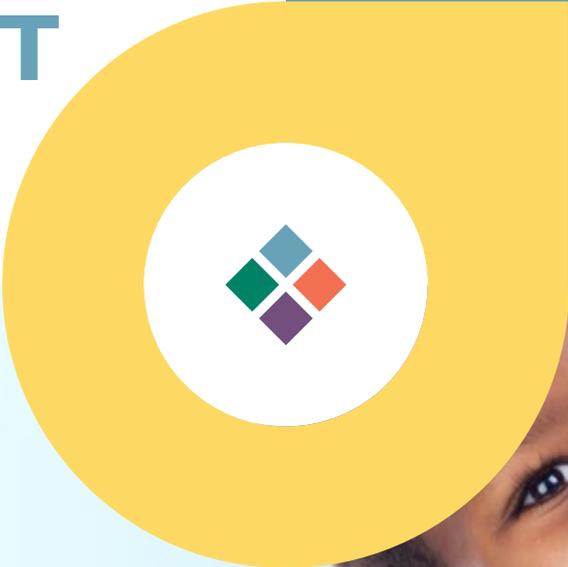


# THE DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT

A guide to supporting early childhood development and learning for Wyoming families and communities



# HELLO WYOMING FAMILIES!

Kids are growing and learning, all day every day. As they learn and grow, as they interact with the world around them and begin to understand how they fit into their world, kids experience physical, cognitive, and social-emotional milestones. These milestones fall into different domains of human development, each of which describes an area of growth and learning.

## THE DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT:



### COMMUNICATION

Language & Literacy



### SENSE OF SELF & RELATIONSHIPS

Social & Emotional Health



### CURIOUS MINDS

Cognition, Knowledge,  
Approaches to Learning



### STRONG & HEALTHY BODIES

Physical Development,  
Health, Motor Skills

**Children pass through the stages of development that exist within these domains at different rates, and they may reach developmental milestones at different ages than their peers.**

**This is OK! Development is an individual progression.**

The purpose of this guide is to help you recognize the stages of growth your kids are experiencing, and to show you how you can experience it with them through play, conversation, getting outside, and more, including activities and information that support every Domain of Development. Because when you're engaged in your kids' development, you can positively influence how they learn and grow. Plus it's a whole lot of fun!

This guide to the Domains of Development was produced in collaboration between:



## Domains of Development:

# COMMUNICATION

Communication is the ability and desire to connect with others by exchanging ideas and feelings, both verbally and non-verbally. The Communication Domain of Development includes literacy, different expressions of language, and understanding the meaning of feelings and ideas expressed by others.



In young children, developing the ability to communicate includes:

1

### Receptive and Expressive Language

- Speech, sounds, and words
- Gestures and facial expressions
- Body language
- Listening and understanding

2

### Literacy

- Symbol and alphabet awareness
- Reading abilities
- Writing abilities
- Listening and understanding



## A Communication Activity Great for all ages

For young kids, art and early writing skills are one in the same. Beginning as a sensory activity, when your child discovers the link between the crayon in their hand and the mark they made on a page, a whole world of cause-and-effect and critical thinking skills opens up!

