainy Background™



Children are more likely to learn when they’re in a relaxed and supportive environment. As you help your child learn new words, you’re also introducing them to the ideas of same and different. The ability to make these kinds of connections is at the heart of learning.

#74

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Take Time to Watch

Take a minute today to watch your child. Pay attention to what they look at. How do they move? What do they sound like? What are they learning? Even when you're busy, responding to what they are learning deepens your connection with them.

Suggested Age

0 - 5 years

Brainy Background™



When you're in tune with your child, you'll be able to pay attention to their needs and interests. This deepens the trust between you. Your child needs this security to reach out into the world to explore, experiment, discover, and learn.

#30

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Shaking Sounds

Put your baby on their back or tummy and shake something that makes noise, like keys. Do they follow the sound with their eyes or head? What do they do when you shake fast or slow? If they do something, copy that action or sound and have a conversation without words.

Suggested Age

0 - 6 months

Brainy Background™



You're helping your baby learn to pay attention and to focus on what is happening. They're also learning about cause-and-effect: When you shake something, it makes a sound. Your positive words and actions encourage them to pay attention.

#986

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Reach High

Place your baby on their back and dangle anything safe, handy, and interesting just out of their reach. Encourage them to follow the objects with their eyes and head or to reach for them. Comment on how hard they try, "You almost touched the spoon!"

Suggested Age

0 - 6 months

Brainy Background™



In this activity, your baby is practicing controlling their body to look at or reach for a spoon. You're helping them build their brain and develop important skills like focus, self-control, and persistence.

#987

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Peekaboo Many Ways!

How many ways can you play “Peekaboo”? You can hide your eyes behind your hand, or use a hat, a napkin, or whatever is handy and then say “Peekaboo!” Help your child take a turn. What can they hide behind? Saying “I see you!” when one of you stops hiding should make you both laugh.

Suggested Age

6 months - 2 years

Brainy Background™



This back-and-forth game builds the connection between you and your child. As they watch your face and movements, your child is learning to trust that things (and people!) go away and come back. This is an important part of building relationships and becoming independent.

#79

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Peekaboo Day

Make today “Peekaboo Day.” See how many times and ways you can play “Peekaboo” with your child. Catch their eye around a corner, through your fingers, over a book, from under a chair.

Suggested Age

6 months - 2 years

Brainy Background™



Use the ideas from today to play “Peekaboo” often. Over time, you can take turns leading. It is a fun way to practice hellos and goodbyes and to learn an important idea: that people still exist even when out of sight.

#813

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Fitting Cups

Give your child safe containers of different sizes to play with. You can use measuring cups, bowls, or whatever is handy. Encourage them to try placing some of the containers inside others. Talk together about what they’re doing. “Two cups fit inside the big pot.” “Which others fit? Which ones don’t?” Ask questions to keep it going!

Suggested Age

12 months - 2 1/2 years

Brainy Background™



Your child learns ideas like numbers, shapes, and sizes by using them in simple ways like this. Talking about what your child is doing also helps them learn new words. Plus, it motivates them to keep exploring and learning!

#604

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Let's Ride!

As you ride in a bus, train, or car with your child, talk about the ride! You can say, "Here comes a bumpy road!" and talk about how it feels or sway back and forth as you say, "Here come the curves!" Talk about whether you're going fast or slow and how that feels. Let them try to describe the ride. Taking turns is fun!

Suggested Age **12 months - 2 1/2 years**

Brainy Background™



As you talk about your ride, you encourage your child to think flexibly and switch between different ideas. This promotes creative thinking. When they experience what words like bumpy mean, they're more likely to remember and use them later.

#752

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Multiplying Words

When your child starts to say words or make sounds that could be words, connect them to more words. If they say "nose," you can say, "There's your nose and there's mine." If they say "beep, beep," you can say, "The horns on the car go beep, beep." Later you can ask, "What sound do cars make?"

Suggested Age **12 months - 2 1/2 years**

Brainy Background™



Children learn to speak by hearing you connect the sounds they make with words. And they learn more words when you add your words to theirs. In this way their brains become more efficient and faster at processing sounds—the building blocks of speech.

#63

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What's That?

Does your child point and say "dat"? Ask them, "What do you want?" Have them lead you to what they're pointing at. When you find it, you can say, "That's a spoon!" or "That's the light switch!"

Suggested Age **12 months - 2 years**

Brainy Background™



From infancy on, children pay attention to the intentions of other people and want to tell you theirs. Pointing and saying "dat" is a first step toward learning how to communicate. You can help children learn this by finding what they want and naming it.

#62

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If You're Happy and You Know It

Sing "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands." (If you don't know the tune, make up your own.) At the end of the line, clap your hands and ask your child to clap their hands too. Next, try changing up actions: touch your nose, hop on one foot, or snap your fingers. When they are ready, ask them to pick what actions you do next!

Suggested Age

12 months - 5 years

Brainy Background™



When you ask your child to follow directions with this game, you're helping them to learn how to focus while having fun. This skill is very important in learning and in life.

#39

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Pointer Power

While you're with your child watch what catches their eye. Point to things you see and say what they are. "There's a black bird and he's flying!" or "The little girl is jumping." Watch where they're looking and say what it is.

