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# Identifying Interest-Based Everyday Activities for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

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The approach to early communication and language intervention developed at the *Center on Everyday Child Language Learning* uses children's interests as the building blocks for infant, toddler, and preschooler learning opportunities. Interests include the things children like and prefer to do (personal interests) and the people, objects, and events that get children to interact with the world around them (situational interests). Findings from many different studies show that child participation in interest-based everyday activities is associated with better communication and language development (Dunst, Jones, Johnson, Raab, & Hamby, 2011; Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2012; Raab, Dunst, & Hamby, 2013).

This *Center on Everyday Language Learning Tool* includes a set of exercises a parent or practitioner can use to hone their skills for recognizing and identifying children's interests and identifying the everyday activities that provide young children opportunities to participate in interest-based activities and learn communication and language skills. There are three exercises: one for an infant, one for a toddler, and one for a preschooler.

## Meet the Stars

Our superstars are Vinnie, Katie, and Rory. Vinnie is a 3-month-old who is enthralled with the world around him, his parents, sights and sounds, and being out-and-about. Katie is a 2-year-old who likes spending time with her mom and grandmom, helping in the garden, riding her bike, and playing with just about anything she can

get her hands on. Rory is a 4-year-old who would live outdoors if he could. He likes running and climbing, visiting and playing with friends, and digging in the dirt. All three children have quite different interests. Yet, each of our superstar's interests provides them lots of opportunities to learn.

## Identifying Interest-Based Activities

Each of the three exercises includes the same information: (1) background information on each child, (2) a list of things each child likes to do, (3) photographs of each child involved in a host of different everyday activities, and (4) a practice exercise for matching activities and interests. Each practice exercise includes (a) a list of each child's interests, (b) space for recording those activities that would provide the children interest-based learning opportunities, and (c) space for recording the reason(s) a particular activity would likely be interest-based.

## Implications for Practice

An interest-based approach to child learning shifts the focus of assessment and intervention from *what a child cannot do* to *what a child can do* (likes to do, prefers to do, enjoys doing, etc.). The photographs for each of the children include examples of the children's interests and behavioral strengths. The things the children can do and the activities that match the children's interests are what then become the learning opportunities for promoting communication and language skills as well as

other abilities (motor, thinking, social, etc.).

Identifying children's interests and using that information to provide infants, toddlers, and preschoolers interest-based learning opportunities will more likely motivate children to try to communicate about what they are doing and what they want you to do. Young children learn to talk and become better at using language to communicate when they are doing things they like to do and when they are involved in activities they enjoy.

## References

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- Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., & Hamby, D. W. (2012). Effect of interest-based interventions on the social-communicative behavior of young children with autism spectrum disorders. *CELLreviews*, 5(6), 1-10. Available at [http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/cellreviews/cellreviews\\_v5\\_n6.pdf](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/cellreviews/cellreviews_v5_n6.pdf).
- Raab, M., Dunst, C. J., & Hamby, D. W. (2013). Relationship between young children's interests and early language learning. *Everyday Child Language Learning Reports*, (5), 1-14. Available at: [http://www.cecll.org/download/ECLLReport\\_5\\_Interests.pdf](http://www.cecll.org/download/ECLLReport_5_Interests.pdf).

## Appendix

Identifying Interest-Based Everyday Infant Language Learning Opportunities

Identifying Interest-Based Everyday Toddler Language Learning Opportunities

Identifying Interest-Based Everyday Preschooler Language Learning Opportunities

# Identifying Interest-Based Everyday Infant Language Learning Opportunities

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## INTRODUCTION

Hello! My name is Vinnie and I am 3 months old. My mom and dad would like me to learn some new ways to interact and communicate with them and with other people. Help them choose activities that would give me the best chances to learn more communication skills.



*Vinnie*

Here's how you can help me: Just like other babies, I learn best when I can do everyday activities that match and build on the things I already like to do. So I'll help you get to know more about my interests, and the things I do every day with my family and in the community. Then you can help my parents find the best opportunities for me to learn to communicate better,

## LET'S GET STARTED!

I already know what I like to do and what things get my attention. Just take a look at some of my interests!