### You can support the development of your kids' art and writing skills by:

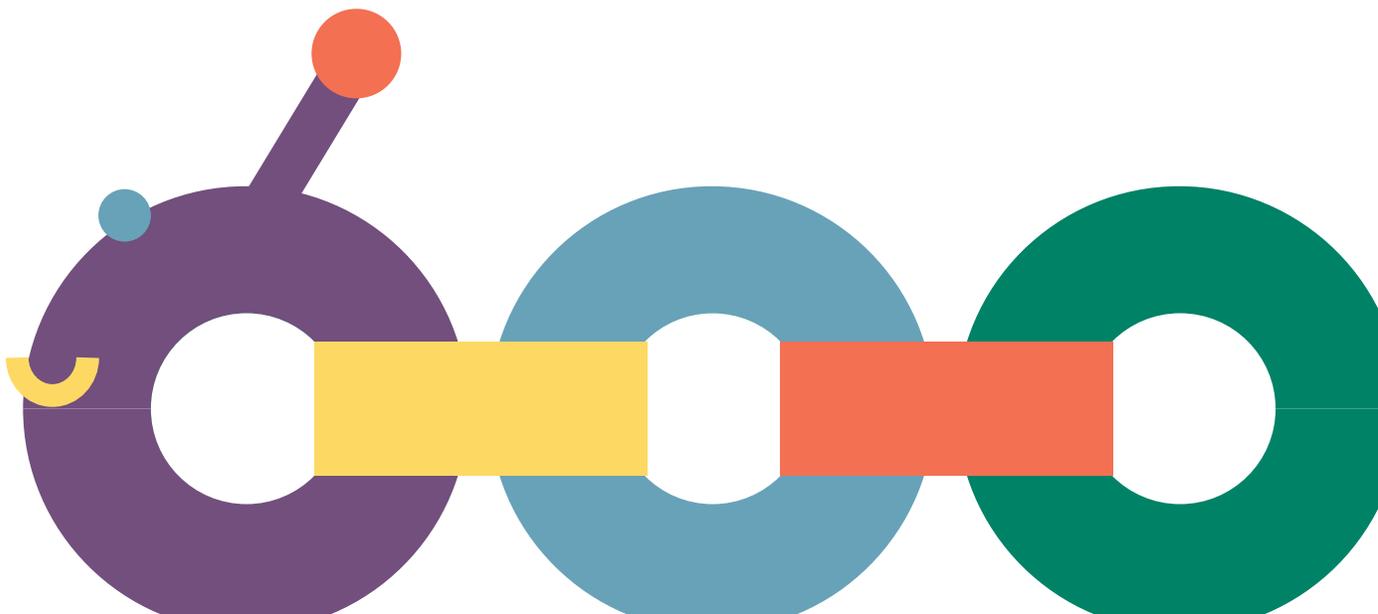
- Making simple art projects a regular part of playtime
- Letting them experiment and get creative without giving too many instructions
- Noticing and encouraging the creation process, not just the end product
- Providing a variety of art materials
- Using art to help them express strong feelings
- Encouraging their attempts to write
- Displaying their art and writing

# DRAW & WRITE



### You can connect art and writing with reading, too!

This helps your kids make connections between what they read and what they see in the world around them. For instance, after reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, make a paper chain caterpillar together. And be sure to point out the next caterpillar and butterfly you see outside!



# YOU'RE A THUNDER-STORM

## A Communication Activity Best for ages 3-5+

Being a good listener takes concentration and practice; it's an important skill to develop. A good listener is an active listener, and active listening leads to better comprehension, communication, and problem-solving skills. It also encourages positive conversation.

Encourage your kids to develop their active listening skills with activities that have simple directions and fun actions—like this!

### Instructions:

- Sit in a circle together.
- Ask your kids to listen to your instructions and do what you do.
- Give your kids directions as you demonstrate; wait 10 seconds before moving on to the next action and get louder (and stand up!) as you go.
  - Rub your fingers together
  - Rub your hands together
  - Snap your fingers
  - Clap softly
  - Pat your chest
  - Pat your legs
  - Stomp your feet
  - Stomp and clap at the same time
  - Add crashing sounds with your mouth
- Then, do the actions backwards! Take noises away until, one by one, you're back to rubbing your fingers together and seated quietly on the floor.



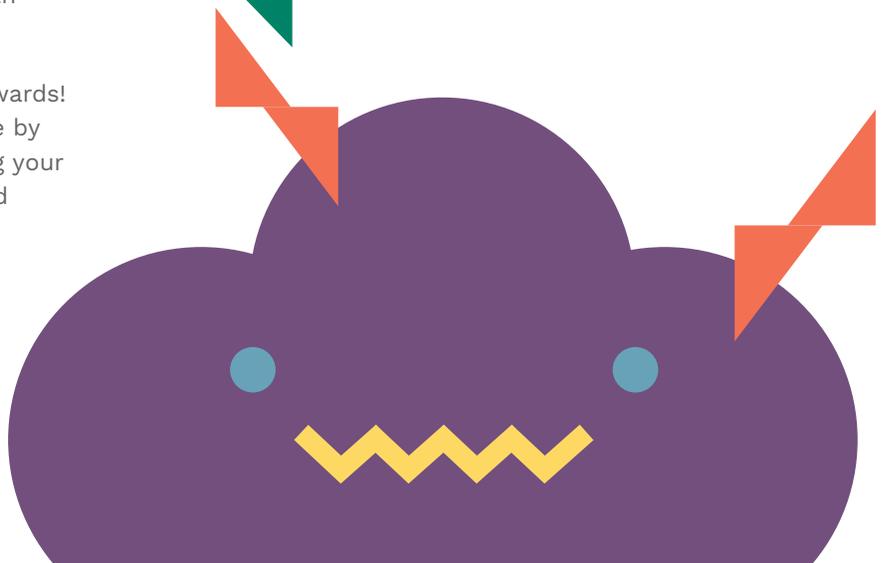
### Do this activity with your baby:

#### Sing to them!

When you sing, your baby learns your voice, bonds with you, develops listening skills, and learns how to express emotion from the words you're using. You can sing about anything! Try inserting their name into familiar nursery rhymes, or use the tunes from songs you know to sing about what you and your baby are doing together in your daily routines.

**That was quite the thunderstorm!**

Be sure to tell your kids what a great job they did listening.



## Domains of Development:

# CURIOS MINDS

Children are naturally curious; curiosity is a desire to learn and an eagerness to explore, discover, and figure things out. Nurturing their curiosity helps to develop young children's thinking skills—such as understanding cause and effect and developing the ability to reason—and sets them up to become lifelong learners.



The Curious Minds Domain of Development includes these important components:

- 1 Developing wonder, curiosity, and the ability to explore
- 2 Willingness to try new things
- 3 Developing persistence and the ability to focus and be attentive
- 4 Creative expression through music, movement, dance, art, and drama
- 5 Early math, science, and social studies skills



# BOAT FLOAT

## A Curious Minds Activity

Best for ages 2-5+

Why do kids ask so many questions? Because they're curious! You can encourage their curiosity with activities that help explain the way their world works, like this one about why some things float—and others don't!

### Materials:

- Tin foil
- Weights – pennies, pebbles, etc.
- Water vessel – bowl, cooler, bathtub, etc.

### Instructions:

- Mold the tinfoil into boat shapes
- Add weights to the boats
- Place boats in water to see if they float
  - If they do, add more weights until they sink
  - If they don't, take out weights until they float
- Experiment with different sizes and shapes of boats
  - Can larger boats hold more weight before sinking?
  - Do certain shapes float better?
- Use these fun facts to talk about what's happening!
  - The boat pushes water away, and the water pushes back
  - Boats actually sink until enough water has been pushed away to match the boat's weight
  - Boats float at different heights depending on how heavily loaded they are
  - To float, it doesn't matter how big the boat is, it matters how dense it is
  - Boats float higher in sea water than in fresh water because of the salt in the sea



### Do this activity with your baby:

#### Build together!

Use blocks, cups, toys, pillows, whatever you have. Count out loud as you stack things together, encourage your baby to touch and play with your building materials, and be sure to laugh when your tower gets knocked down!

### Reminder!

Don't leave your kids unattended around water!



## A Curious Minds Activity

Best for ages 3-5+

Spending time outside gives kids a unique sense of wonder about their world. Outside, their senses are stimulated as they hear, touch, and smell their environment. Help your kids engage in the world around them by getting outside and exploring what's growing there. On your next family walk, hike, or stroll around the backyard, collect flowers, leaves, grass, and other treasures you find, and wear them!

### Materials:

- Masking tape, duct tape, or contact paper – the stickiest you have!

### Instructions:

To make a badge, make a loop of tape and stick it to your kids' shirts, sticky side out.

To make a bracelet, wrap a strip of tape around your kids' wrists, sticky side out.

As your kids explore, they can attach the treasures they find to their badges or bracelets!