Suggested Age

18 months - 2 years

Brainy Background™



When you describe what you see, or what your child sees, they're making connections between words and what they mean. Children who know words and what the words mean have a head start on learning.

#194

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Stop and Explore

When you're out, find a safe spot to let your child explore. Get down to see the world from their point of view. Touch the dirt or the pavement. Do you notice a small creature crawling by? Talk together about what you see and refer back to it later that day.

Suggested Age

18 months - 3 years

Brainy Background™



Talking back and forth about what your child sees, hears, and feels helps them connect their world to words. It also adds new words to their vocabulary. When you bring it up again later and think back, you help them get better at remembering.

#693

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Sort & Clean

Encourage your child to sort objects during cleanup. Talk about what you're doing: "All of the small lids go in the little bowl and the big lids go in the big bowl." Then mix it up and ask them to put the small objects in the big bowl. You can also sort by shape or color.

Suggested Age

18 months - 4 years

Brainy Background™



Being able to group things by size or color is an important skill. When you switch the rules of the game, you're helping them learn how to think flexibly, use self-control and not go on autopilot.

#408

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Smile and Wink

Smile at your child and then wink at them. Repeat it several times, then encourage them to try to copy you. The smile is easy, and their wink, which may be just crinkling their eyes, will make you smile again! Take turns. Count how many smiles and winks you share.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background™



Playing "Smile and Wink" may seem simple, but it takes a great deal of skill for your child to pay attention to what you're doing, remember the rules (first you smile, then wink), and copy what you're doing. These are important skills for school and life.

#54

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New to You

When they are playing, help your child do things they haven't done before. Try out the swings or the slide at a playground, or even feel the different textures on the ground. As long as they're safe, let them try new things, with a helping hand if they need it. How do they respond? Celebrate what they say and do!

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background™



Giving your child the chance to do safe things by themselves helps them feel confident and to learn to take on challenges.

#182

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Touch Talk

Ask your child to touch the clothes you're both wearing. Talk back and forth about how they feel. You could say, "We're both wearing shirts. Mine is smooth and yours is wrinkled." Take turns using as many words as you can to describe how your clothes feel.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background™



This type of conversation helps your child learn how to make connections. This is the idea that that one thing (a word) can stand for other things (what they touch). You're also helping them learn new words and their meanings.

#246

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Clothing Choices

Does your child want to choose their clothes? Help them by giving them two choices: "Do you want to wear your blue pants or your green pants?" When they choose, congratulate them by saying, "Great choice, I like those too."

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background™



Limiting choices in the early years sets your child up for success as a decision-maker, a skill they'll use their whole life. You're giving them the control they want and need without letting them get overwhelmed. This lets them focus on thinking.

#466

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One, Two Foods

Pick two food words, such as banana and apple, to make a word pattern two times. Repeat with your child, "Banana, apple, banana, apple." Have them pick two food words and make a pattern two times: "fork, spoon, fork, spoon." Talk about which word comes first and second.

Suggested Age

2 years - 3 years

Brainy Background™



When your child is choosing words, listening to words, and making patterns with you, they're creating and then using a rule. Understanding and applying rules in patterns helps them learn math concepts.

#576

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Rolie Polie

Grab a ball or anything that rolls and is soft and play a game of catch. Roll the ball back and forth and talk to your child about what is happening.

Suggested Age

2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Brain building can be just this simple. This game helps your child learn to pay attention and remember the rules. Chatting while you do it adds new words to their vocabulary too.

#3

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Handy Helpers

In the morning, take turns being “Handy Helpers.” Help each other find a pair of socks, pour milk, or zip up a jacket. Ask your child, “Will you please help me __?” Then invite them to ask you for help. It’s a nice way to start the day!

Suggested Age

2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Taking turns helping one another gives your child practice communicating and helps them explore the idea that people have different wants and needs.

#463

vroom.org

Animal Adventure

Turn your living room into an “Animal Adventure.” Make an animal noise. Can your child guess the name of the animal? Can they copy the sound back? Now it’s their turn to make a sound for you to guess. See how many times you can go back and forth: “Woofff! Hisssss! Rooarr!”

Suggested Age

2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Back-and-forth conversations, whether they’re with words, sounds or faces, help your child learn to pay attention, listen carefully, and follow the rules rather than go on autopilot.

#785

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Bathtime Sing-a-long

During bathtime sing your child's favorite songs. You can make up your own song about what's happening in the bath too. Are they pouring water from a cup, or pretending with a toy? Encourage them to sing their own song and respond to them.

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background™



When you ask your child to respond to the songs, you're helping them pay attention, while also making connections between what they already know and what you're asking. These connections help them organize information in new ways, which is very important to learning.

#368

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Simple Steps

Make cleanup more fun by starting small. Say something like, "You can pick up these three books first." After that, encourage your child to choose their next simple step. As they get the hang of it, increase the number of objects and add more steps.

Suggested Age

2 years - 4 years

Brainy Background™



By helping your child break tasks down into steps, you encourage them to practice using strategies to achieve goals. They can use these strategies to take on challenges in the future.

