

child's play



Fingerplays
Plus



active learning series

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Family life 4

... and justice for all

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PM 1770b-1 | October 1998

FINGERPLAYS PLUS

When children repeat fingerplays and rhymes, they are learning and practicing many important language skills — building vocabulary, rhyming, rhythm, memory, matching words with actions — just to name a few. Verses also can help develop children's muscle coordination and listening skills as well as strengthen their understanding of concepts such as counting, colors, and spatial positioning (up, down, behind, etc.).

This series of activity cards includes fingerplays with a variety of concepts and movements. Also included are some suggestions for related activities. Children learn best when they can experience or practice new concepts in several different ways. Perhaps these fingerplays and verses will become favorites to which you add your own verses and related activities.

[Note: To help in picking up the rhythm of each verse, short underlines have been included to show where the downbeat of the rhyme falls.]



Ordering Information

For additional sets of PM 1770b, contact your local county office of ISU Extension or the Extension Distribution Center at:

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PM 1770b-2 | October 1998

Little, Bigger, Biggest

A little ball,
A bigger ball,
And a great big ball I see.
Now help me count them,
One, two, three!

(make ball with finger and thumb)
(make ball with two hands)
(make a ball with arms)

(repeat gestures for each size)

Variations:

- Use cutout paper shapes or real objects to show the three sizes.
- Create additional verses with other shapes of differing sizes.



Circle Sandwiches

content: cooking
setting: small groups

Use foods that are round in shape and that are a variety of sizes to make circle sandwiches. Talk about the sizes of each food compared to the others as the children assemble their own sandwiches. Some foods to offer are:

- round bread (pita, tortilla, English muffin, leftover pancake, hamburger bun);
- meat (bologna or other round cold cuts)
- vegetables (tomato, cucumber)
- fruit (cored apple, banana, kiwi, pineapple rings, spiced apple rings, grapes, blueberries)

Use your favorite spreads to help hold the circle sandwiches together (butter, mayonnaise, peanut butter, cream cheese, etc.).

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Funny Bunny

Here is a bunny

(raise two fingers)

With ears so funny

And here is a hole in the ground.

(make hole with fingers of other hand)

At the first sound she hears,

She pricks up her ears

(straighten fingers)

And pops right into the ground.

(put fingers in hole)



Sound Matching

content: listening

setting: small group or free play

Collect several pairs of small containers, such as film canisters or aspirin bottles (with the labels removed). The containers should all be the same. In each pair, place a different object or material (a penny, sand, rice, crumpled foil, dried beans, styrofoam). Place the lids on all the containers. Let children try to match the pairs of containers that have the same material by listening to the sounds they make. Ask them to guess what is inside each pair. Once they've matched them by sound, let them check by opening the containers (depending on the containers, they may need adult help).

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Up, Out, Front

(While sitting on the floor. . .)

Put your hands way up,

Put your hands way out,

Put your hands in front

And clap, clap, clap.

Put your feet way up,

Put your feet way out,

Put your feet in front

And stomp, stomp, stomp.

Position Charades

content: cognition (spatial relationships)

setting: small or large group

Place a chair, a large block, and a ball on the floor. Have children come one at a time to you. Whisper in their ear a position or action, such as “stand in front of the block” or “step over the ball.” Let other children guess what the direction was by watching the child perform the action. [Emphasize the position words and repeat them often during the activity.]



- Once they've tried it this way a few times, let each child whisper in your ear the action they will do.
- On 3 x 5 notecards, draw simple stick figures performing position actions and let each child choose a card to perform. Let children suggest actions to draw.
- If children are just beginning to understand spatial position words, choose only three or four such concepts when you first play this game. As children become more familiar with these terms, add new ones.
- Choose other objects to place on the floor that would work well for words such as *under*, *between*, *through*, *inside/outside*, etc.

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Tool Time

- Peter works with 1 hammer, 1 hammer, 1 hammer *(one fist moving up and down)*
- Peter works with 1 hammer, now he works with 2. *(two fists)*
- Peter works with 2 hammers, etc. *(two fists & one foot)*
- Peter works with 3 hammers, etc. *(two fists & two feet)*
- Peter works with 4 hammers, etc. *(two fists, two feet & head nodding)*
- Peter works with 5 hammers, 5 hammers, 5 hammers
- Peter works with 5 hammers,
- Now his work is done.

[Note: Substitute any name for Peter. You also can make the fingerplay longer by counting backwards from 5 down to no hammers before saying, "Now his work is done."]



