

A Workbook for Parents of Infants and Toddlers

# Windows to Wide-Open Learning



My Child's  
Interests + Everyday  
Activities = Learning  
FUN!

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Opportunity



## WELCOME

**M**atching your young child's special interests with day-to-day activities and experiences that help her learn is an outstanding way to promote all areas of growth and development.

**T**his workbook gives moms and dads a quick and easy way to pinpoint their young child's special interests. By jotting down responses to a series of simple questions, and identifying activities that could give your child chances to use or express his interests, you can develop a plan for letting your child's interests lead the way into a world of exciting opportunities for learning. When you respond to and build on your young child's interests, the results are powerful learning **and** plenty of **FUN!**

**Y**ou can also use Windows of Opportunity's family-friendly handouts for helping your young child enjoy a variety of other experiences of interest to her at home and in your community. Once you've identified your child's interests, you'll be able to choose the handouts that are **just right** for your young learner!

**W**e invite you to spend a few minutes completing the workbook, using it to see how matching your child's special interests and your family's day-to-day activities creates **Windows of Opportunity** for learning! Enjoy the benefits of this approach to early childhood learning for yourself and your child. Discover the wide-open possibilities!



Adapted from *Spotting My Child's Very Special Interests: A Workbook for Parents* by Carl J. Dunst, Kaki Roberts, and Donna Snyder (Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press, 2004) and from *Promoting Young Children's Participation in Interest-Based Everyday Learning Activities* by Jennifer Swanson, Melinda R. Raab, Nicole Roper, and Carl J. Dunst (Morganton, NC: CASEtools, 2006, [http://www.fippcase.org/casetools/casetools\\_vol2\\_no5.pdf](http://www.fippcase.org/casetools/casetools_vol2_no5.pdf)).

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My child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

## Special Interests

What gets my child excited?

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When given a choice, the kinds of activities my child chooses or prefers are:

#1 \_\_\_\_\_

#2 \_\_\_\_\_

#3 \_\_\_\_\_

What makes my child laugh or smile?

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Actions my child enjoys doing (for example, jumping):

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People my child prefers to be with:

#1 \_\_\_\_\_ #2 \_\_\_\_\_ #3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Young Children's Everyday Activities

The following is a list of activities many children experience as part of day-to-day life. Keeping in mind your child's interests from the previous page, draw a circle around the number of each activity that you think would give your child chances to do things he/she likes. Add activities not included here that are important to your family and would be interesting to your child. Don't forget about activities that young children can learn from by "tagging along" with an older sibling or adult.

1. Attending a playgroup
2. Attending church/synagogue
3. Attending music/movement class
4. Attending neighborhood gatherings
5. Attending Sunday school/kid's church
6. Being read to
7. Being sprayed by a garden hose
8. Brushing teeth
9. Collecting leaves or rocks
10. Creating an art project/craft
11. Cuddling/rocking with adult
12. Cutting/tearing pictures (e.g., magazines)
13. Dancing with mom or dad
14. Diaper changing
15. Doing errands with mom or dad
16. Doing laundry with mom or dad
17. Dressing/undressing

