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Dear Parents,

Let's face it: school days can be chaotic. There's the morning hustle to get the kids awake, dressed, and off to school. After-school activities flood the afternoons: sports, language programs, and classes on computer coding (yes, that's a real thing now). Trying to tackle homework amidst cooking dinner and settling sibling arguments fill the evenings. Oh, and let's not forget the dilemmas and distractions of raising a child in the digital age—the perils of parenting in a world with YouTube are endless!

Schools desire parent involvement not because they want to add to your already hectic schedule, but because studies have shown that students are more successful when there is a strong connection between home and school. Creating a supportive and positive learning environment at home fosters knowledge, sparks curiosity, and builds self-confidence.

This parent guide will not burden you with more tasks and to-do lists; rather, it will empower you with useful tools, meaningful advice, and resourceful activities to help you create opportunities for learning in the moments that make up your everyday life.

Not every activity in this book needs to be completed. Choose what works best for you and your family. Take small steps. Live in the moment with your child. If you do that, you will naturally create a learning environment that will connect your home and school beautifully and seamlessly.

Let's Build!

Exploring Engineering ➤ Engineering involves a lot of doing: observing, investigating, thinking, trying, testing, and fixing. It presents children with a problem and challenges them to solve it the best way they know how. The following engineering activities are designed for your kindergartener to try to do without the pressure of expectation. There is no right or wrong answer. Just let your child explore and see what works and what doesn't!



Building Buddies

Talk to your child about engineering. Explain what engineers do. Tell them engineers study math and science. They are good problem solvers who invent, design, and build things, such as machines, systems, and structures. Engage in some engineering activities with your child; however, let your child do the thinking and the legwork. Be supportive and offer tips when necessary, but don't do the work yourself.

Apple Architecture

Cut up some apples into chunks, wedges, slices, and rings. Give your child all the apple pieces, some paper, and toothpicks. Challenge your child to build as many different things as he can. He can build whatever pops into his mind—shapes, structures, or animals—the possibilities are endless.



Inventive Idea

Help your child construct a little sailboat that actually floats, using an apple piece, paper, and toothpicks! Try to make two boats and race them by blowing air through straws.



Cool Concept

Add additional items, such as wooden blocks, paper cups, or craft sticks to the building supplies, and see what new designs and features you can construct.

Construction Challenge

If you have stacks of newspapers, magazines, or cardboard boxes around, try this challenge with your child! Gather all those materials into one place, and add a few extra things: tape, string, and glue. Show the materials you've gathered to your child. Then, work on building some structures together.

- Build a structure 1 foot high. (Show her how high 1 foot is.)
- Build a structure 3 feet high. (Show her how high 3 feet is.)
- Build a structure with/without a base. (Show her an example of a base.)
- What's the tallest structure you can build in 5 minutes?
15 minutes?

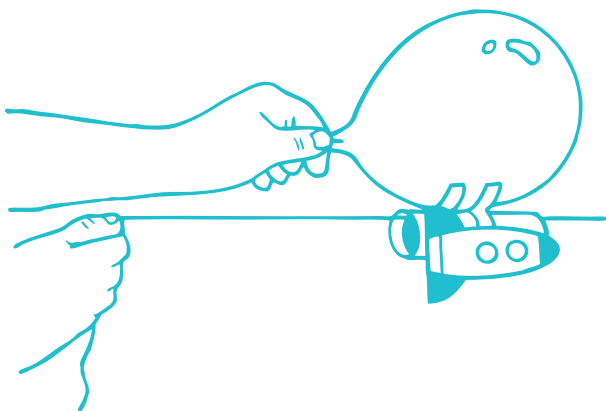
Balloon Races

Invite some of your child's friends over for a balloon race.

You'll Need:

- balloons
- string
- empty toilet paper rolls
- art supplies
- tape

Have the children use art supplies to decorate one side of each toilet paper roll. They can decorate them to look like rockets, race cars, horses, superheroes—whatever their imaginations desire! Next, run two strings parallel to each other across a room or down a hallway. Tie one end of each string to an object, such as two legs on the same table or two chairs sitting side by side. One child will hold one string; a second child will hold the other string. Put the loose ends of the strings through the toilet paper rolls. Blow up the balloons for each child, but don't tie them! Pinch them closed to keep the air inside. Tape the side of each balloon to the undecorated side of a toilet paper roll. Each child should be holding a string in one hand and a pinched balloon taped to the toilet paper roll in the other hand. On the count of three, have the children let go of the balloons (while still holding up the string). Watch closely! Who won? Was it a photo finish?



Cool Concept

Use a smartphone camera to record the race in slow motion!

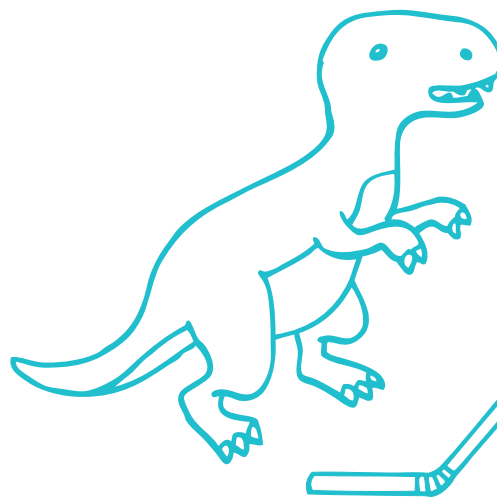
Design a Dinosaur

You'll Need:

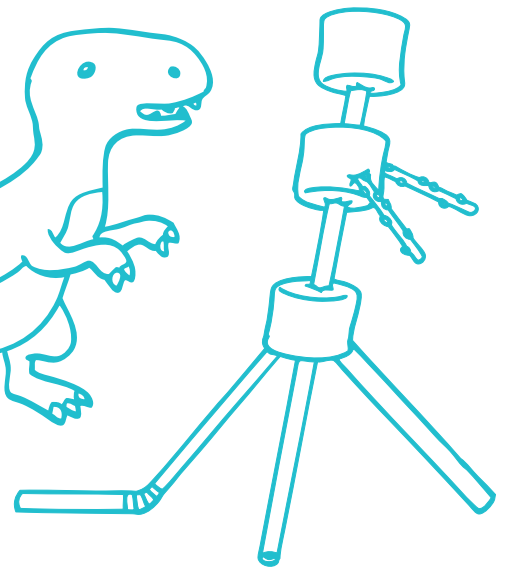
- 3 large marshmallows
- 3 plastic straws
- 2 pretzel sticks

Place the listed materials on a table. Challenge your child to build the dinosaur in Picture A without showing her Picture B. Once she has made the dinosaur, have her create something new using the same items!

Picture A



Picture B



Make a Marble Drop

Don't buy an expensive plastic marble drop—make your own!

You'll Need:

- a cup or jar (to catch the marbles)
- marbles
- empty paper towel, toilet paper, and/or wrapping paper rolls
- masking or painter's tape

Have your child help you tape empty cardboard rolls to a wall or a sliding glass door. Test the rolls as you go to make sure the gaps between them and the angles allow the marbles to easily drop down.

Chill Out!

Freeze some small toys in containers of water. Bring them outside and ask your child to rescue the toy from the ice. Let him choose different tools to help him expedite the melting process, such as salt, warm water, or a spoon. Ask him which tools work best, and why.