Tool Sorting

content: cognition (categorizing)

setting: small or large group

Collect several examples of two or three categories of tools (kitchen tools, school or office tools, repair tools, woodworking tools). Talk to the children about what tools are: objects that make a task easier to do. Provide a box or a marked area of a table or floor for each category. Have children sort the collection of tools by where or how they think each tool would be used.

Ask children lots of questions as they are sorting to discover and guide their thinking about what they are doing. [Note: The goal is not necessarily to get “the right answer” but to think about how tools are used and what certain tools might have in common. Often children will provide an explanation for their thinking that hadn’t occurred to the adult, but makes good sense to the child. Discovering the child’s thought process is more important in this case than replacing the child’s answer with yours.]

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Home Sweet Home

A nest is a home for a robin;

(cup hands to form a nest)

A hive is a home for a bee;

(turn cupped hands over)

A hole is a home for a rabbit;

(make a hole with hands)

And a house is a home for me.

(make roof with peaked hands)

[Note: If these animals are not common in your geographic area, substitute other animals that are. Consider other types of people homes as well. Also, encourage children to help lengthen the poem by adding more animals and homes to make additional verses.]

Home Addresses

content: cognition (memory)

setting: transition



This is an activity that can be used to transition children from one activity to another, one child at a time (ex., from storytime to washing hands for snack). Make simple mailboxes out of tissue boxes (make as many boxes

as you have groups or places for children to go). Leave a slot opening on the top or side of each box. Make individual letters out of laminated 3 x 5 cards or envelopes and print each child's name and address on one side. When you are ready to transition children to the next activity, read the address on each card and see if that child can identify his/her address. At first, if children do not know their addresses, you may need to give other clues (she's wearing flowered shorts today) or show the name while you are saying the address out loud. That child then takes his/her letter and puts it in the mailbox located at the place where the next activity is happening.

[Note: Young children never seem to tire of this activity, even though it seems monotonous to adults after the hundredth time. In fact, the more often you repeat this activity, the more quickly children will recognize their own addresses, and the more excited they will become with "showing off" their new knowledge!]

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Dancing Fingers

Thumbs are up;
Thumbs are down;
Thumbs are dancing
All around the town.

Pointers up;
Pointers down;
Pointers dancing
All around the town.

(additional verses)

Tall fingers up, etc.
Ring fingers up, etc.
Little fingers up, etc.
All fingers up, etc.



Interpretive Dance

content: *music/movement*

setting: *large group*

Collect several different types/styles of music (classical, rock and roll, country, traditional music from other countries). [Note: If you don't have a large selection yourself, try asking parents and/or your local library.] As you play a short selection of each type of music, encourage children to think about how the music feels (encourage lots of descriptive words — bouncy, sleepy, etc.) and to move in a way that goes with each kind of music.

Ask questions and use descriptive words as you do this activity (“Janelle is hopping. Janelle, does that music sound ‘hoppy’? What does it make you think of?”). Remember, individual opinions and respect for diverse ideas is encouraged in this kind of activity (although you may want to set some safety rules, “You can move any way you like as long as you are not hurting anyone.”).

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Quiet Cats

We are little pussy cats
Walking round and round.
We have cushions on our feet
(*whisper*) And never make a sound.

(use hands, crawl, or tip toe)

Pet Play

content: dramatic play

setting: free play

Here are a few ideas for children who are interested in pets.

- Give children some props so they can pretend to be pets. Here are some suggestions, but be sure to ask the children what they think they will need, also!



Large cardboard boxes or blocks to use for a house

Food and water dishes

Empty pet food boxes

Soft pillows

Writing materials to write the names of the pets

Yarn, paper, and paper punch to make collars (remind children that it's not safe to pull on the collars)

Pet toys (squeeze toys, scratching post)

- Use stuffed animals to create a pet store. Ask a local pet store, the county extension office, and parents for additional props (posters of breeds of animals, cages, informational books about pets). Be sure to include a cash register, calculator, and/or writing materials for the “salesclerks”!
- Substitute a few doctor props for the sales props and you’ll have a veterinary office!

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Accordion People

content: small muscle coordination

setting: small group or free play

Cut strips of construction paper about 2" wide and 12" long. Demonstrate a fan/accordion fold (or have a child who knows how demonstrate). Let children try it with a strip of paper. Then encourage them to think of creative ways of making heads and feet from a variety of art materials to attach to each end of the folded strip to make a person who can be short or tall. While children do this activity, encourage size comparison and measuring.

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High, Low, Around We Go

We clap up high, we clap down low,
We jump, jump, jump, and around we go.
Up and down, up and down,
Clap your hands and turn around.
(or . . .) Clap your hands and sit right down.