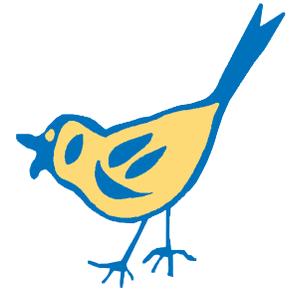
18. Eating meals or snacks
19. Eating out
20. Feeding ducks at the pond
21. Finger painting
22. Gardening/planting flowers
23. Getting out of bed/waking up
24. Getting ready for bed/nap time
25. Going on a camping trip
26. Going on a play date
27. Going fishing with mom or dad
28. Going grocery shopping with mom or dad
29. Going on a bike ride
30. Going on a hike
31. Going on a stroller ride
32. Going on a neighborhood walk
33. Going on nature walks
34. Going to a movie
35. Going to siblings' ball games/sports events
36. Going to the library
37. Having picnics
38. Helping with household chores
39. Listening to bedtime stories
40. Listening to music
41. Listening to storytellers/story times
42. Listening to/saying nursery rhymes
43. Looking at and talking about photographs
44. Looking at/reading cereal boxes/labels
45. Looking in mirrors
46. Participating in family talks
47. Picking up siblings from school/childcare
48. Picking up toys
49. Playing at an indoor playland
50. Playing chase/running
51. Playing dress-up
52. Playing finger games
53. Playing hide-n-seek
54. Playing house
55. Playing in a stream/creek/river
56. Playing in a sprinkler
57. Playing in a wading pool
58. Playing in dirt/mud/sand
59. Playing in kitchen cupboards
60. Playing lap games (e.g., peek-a-boo, so big)
61. Playing musical instruments
62. Playing on park/playground equipment
63. Playing on the computer/typewriter
64. Playing turn-taking vocal games
65. Playing with a garden hose
66. Playing with balls/balloons
67. Playing with bubbles
68. Playing with busy boxes/baby gyms
69. Playing with magnetic letters/shapes
70. Playing with musical toys
71. Playing with other children
72. Playing with/taking care of pets
73. Playing with playhouse toys
74. Playing with push/pull toys
75. Playing with puppets, dolls, etc.
76. Playing with responsive toys (e.g., mobile, roly poly)
77. Playing with shape sorters/puzzles
78. Playing with talking toys (e.g., See 'n Say<sup>®</sup>)
79. Playing with teething toys
80. Playing with trucks/cars/boats
81. Playing with water toys
82. Praying/saying Grace
83. Preparing meals or snacks
84. Renting/returning videos
85. Riding in a boat
86. Riding in wagon/riding toys

- 87. Rough housing/playing tickle games
- 88. Saying hellos/good-byes
- 89. Shopping at the mall/department stores
- 90. Singing
- 91. Swimming/floating at the pool
- 92. Taking a bath
- 93. Taking a car, bus, train ride, etc.
- 94. Toileting/going to the bathroom
- 95. Using crayons, markers, etc.
- 96. Using play dough, silly putty, etc.

- 97. Visiting animals (e.g., pet store/zoo)
- 98. Visiting friends, relatives, or neighbors
- 99. Washing hands/face
- 100. Watching mom or dad write notes/lists
- 101. Watching TV/videos
- 102. Watering plants/grass/flowers
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

The best activities are ones that provide lots of opportunities for a child to do the things he/she is interested in doing and learn new things. To help you choose activities that are the best opportunities for your child to learn, go back through the list and **circle the activities** that do or could happen at least three times a week for your child and which best match your child’s interests.

## Planning To Match Interests with Activities



Now that I’ve identified many of my child’s special interests and activities he/she would like to do, I’m ready to create a plan so I can provide my child lots of opportunities to use his/her interests with fun activities to strengthen learning and development.

Take a look at the **Expanding My Child’s Learning Opportunities** chart on the following pages. One row is filled in to show you how parents whose young child loves to be a “helper” might plan to make the most of one everyday activity—a trip to the laundromat. Use the chart to jot down your own plans and ideas for maximizing your child’s learning and fun during everyday activities that match your child’s very special interests!

## Expanding My Child's Learning Opportunities

Date	Activities that match my child's interests	Place(s)	What my child will get to do	What I can do to help my child learn
June 3	Helping Mommy and Daddy wash the family laundry	Corner Laundromat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scoop and pour soap powder</li> <li>• Sort coins</li> <li>• Put coins in machine slot</li> <li>• Watch clothes spin</li> <li>• Talk about bubbles</li> <li>• Pull warm clothes from the dryers</li> <li>• Help pack clean clothes in baskets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring a scoop and measuring cup. Let him stand on a chair at the work table to easily reach and scoop the soap powder. Mark a boldfill mark on the cup to show where to stop filling.</li> <li>• Show him how to hold quarters and let him push them into coin slots.</li> <li>• Hear and say word pairs like wet/dry, clean/dirty: "This shirt was wet; now it's dry!"</li> <li>• Make a game of finding matching socks.</li> <li>• Sing "This is the way we wash our clothes" on the way home in the car.</li> </ul>

## More Learning Opportunities

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