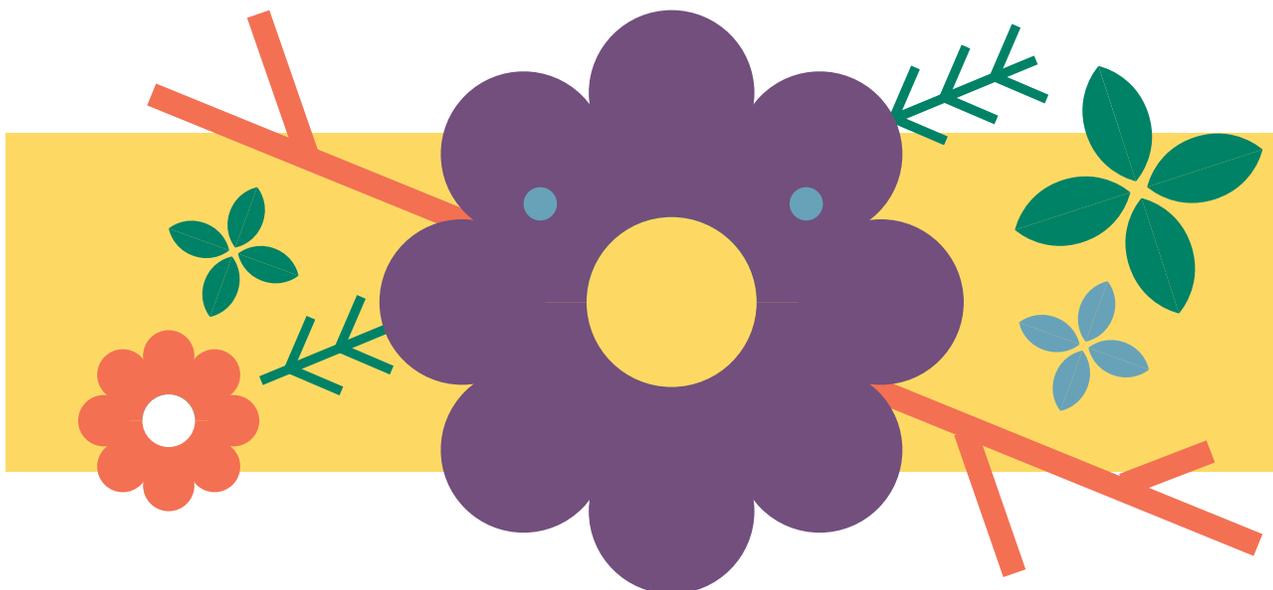
Be sure to talk about the things they find—ask questions and point out what you notice, too.

# NATURE BADGES & BRACELETS



### Adapt this activity for your baby:

On your next walk together, point out things you see and make frequent stops to touch and smell things like flowers, leaves, and grass. When you give something to your baby to touch and smell, tell them what it is and let them know how you think it looks, feels, and smells.



Domains of Development:

# SENSE OF SELF & RELATIONSHIPS

Sense of Self & Relationships refers to the social and emotional development children go through during which they begin to understand who they are, what they are feeling, and what to expect when interacting with others. Within this Domain of Development, children learn confidence and empathy, they grow their self-concept, develop meaningful, lasting relationships, and they learn how to manage their emotions.



Developing their sense of self and the ability to engage in relationships includes these skills:

1

## Emotional and Behavioral Skills

- Relating to others
- Developing a growing self-concept
- Mastering self-regulation
- Expressing feelings, wants, and needs

2

## Social Interactions and Skills

- Cooperation with others
- Resolving conflicts



## A Sense of Self & Relationships Activity

### Best for ages 3-5+

Appreciating the special qualities in ourselves and in others fosters self-awareness, self-confidence, and acceptance of differences. You can encourage your kids to express themselves with activities that model social and emotional skills, and that let your kids practice opening up about who they are. In this activity, your kids will show you what makes them unique!

### Materials:

- Boxes with lids
  - Shoe boxes, empty diaper wipes containers, and egg cartons all work great
- Art supplies
  - Markers and crayons, paints, glue, glitter, feathers, beads, string, pipe cleaners, stickers, shells from your last family vacation, leaves and flowers and pebbles and sticks—whatever you think is fun

### Instructions:

After you have created your chests, fill them with treasures! Have your kids put some of their favorite personal items in their chest, and you do the same. “Treasures” might be:

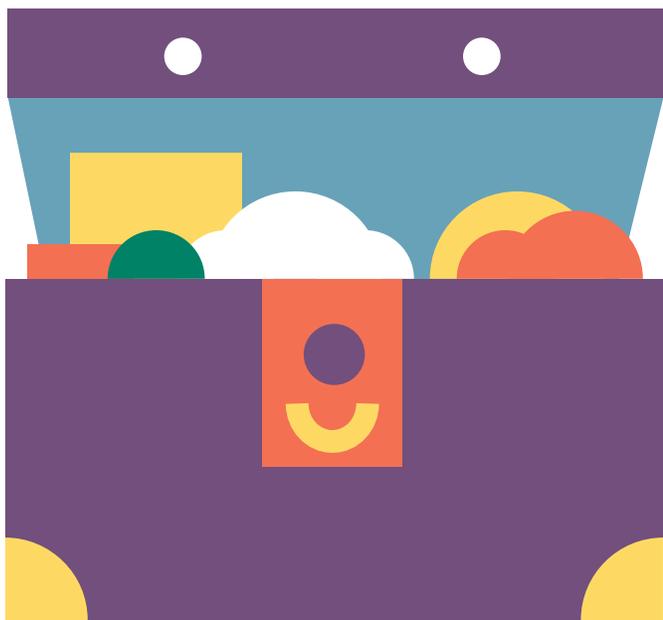
- Pictures or books
- Stuffed animals or toys
- Something from school
- A favorite shirt, tutu, hat, costume, etc.
- Anything that makes each of you feel good and shows a little of who you are

# THIS IS ME TREASURE CHEST



### Do this activity with your baby:

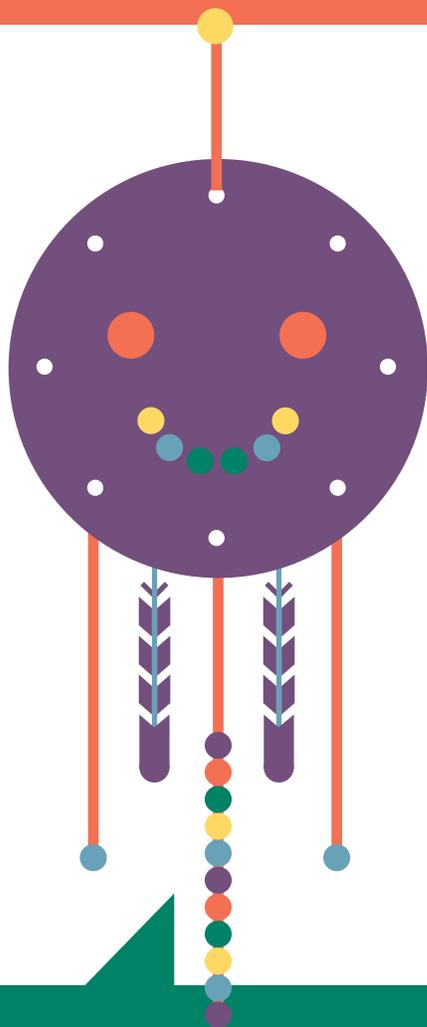
Sit together in front of a mirror so that your baby can see their reflection. Point to their reflection and talk about what you see! Say their name, describe what they're wearing, touch their arms and legs and then point to their arms and legs in the mirror. You can give hugs and kisses too, so your baby can see what you're doing and feel what you're doing at the same time!



### Once your chests are full, share your treasures!

Talk about each item in your treasure chests together and explain why you chose them. Each treasure represents something unique about your kids—and about you!

# EMOTIONS CATCHER



**While you make your Emotions Catchers, ask your kids simple leading questions, like:**

“What kinds of things do you do that make you happy?”

“Do you remember a time when you were really sad?”

“Let’s talk about something that makes you laugh!”

## A Sense of Self & Relationships Activity

**Best for ages 3-5+**

Kids have big emotions, but they don’t always know how to talk about them. When you have conversations with your kids about feelings, you’re helping them understand that emotions are important, and that they are always OK to talk about. This “Emotions Catcher” activity can help make the abstract idea of “feelings” a little more tangible, and make emotions seem a little easier to comprehend.

### Materials:

- Paper plate
- Markers, crayons, or paint
- Yarn, string, or twine
- Hole punch or scissors
- Glue
- Extras for decorating (beads, feathers)

### Embellishments for the Bottom of Your Catcher:

- Put a line of glue on the back of the plate
- Stick plain yarn, strung beads, or feathers to the glue

**Or**

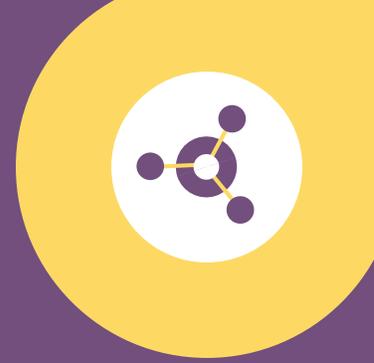
- Punch or cut holes in the bottom of the plate
- Tie plain yarn, strung beads, or feathers at the holes

