Early Learning Parents' Pages

Explore, Engage & Learn!

As the weather begins to get warmer, your family is more likely to enjoy time outdoors. Whether you are taking a vacation, enjoying your local park or staying at home, you can plan engaging activities with your child.

Children learn through use of their imagination, senses and play when interacting with the world around them. With a little inspiration, you can create fun activities at home or while traveling that can expand your child's imagination and capacity to learn.

Here are a few activities you can do at home:
- Read a book together outside. Get a library card and keep books on hand on topics your child likes.
- Explore in your yard and look for various shapes and colors of leaves or flowers.
- Provide several types of large spoons and bowls for your toddler or preschooler to make different sounds or tap to your favorite music.
- Play a game your child enjoys like "I Spy" or "Hopscotch."
- Give your child sidewalk chalk to draw shapes and write numbers in a safe space outside.
- If you travel, include your child in the planning to get them excited about the quality time that you will share.

Your child's learning and development begin at home. Children are natural investigators, so provide a wide array of experiences to enhance their development and love of learning.

The Division of Early Learning also encourages you to use the [Prekindergarten Family Guide](#) as a resource to help prepare your child for kindergarten and a successful future as they continue to explore, learn and grow.

Let the Outdoors Unleash Your Child's Inner Explorer

Children are naturally inquisitive—they love to explore and discover new things around them. [Florida state parks](#) provide unique and often free opportunities for children to see and learn about animals, natural resources and plants.

Your child's level of understanding will deepen over time with such enriched experiences.
- Infants begin to use their senses and explore when they gain mobility and begin to crawl. Take a large blanket to the park for your baby to crawl on and play with infant toys or shake rattles.

- Toddlers engage in exploration as their physical and motor capacities increase. One of the eight areas of development, or domains, outlined in the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)](#), is scientific inquiry. Scientific inquiry addresses children exploring the world around them. Outdoor activities such as planting flowers and watching butterflies fly are fun for children at this age.

Parks are a wonderful way for children to interact with nature. Plan your visit and view the park guide. Talk with your child about the plants, trees, insects and birds you encounter walking on the trail. Practice math concepts by counting how many birds or insects your child notices during the adventure.

As your child begins to question the sights around them, talk about what they have learned or want to know more about. Visit your local library to check out books about topics of interest for your child.

Hands-on experiences provide children with learning opportunities that create new brain connections. Start a new family tradition and create lasting memories by visiting Florida's parks and taking advantage of all that they offer.

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Water Safety Tips

Florida has many pools, rivers, springs, lakes and beaches, allowing families to enjoy a wide variety of activities such as swimming, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and tubing.

That makes it vital for parents to learn about water safety. Consider signing up your child for swimming lessons and talk to them about how to stay safe in and around water. Most importantly, always supervise children when they are close to a pool, bathtub or any body of water.

Here are a few water safety tips:

- Never leave your child unattended near or in a small or large body of water.
- Always designate an adult to watch children playing in pools or other swimming areas.
- Check with your local parks and recreation division for age-appropriate swimming lessons.
- Comply with safety precautions posted on gates located outside of pools.
- Keep pool drains and your pool covered when not in use.
- Sign up for a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course and learn this lifesaving technique.

Be prepared and be safe.

For additional information on water safety, visit the website [Water Safety for Kids | Florida DCF](#).

One of the most important decisions you will ever make as a parent is choosing quality care for your child. The Gold Seal Quality Care designation is one way to identify quality in a child care program.

The Gold Seal Quality Care Program recognizes child care facilities and family child care homes that have gone above and beyond the required minimum licensing standards. These providers are accredited by Gold Seal Quality Care accrediting associations who, in turn, have had their standards reviewed by the Division of Early Learning prior to their approval as Gold Seal Quality Care Accrediting Associations.

Child care providers that are accredited by Gold Seal Quality Care accrediting associations and have good health and safety inspection histories may obtain a Gold Seal Quality Care designation. The designation offers several perks for maintaining a high level of quality.

To learn more about choosing quality child care, or if you would like to view a list of child care programs in your area that have a Gold Seal Quality Care designation, contact your local [Early Learning Coalition](#).

COMMISSIONER'S
BOOK OF THE MONTH

If you are looking to add to your home or school library, check out Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr.'s Commissioner's Book of the Month. The monthly reading challenge promotes literacy and reading engagement while helping children succeed academically and in life. Here are additional resources to support early literacy:

- [New Worlds Reading Initiative](#)
- [Just Read, Families!](#)

Manny Diaz, Jr.
Commissioner of Education

DIVISION OF Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

Cari Miller
Chancellor of Early Learning