*What makes me smile and laugh:*  
Bouncing/physical activities  
Lap games

*What gets and keeps my attention:*  
Things that make noises/squeak  
Hearing Mommy's voice

*What I work hard at doing:*  
Sucking/mouthing things

## TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT I DO EVERY DAY

My mom and dad take lots of photos of the everyday activities we do in our family and when we are out and about. Look inside to check out the photos my mom and dad have taken. Can you help them identify which activities give me chances to do the things I like to do?

Raab, M., Dunst, C. J., & Roberts, K. (2013). Identifying interest-based everyday infant language learning opportunities. In C. J. Dunst & M. Raab (2013), Identifying interest-based everyday activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. *Everyday Child Language Learning Tools*, 2013, Number 2.





## MATCHING ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

Thinking about the activities that match my interests, can you help my mom and dad choose the best activities that will give me lots of opportunities for learning to communicate better? I'll have lots of chances to learn when the activities match my interests, give me many opportunities to try communicating different things, and happen or could happen often.

Here's a reminder of what my interests are:	Which activities do you think I should do?	Why should mom and dad choose those activities?
Bouncing/Physical activity		
Lap games		
Being outside		
Being held/snuggling		
Things that make noise or squeak		
Hearing Mommy's voice		
Making sounds with my voice		
Looking at what's happening around me		
Sucking/mouthing things		

Wow! Did you notice how many different activities could have good language learning opportunities for me?

Now that you've helped my mom and dad choose activities that match my interests and would be good places for me to learn new ways of communicating, how could they make sure I have lots of chances to do these activities?

We do a lot of different activities, but can you help my mom and dad think of any new activities (that aren't in these photos) we could do in our family that would match my interests and give me chances to learn to interact and communicate better? Any new community activities?

Thanks for helping my mom and dad find the best activities for me to have fun and learn new ways to communicate! This works with other kids, too! Now it's your turn to choose (or help other parents choose) activities full of interest-based everyday language learning opportunities for your (their) child!

# Identifying Interest-Based Everyday Toddler Language Learning Opportunities

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## INTRODUCTION



*Katie*

Hello! My name is Katie and I am 2 years old. My mom and dad would like me to learn some new ways to interact and communicate with them and with other people. Help them choose activities that would give me the best chances to get better at communicating and interacting.

Here's how you can help me: Just like other toddlers, I learn best when I can do everyday activities that match and build on the things I already like to do. So I'll help you get to know more about my interests, and the things I do every day with my family and in the community. Then you can help my parents find the best opportunities for learning communication and language skills,

## LET'S GET STARTED!

I already know what I like to do and what things get my attention. Just take a look at some of my interests!

*What makes me smile and laugh:*

Playing with bubbles  
Playing with sister

*What gets and keeps my attention:*

Pets and animals  
Doing things with Grandma

*What I work hard at doing:*

Riding bike

## TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT I DO EVERY DAY

My mom and dad take lots of photos of the everyday activities we do in our family and when we are out and about. Look inside to check out the photos my mom and dad have taken. Can you help them identify which activities give me chances to do the things I like to do?

Raab, M., Dunst, C. J., & Roberts, K. (2013). Identifying interest-based everyday toddler language learning opportunities. In C. J. Dunst & M. Raab (2013), Identifying interest-based everyday activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. *Everyday Child Language Learning Tools*, 2013, Number 2.







## MATCHING ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

Thinking about the activities that match my interests, can you help my mom and dad choose the best activities that will give me plenty of opportunities for learning to communicate better? I'll have lots of chances to learn when the activities match my interests, give me opportunities to try communicating in different ways, and happen or could happen often.

Here's a reminder of what my interests are:	Which activities do you think I should do?	Why should mom and dad choose those activities?
Playing with bubbles	_____	_____
Playing with sister	_____	_____
Pets and animals	_____	_____
Doing things with Grandma	_____	_____
Riding bike	_____	_____
Jumping	_____	_____
Being outside (nature)	_____	_____
Spending time with Mom	_____	_____

Wow! Did you notice how many different activities could have good language learning opportunities for me?

Now that you've helped my mom and dad choose activities that match my interests and would be good places for me to learn new ways of communicating, how could they make sure I have lots of chances to do these activities?

We do a lot of different activities, but can you help my mom and dad think of any new activities (that aren't in these photos) we could do in our family that would match my interests and give me chances to learn to interact and communicate better? Any new community activities?

Thanks for helping my mom and dad find the best activities for me to have fun and learn new communication and language skills! This works with other kids, too! Now it's your turn to choose (or help other parents choose) activities full of interest-based language learning opportunities for your (their) child!