### Instructions:

- Decorate the plate with markers, crayons, or paints
- Punch or cut holes around the plate
- Thread the string through one hole and knot the end so it stays
  - a dot of glue on the knot can help hold it in place
- Thread the string through all the other holes
  - use any pattern, go in any direction, as many times as you like
  - it can be fun to add beads to the string as you go along!
- Knot the string again when you’re done threading
- Add a loop of string to the top of the plate for hanging

Domains of Development:

# STRONG & HEALTHY BODIES



Developing strong and healthy bodies has to do with the food children eat, the physical activities they participate in, their ability to help themselves meet basic needs, and the ways in which they use the muscles in their bodies. The Strong & Healthy Bodies Domain of Development covers all of the elements that make up a child's overall health status.

Being “strong and healthy” means a lot of different things, including:

- 1 Overall health status
- 2 Developing self-help skills
- 3 A growing awareness of meeting basic needs
- 4 Good health and nutrition practices
- 5 Gross and fine motor skills—use and control of the body



# ANIMAL WORKOUT

## Instructions:

- Set a time to do the exercises each day.
- Do each activity for 45 seconds, rest for 45 seconds, and move on to the next activity.
- Try turning on some music!
- At the end of the workout, clap, high-five, or tell each other great job!



## Do this activity with your baby:

Spread a blanket out in the park on a sunny day or at home on the floor. Get your baby's attention with a toy, colorful object, or stuffed animal. Talk to them about the object or make the animal sounds that the stuffed animal would make—this will encourage them to lift their head and move around, and strengthen their core muscles for sitting, crawling, and walking!

## A Strong & Healthy Bodies Activity

Best for ages 2-5+

Exercise is good for every component of a strong and healthy body. In young kids, it helps with self-regulation by reducing cortisol and adrenaline levels, lessening anxiety, and stimulating dopamine and other endorphins. It also improves brain function and communication skills. Exercise is good for the muscles, the heart, and blood flow too!

## Activities:

**Frog Jump:** Hop up and down

**Bear Walk:** With hands and feet on the floor, hips high, “walk” forwards and backwards

**Gorilla Shuffle:** Sink into a low sumo squat and put your hands on the ground between your feet, then shuffle to the left and shuffle to the right

**Starfish Jumps:** Jump up and down, spreading your arms and legs wide (like jumping jacks)

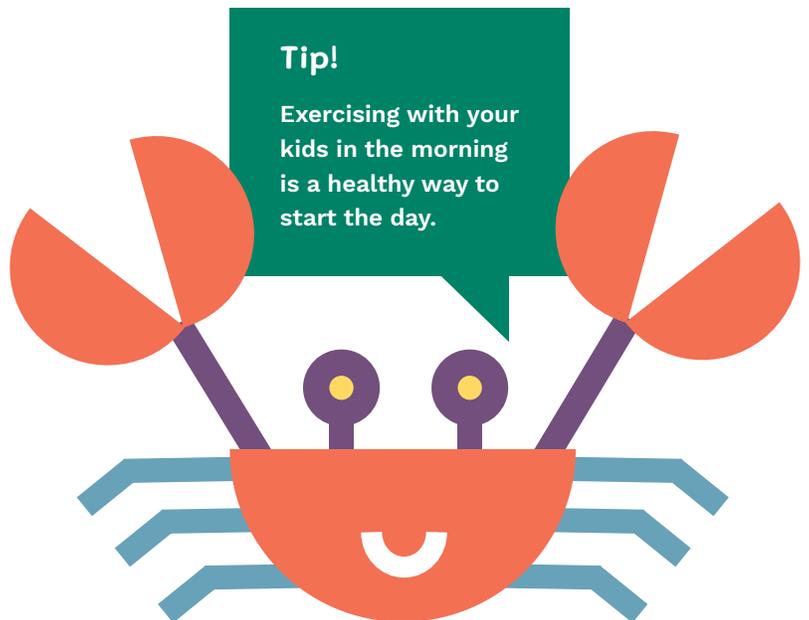
**Elephant Stomps:** Stand with your feet hip-width apart and stomp, raising your knees up to hip level

**Cheetah Run:** Run in place as fast as you can!

**Crab Walk:** Sit down with your knees bent and place your palms on the ground behind you; lift your hips and body off the ground and crawl around on your hands and feet

### Tip!

Exercising with your kids in the morning is a healthy way to start the day.



