



## How Do Young Children Learn?



Young children learn through exploration. Children explore in hundreds of different ways. For young children, learning takes place everywhere and all the time. You can observe children exploring when they:

Repeat actions over and over: Alicia works on the same puzzle over and over.

Lift things up and look underneath: Carly turns over the rocks in the park.

Ask questions: Jacob asks: “Why does the fish make bubbles?”

Use materials and tools in creative ways: Leah uses a piece of rope to measure a tower of blocks.

Watch things intently: Julio likes to watch the hamster running around and around on its wheel.

Make predictions: Kayla guesses that a raccoon might live in a hollow log.

Solve problems: Tyler substitutes two small blocks for one bigger one.

Represent real objects: Maria draws two parallel lines, connects them and says, “It’s a train track!”

Make comparisons: Peter uses the small blanket to wrap up the smaller of two dolls and a bigger blanket to wrap up the larger doll.

Sort objects: Zayda separates a collection of buttons into two groups: metal ones and plastic ones.

Make connections: Mary tells her sister to make playdough pies that look like the pies in a book they read.

Chances are good that you and your child are already doing many science- and math-related activities as you go about your day. Here are ways to encourage mathematics and science learning in everyday situations:

- Setting the table for dinner is a chance to count and create a pattern with the napkins, utensils, and dishes.
- Going outside to play means being able to observe and talk about plants, the sun, shadows, wind or gravity, just to list a few possibilities.
- Watching the fish in the aquarium or hamster in its cage provides a wonderful opportunity for comparing and contrasting two different living things.
- Cooking up a batch of cookies requires counting, measuring, combining solids and liquids, and using all of the senses!