# Identifying Interest-Based Everyday Preschooler Language Learning Opportunities

Melinda Raab Carl. J. Dunst Kaki Roberts

## INTRODUCTION



Rory

Hello! My name is Rory and I am almost 4 years old. My mom and dad would like me to learn some new ways to interact and communicate with them and with other people. Help them choose activities that would give me the best chances to get better at communicating and interacting.

Here's how you can help me: Just like other preschoolers, I learn best when I can do everyday activities that match and build on the things I already like to do. So I'll help you get to know more about my interests, and the things I do every day with my family and in the community. Then you can help my parents find the best opportunities for me to learn communication and language skills,

## LET'S GET STARTED!

I already know what I like to do and what things get my attention. Just take a look at some of my interests!

*What makes me smile and laugh:*

Playing with my sister and other kids

*What gets and keeps my attention:*

Animals

Telling and hearing stories

*What I work hard at doing:*

Making things

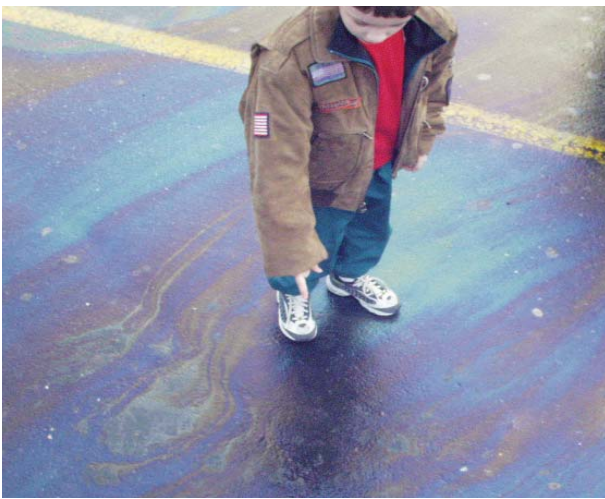
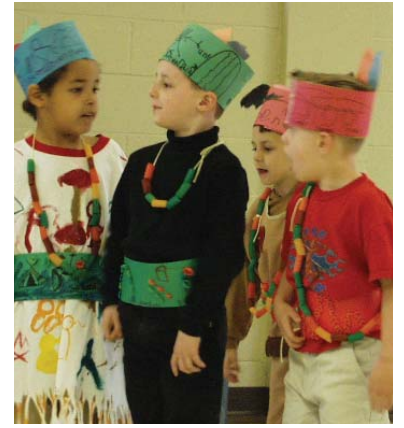
Using tools

## TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT I DO EVERY DAY

My mom and dad take lots of photos of the everyday activities we do in our family and when we are out and about. Look inside to check out the photos my mom and dad have taken. Can you help them identify which activities give me chances to do the things I like to do?

Raab, M., Dunst, C. J., & Roberts, K. (2013). Identifying interest-based everyday preschooler language learning opportunities. In C. J. Dunst & M. Raab (2013), Identifying interest-based everyday activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. *Everyday Child Language Learning Tools*, 2013, Number 2.





## MATCHING ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

Thinking about the activities that match my interests, can you help my mom and dad choose the best activities that will give me lots of opportunities for learning to communicate better? I'll have lots of chances to learn when the activities match my interests, give me many opportunities to try communicating in different ways, and happen or could happen often.

Here's a reminder of what my interests are:	Which activities do you think I should do?	Why should mom and dad choose those activities?
Playing with my sister and with other kids		
Animals		
Telling and hearing stories		
Making things		
Using tools		
Running		
Climbing		
Physical play		
Dinosaurs!		
Pretending		

Wow! Did you notice how many different activities could have good language learning opportunities for me?

Now that you've helped my mom and dad choose activities that match my interests and would be good places for me to learn new ways of communicating, how could they make sure I have lots of chances to do these activities?

We do a lot of different activities, but can you help my mom and dad think of any new activities (that aren't in these photos) we could do in our family that would match my interests and give me chances to learn to interact and communicate better? Any new community activities?

Thanks for helping my mom and dad find the best activities for me to have fun and learn new things! This works with other kids, too! Now it's your turn to choose (or help other parents choose) activities full of interest-based everyday language learning opportunities for your (their) child!