Books about opposites:

content: cognition (opposites)

setting: storytime or free play

Ages birth to 3 years:

- Hot, Cold, Shy, Bold: Looking at Opposites (1998), Pamela Harris.
Kids Can Press. ISBN1550741535



- In and Out, Up and Down (1982), Michael Smollin (Sesame Street board book). Random House. ISBN 039485151X
- The Opposite Zoo (1998), Steven Walker. Puffin. ISBN 0140562443

Ages 4 to 8 years:

- Exactly the Opposite (1997), Tana Hoban. Mulberry Books. ISBN 0688154735
- Learn About Opposites (The Adventures of Poldy) (1995), Felicia Law. World Book Inc. ISBN 071661055
- Opposites = Les Contraires (Bilingual First Books) (1997), Clare Beaton. Barrons Juveniles. ISBN 0764100300

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All Sizes

As high as a house;

(reach up high)

As small as a mouse;

(crouch down low)

As wide as a barn;

(feet apart, arms spread wide)

As thin as a pin.

(stand straight)

A Book of Similes

content: art/cooperative play

setting: small group

Create a group or class book about comparisons. After learning the fingerplay, talk with children about other similes (as _____ as a _____). If children have trouble generating their own comparison phrases, suggest some descriptive words and have them fill in the blank (as fast as

CHILD
CARE
• THAT •
WORKS

a _____). Have each child decide on one phrase that he or she would like to draw a picture about. Be sure to provide lots of markers, crayons, and other types of drawing materials. Encourage beginning writers to spell out their own phrases on their page. For those children who are not yet writing, have them dictate to you the phrase that they illustrated.

Explain to children that when everyone is finished, all the pages will go together in one book. Once the book is assembled and covered by a title page, put it in a large zip-type plastic bag along with a checklist of all the children's names and let each child take it home overnight. When they have returned it the next day, check off that child's name and send it home with the next child on the list. After everyone has taken it home, add it to your own selection of books that are available to children.

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Activity: Create your own small teeter totter with a flat rectangular block or board and a small object to act as the point of balance (triangular block, etc.). Select a few familiar objects from around the room that vary quite a bit in weight. Collect several identical items to use as counterweights and give one (or more) to each child (wooden unit blocks). Place one of the familiar objects on one side of the balance; have children place the counterweights on the other end one at a time until the balance is tipped. Count the number of blocks it took to tip the balance. Repeat the procedure with each of the other familiar objects. Help children to compare each “weighing” by counting the counterweights, using words such as “more/less” and “heavier/lighter”, etc. Older children will enjoy predicting how many counterweights each object will take to tip the balance and making a chart of the results of the experiment.

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Amazing Fingers

I have ten fingers and they all belong to me;
 I can make them move - would you like to see?
 I can shut them tight, I can open them wide,
 I can put them together, I can make them hide,
 I can make them jump high, I can make them jump low,
 I can fold them quietly and hold them just so.

Finger Paint Recipes

content: sensory & art
setting: free play

Recipe 1	7 cups boiling water	cold water
	1 1/2 cups corn starch	1 1/2 cups soap flakes

Mix starch with enough cold water to make a smooth paste. Add boiling water and cook until glossy. Stir in soap flakes while mixture is warm.



When cool, add food coloring or powdered tempera paint. Keeps for a week if tightly covered.

Recipe 2 Mix equal parts of soap flakes and water. Add tempera powder to color. Whip in blender until pudding-like consistency is reached.

Note: Remember that, for young children, finger painting is enjoyable as much for the feel of it as for the looks of it. If your children are definitely enjoying the sensory nature of finger painting, rather than using paper, try putting the paint directly on a table covered with a plastic tablecloth (you will probably want to anchor the tablecloth to the table). For added tactile variety, add a little clean sand or glitter to the finger paint.

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Opposites

Roll your hands so slowly,
 As slowly as can be;
 Roll your hands so slowly,
 And fold your arms like me.

(additional verses. . .)
 Roll your hands so quickly, etc.
 Clap your hands so softly, etc.
 Clap your hands so loudly, etc.

An Opposite Survey

content: language & cognition
setting: small group

Divide a piece of paper into two to four sections and within each section write one question about a pair of opposites (Are you wearing long sleeves or short sleeves? Do you like the crust on your pizza to be thin or thick? In the morning do you like to get up early or late? Is your favorite music fast or slow?). Number the questions; write the two opposite words on opposite sides of the paper in each section; include a simple picture to represent



each word, if possible; and leave enough room for the children to put tally marks under or beside each word. Duplicate so that each child has a copy.