#423

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Mealtime Math

Are you eating crackers or other food like that? Ask your child how many they want. Give them that amount and say, "Eat one. How many are left?" Count together, encouraging them to count out loud. Then you take a turn. Continue this game until the crackers are all gone.

Suggested Age

2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



In "Mealtime Math," your child is thinking in symbols—that the numeral 3 represents three of something. This game helps them begin to understand how to add and subtract in everyday life. Games like this help build a strong foundation for learning math later on.

#602

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More or Less?

Give your child two plastic tubs or old boxes and ask them to choose safe things like toys or spoons to put inside. Ask questions about more and less, empty and full. You can say, "I wonder which box has more spoons? How can we find out?" See what ideas they come up with!

Suggested Age

2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



As they work with objects and containers, your child is practicing problem solving while exploring math and science ideas like space, shape, number, and size. They're also using focus and self-control to grasp the items, put them inside, and think about what they see.

#893

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How Many Ways?

Choose an object in your home, like a used paper towel roll, and challenge your child to see how many different ways they can use it. It can be a telescope, a tunnel for something small, or a musical instrument like a horn. What other items can they find around the house to explore? Take turns!

Suggested Age

2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Thinking of lots of new ways to use an object challenges your child's imagination. This calls on flexible and creative thinking, important skills in life and in school.

#927

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Child Author

Start telling a story with your child: "Once upon a time there was a beautiful person who lived in a castle." Ask them, "What do you think this person did today?" They might say, "She played!" You continue, "What did she play with?" Keep the story going based on their responses.

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Telling ongoing stories with children can become a loving tradition that they will remember and cherish all of their lives. It's skill building too. This is a great way to use imagination and build their memory and vocabulary.

#59

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20 Questions

When you're reading or telling a story to your child at bedtime, ask them questions about the story. Pause the story and ask: "What do you think will happen next? How do you think the character feels? What would you do if that happened to you?"

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Asking questions (what, where, when, who, why) helps your child learn to focus and pay attention to the details of the story and use critical thinking skills. These questions also build their memory.

#327

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Doing the Dishes

When you have a sink full of dishes, turn the chore into something fun. As you scrub, ask your child to talk about the shapes of each dish. "What else is round like this bowl?" Have a conversation around their response. Remember, there are no wrong answers!

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Every back and forth conversation you have builds your child's brain. Try and build on what they're saying, using their response to inspire the next question. This helps grow their communication skills.

#388

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Size Search

Invite your child to hunt for objects of different sizes. How many small things can they find? What about big things? Make it harder and ask them to find things that are medium-sized or huge. Talk about what they see and what is the same and different.

Suggested Age

2 1/2 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



When you and your child take turns and talk about ideas like big and small and same and different, you're helping to develop their vocabulary. They're also beginning to understand math and science ideas that are important now and in the future.

#136

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Reporting Live

Waiting is a part of life. Do you wait in line at the store, at a doctor's office, or for a ride? While you're waiting, pretend you're a newscaster. Using your pretend microphone, ask your child questions: "What do you see? Who else is here? What do you think is going to happen next?"

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Giving your child a chance to tell the news provides them a chance to look at what is happening around them and put it into words. They're learning to be an effective communicator. There's nothing like a pretend microphone to get someone talking!

#216

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Cart Companion

When you're grocery shopping with your child, hand them some of the items before you put them into the cart. As they check each out, tell them its name and talk about what you plan to use it for. Make sure it's a conversation, where they're adding their ideas!

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



Holding an object in front of your child as you say its name helps them learn new vocabulary. And every time you have a back and forth conversation that extends their knowledge, you're building a brain!

#262

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Once Upon a Time

On a long ride, make up funny stories with your child. You start it off with something like, "Once upon a time there was a teeny, tiny wiggly ant..." Then let them tell you what happens next. Take turns adding to the story and see how far their imagination can go.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



As you go back and forth inventing a story, the interesting, new, and fun words you use invite your child to add to their growing vocabulary. This is an important part of communicating with others.

#642

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Outside Adventures

Going out? Grab a container and see what you and your child find that's safe to pick up. Do you see some rocks to bring home and decorate? Do you see some leaves to glue into a collage? Do you see a bug to watch before you let it go? Continue watching and talking about what you see.

Suggested Age

3 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



"Outside Adventures" helps your child build many learning skills—focusing, communicating about what they're seeing and doing, and thinking critically about what they're finding.

#697

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Today's Color

Any day can start off with a little color. Ask your child to pick today's color, like yellow, red, or blue. When you're getting them dressed, take turns picking something that's the same color. See if you both can find more things the same color during breakfast.

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



A conversation about color builds on something your child knows. Focusing on details, like colors, is a skill they can use for other kinds of learning and will help them learn to read.

#462

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Today's To-Do

Talk back and forth with your child about the plans for the day. Maybe you can chat about what you're having for breakfast. Where are they going for the day? What might you do together? Or what are you both excited to do today?

Suggested Age

4 years - 5 years

Brainy Background™



There is no better way to learn how to plan than practicing. Giving your child a chance to think about the day ahead helps them use what they already know in new and flexible ways.

#23

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