## A Strong & Healthy Bodies Activity

### Great for all ages

You can help shape your kids' attitudes towards food and the relationship they have with food by guiding them toward healthy eating habits. One of the easiest ways to do this is, instead of focusing on the foods your kids can't have, help them think about the foods they can have, and making eating it fun!

# EATING HEALTHY

## WHERE TO START

### Eat the Rainbow

Having a variety of colors on the plate helps ensure your kids are getting different varieties of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

### Mix it Up

Try a twist on a favorite recipe, like baking or grilling chicken or fish instead of frying it.

### Let Them Help

Cooking with kids is not only fun, it also introduces new vocabulary and math skills, requires focus and attention, and the more involved kids feel, the happier they are to eat!

### Plant the Seed

This can be a single pot on your patio or a full garden outside—either way your kids will love planting a garden with you, learning how things grow, harvesting, and eating the food they've grown.

### Make it Routine

Mealtime routines help kids develop a healthy relationship with food. Sitting down to a meal together is an excellent way to develop your relationship, too!



# VALUE OF PLAY

It's never "just play." Play is simple and complex. It's a context for learning, it's healthy, and it's a joyful outlet. The learning that emerges from play is deep and meaningful to children because they have shaped it themselves. Play allows children to use their creativity, develop their imaginations, and engage and interact in the world around them physically, cognitively, and emotionally. When you give your children time to play, you will see all that they are capable of!

**Keep the Six Cs of Playtime in mind when you're thinking about how your kids play—these are all skills kids exercise while they're at play!**

C

## 1 Collaboration

Working with others towards a shared goal

C

## 2 Communication

Utilizing verbal, nonverbal, and listening skills

C

## 3 Content

Demonstrating what they know and what they're thinking about

C

## 4 Critical Thinking

Analyzing information uses attention, memory, control, and flexibility

C

## 5 Creativity

Content and critical thinking come together as innovation

C

## 6 Confidence

Taking risks and trying new things shows kids what they can do on their own

# VALUE OF THE OUTDOORS

Outdoor play benefits children in every Domain of Development. Young children learn through what they experience with their senses, such as seeing animals, smelling flowers, jumping in puddles, and eating apples from a tree! Being outdoors also makes children more likely to be inventive, to explore, and to learn about the world around them.



## Physical Fitness

- Encourages active play and gets children to run, jump, kick, throw, climb, swim, dance, ride, and more
- Strengthens the immune system and improves vitamin D levels, which can provide protection from osteoporosis, heart disease, and diabetes

## Mental Health

- Helps reduce stress
- Positively impacts conditions such as anxiety and ADHD

## Intellectual Development

- Improves executive function—skills that help plan, prioritize, troubleshoot, negotiate, multitask, and be creative
- Children who regularly play outside are more curious, self-directed, and likely to stay with a task, which enhances readiness for learning and leads to a better ability to focus

## Social Development

- Unstructured outdoor play allows children to learn to work in groups, learn how to share, and learn to resolve conflicts

# THE DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT



## COMMUNICATION

Language &  
Literacy



## CURIOUS MINDS

Cognition, Knowledge,  
& Approaches to  
Learning



## SENSE OF SELF & RELATIONSHIPS

Social & Emotional  
Health



## STRONG & HEALTHY BODIES

Physical  
Development, Health,  
& Motor Skills

**Find additional activities and resources  
to help support and encourage your  
kids' development:**



**Screen for Success**  
[screenforsuccess.org](http://screenforsuccess.org)



**WY Quality Counts**  
[wyqualitycounts.org](http://wyqualitycounts.org)



**Head Start**  
[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov)



**2-1-1**  
[wy211.communityos.org](http://wy211.communityos.org)



**Wyoming Department  
of Family Services**  
[dfs.wyo.gov/services/  
family-services/child-care](http://dfs.wyo.gov/services/family-services/child-care)



Wyoming Early Childhood  
Outreach Network

