



*The bond between parent and child is important.* It takes a little effort to keep the bond with your child strong through the years. Here are a few ideas for things you can do with your child to help build a strong relationship. For more tips and ideas, visit your local library.

**THE FIRST YEAR:**

- Look at picture books with your baby and name things as you point to them in the book. This will help your baby learn to talk, listen and understand.
- Play song games with your baby.

**TODDLER YEARS (1–2):**

Toddlers enjoy hands-on activities such as finger paint and play dough. Plastic cookie cutters or small cups are always fun.

Puppets are an ideal way to stimulate the imagination. Puppets can be made with small paper bags or socks. Start by telling your child a story, then allow your child to add on to the story or create a new one.

**PRESCHOOL YEARS (3–5):**

Preschoolers are beginning to learn rules. Some favorite games to play with your child at this age include Duck, Duck, Goose; Red Light, Green Light; and London Bridge is Falling Down.

**THIS LITTLE PIGGY**

*Hold and wiggle each of baby's fingers or toes in turn while reciting this rhyme.*

This little piggy went to market.  
 This little piggy stayed home.  
 This little piggy had roast beef (tofu).  
 This little piggy had none.  
 And this little piggy cried, "Wee, wee, wee,"  
 all the way home!

**ITSY BITSY SPIDER**

*Creep your fingers up and down baby's body as you play this game, or play the "sun" and "rain" with your hands in the air.*

The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout.  
 Down came the rain and washed the spider out.  
 Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.  
 And the itsy bitsy spider went up the spout again.

Memory games are also fun for preschoolers. An easy, do-it-yourself way to play is to draw a variety of shapes, colors or numbers onto paper, making sure there is two of each. Then cut them into squares. Place them face-down and take turns by turning two squares over at a time. If you pick a match, then keep it. The game ends when the squares have all been matched together.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEARS (6–10):**

Create a scavenger hunt for your little explorer. Create a list of 5 to 10 things they can find outside such as rocks, leaves (different colored ones or different shaped ones), pinecones, sticks, etc. For a rainy day, find things inside. Some quick ideas are: something blue or round, something to wipe your hands with, or something soft.

Card games are also a good choice. Go-Fish, Old Maid and Uno are some favorites. Your child will learn multiple rules for one game and learn to take turns with play mates.

**PRE-TEEN AND TEEN YEARS (11–18):**

Cooking together helps your teen learn a valuable skill and gives the two of you time to talk. Be sure you work with your teen to make the meal and tell your teen what you liked about the meal they helped make.

Exercising with your teen can give you a chance for one-on-one time with him or her. Walking or biking in the evening or in the morning gives you time to listen to what your teenager is interested in and show the teenager that you care.

*When your children grow up,* they will not remember the perfectly clean house or elaborate meals, but the time spent together sharing love and laughter.

*You can call Florida's Parent HelpLine  
at 1-800-FLA-LOVE for tips on connecting with  
your child or any other parenting matter.*