



Tip Sheet

Cook Up Some Learning Fun!

Your kitchen has everything you need to teach your young child some early reading, math and science skills. You don't have to buy expensive educational toys— just open up your pantry and involve your child.

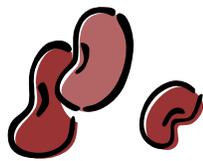
Here are some simple things you can do together:

Be a Bean Counter

Use an empty egg carton or some mini-muffin cups and some dried beans. Write the numbers 1 to 12 in each space in the egg carton or muffin cups. Help your child to count out the correct number of beans for each space. Allow your child to place the beans in the carton one by one. Add another skill to this task by asking your child to pick up the beans with small tongs or a clothespin.

What your child is learning while "Bean Counting":

- Your child is learning to count the number of beans that match the numbers in the egg carton.
- As your child squeezes the tongs or clothespin, she is strengthening her finger muscles— **very** important for writing skills.



Package Reading

Look at the food packages in your pantry together. Ask your child, "Can you find the letters of your mom or dad's name? What other letters can you find?" Now, write the letters on paper together. **It's OK to help!**



What your child is learning while "Package Reading":

- Your child is learning that the letters of his or her name occur in many different places. Look for them also when you are out and about— in the car, on the bus, walking to school. Letters and words are everywhere!

Don't Throw Away Those Supermarket Ads!

Help your child to cut out pictures from shopping advertisements and glue them on to paper to create a shopping list with pictures. Write the names of the items you are shopping for next to the pictures:



bread



cookies



bananas



apples

What your child is learning as she plays with store advertisements:

- Cutting strengthens hand and finger muscles, important for learning to write.
- When they do things like make lists and follow recipes, children learn that letters and words have meaning in real-life situations.

Wear Your Breakfast Around Your Neck

String cereal O's to make a necklace that your child can eat! Simple as that! You can also string macaroni or candies. Try making patterns with colored cereal O's. Count the O's as you string them.

What your child is learning as he makes a cereal necklace:



- Your child is learning fine motor control skills as he threads the cereal. This is important for learning to write. He is also learning about sequencing and counting— important math skills.

Listen to Your Food¹

Fill clear plastic containers with a variety of dry foods, such as popcorn, rice, beans, or lentils. Let your child shake the containers and listen to the sounds. After you have shown the containers to your child, ask her to cover her eyes and guess what is in the containers as you shake them one by one.

What your child is learning as she listens to food sounds:

- As they learn to read, children must learn to tell the difference between letter sounds that are slightly different. This activity helps children to listen for small differences in similar sounds. And it's a fun guessing game!

¹ This activity adapted from: *CIRCLE Preschool Early Language and Literacy Teachers Manual*, 2008, McKinney, TX: Brewer Educational Resources www.brewereducationalresources.com

Read, Read, Read and Read Some More!

Choose books from the library about food. See the list at the end of this tip sheet for ideas for great books for preschoolers. Ask the librarian for help finding them. Read the books together. Ask open-ended questions (questions that do not have a simple yes or no answer), such as, "What do you think will happen next? Why does the mouse want a cookie?" Ask your child if he or she likes the book. Ask why.

What your child is learning as you read together:

- When you ask "what, why, and how" questions, your child is learning to solve problems, to think of solutions, and to predict. These are all very important reading and thinking skills.



Exciting Books about Food— Read Them in the Kitchen (or in Bed)

Brown, M. (1995) D.W., *The Picky Eater*. Little, Brown.

Carle, E. (1994) *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Philomel.

Casanova, S. (1997) *Mama Provi and the Pot of Rice*. Antheneum.

Falwell, C. (1993) *Feast for 10*. Clarion Books.

Friedman, I. (1984) *How My Parents Learned to Eat*. Houghton Mifflin.

Hill, E. (1994). *Spot Bakes a Cake*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Hoban, R. (1993) *Bread and Jam for Frances*. Harper Collins.

Jackson, A. (1997) *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Pie*. Dutton.

Jaffe, N. (1998) *The Way Meat Loves Salt*. Holt.

Kimmel, E. (1994) *Anansi and the Talking Melon*. Holiday House.

MacDonald, M. (1998) *Pickin' Peas*. Harper Collins.

Numeroff, L. (1985) *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. Harper Row.

Palatini, M. (1995) *Piggie Pie*. Clarion.

Polacco, P. (1990) *Thunder Cake*. Philomel.

Riley, L. (1997) *Mouse Mess*. Blue Sky Press.

Sendak, M. (1990) *Chicken Soup with Rice*. Harper Collins

Sturges, P. (1999) *The Little Red Hen (Makes a Pizza)*. Dutton.