Talk to the children first about each word and question. Then talk to the children about surveys: they will be asking several people each question, then marking down their answers (demonstrate with one of the children). Give each child a pencil (with an eraser, just in case!), a clipboard or other portable hard surface, and a copy of the survey. Then go around as a group to other children, other adults in your building, or neighbors and encourage each child to ask a question. Everyone can mark down the answers. Continue as long as the children show interest and as long as time permits. Then have the children count up their tally marks and compare the opposite pairs. If you have time, make a chart of your survey answers and display it. Have children ask their parents the survey questions as well.

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I Spy

I spy someone wearing red;
Stand up, turn around,
Touch that red.

(Repeat with other color names.)

I spy every color I know;
Stand up, turn around,
We're a rainbow!

Color Viewers

content: visual perception

setting: free play/small group



materials: toilet paper tubes (three for each child)
colored cellophane (red, yellow, blue), cut into 4" squares
rubber bands, medium (to go around one tube) and large (to go around all three)

procedure:

1. Give each child three toilet paper tubes, one square of each of the three colors of cellophane, three medium rubber bands, and one large rubber band.
2. Have children put each cellophane square over the end of a tube and secure it with a medium rubber band. Then put all three tubes together with the colored ends together and secure with the large rubber band. [If children have difficulty putting on the rubber bands, have them work in pairs or have an adult assist.]
3. Ask children questions about how things look when they use one eye to see through one color and then two eyes to see through two colors.

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Favorite Foods

I like watermelon, how about you?

Let's eat and eat 'til the day is through!

(eating motions)

Oh, I think I've had enough,

(hands on tummy)

Let's try something different. . .

(substitute other favorite foods)

Let's go out and play!

(Last line of last verse)

Jelly Bean Tasting

content: *cognition (color recognition and charting)*

setting: *large or small group*

[Note: This works best when you have ten or fewer children in a group.]

materials:

large poster board or sheet of paper

colored markers or crayons

several flavors of jelly beans

plain star or circle stickers, enough for each child to have one for

each jelly bean flavor *[optional]*



procedure:

1. Make a chart with the colors of jelly beans down the left side (draw a colored jelly bean and also write the name of the color for each row). Along the top, make three columns: "color of jelly bean," "yes, I like it," and "no, I don't like it."
2. *[optional]* Give each child the same number of stickers as there are jelly beans and tell them to hold on to them. They will use them to tell you if they like each flavor.
3. Give each child a small plate or bowl containing one of each color of jelly bean and tell them that you'll all be tasting them one at a time (so don't start shoveling them in!).
4. Start at the top of your list and have the children find their bean that matches the color on the chart and taste it. Have the children put a sticker on the place on the chart that will tell whether or not they like that flavor (if a child doesn't want to taste one, have him or her put their sticker on "no, I don't like it"). *[Or have children use a marker to put a tally mark in the appropriate column. If you have a larger group and think this may take too long, ask children and write down the responses yourself.]*
5. Continue until all the jelly beans have been tasted. Then compare which flavors were liked by the most people and which flavors were liked by the least.

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The Apple Tree

Way up high in the apple tree,
Two little apples smiling at me;
I shook that tree as hard as I could;
Down came the apples and
Mmmm, they were good!

(point up high)
(make two circles with hands)
(wrap hands around "trunk" and shake)
(two circle hands come down)
(rub tummy)



Applesauce Muffins

content: cognition (measuring,
following steps in a process)

setting: small group/free play

1 cup sugar

1 egg

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup butter, softened

2 cups flour

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground cloves

1 cup applesauce

Cream together sugar and butter. Add egg and beat until smooth. Mix together dry ingredients until blended. Alternate adding applesauce and dry mixture to creamed mixture, blending just until moistened. Fill greased muffin tins $\frac{2}{3}$ full. Bake in 350° oven 20-25 minutes. Makes 1 to 1 1/2 dozen muffins.

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Big Fat Hen

1, 2, buckle my shoe,
3, 4, shut the door,
5, 6, pick up sticks,
7, 8, lay them straight,
9, 10, a big fat hen!

Big Fat Hen Interactive Bulletin Board

content: language
setting: free play

From flannel, cut out the numerals "1" through "10" and pictures representing each of the objects in the rhyme: a shoe with a buckle, a door, a mixed up pile of sticks, a straight row of sticks, and a hen. Let children practice putting the pieces in order on a flannel-covered board as they say the rhyme (or mixing up the order and changing the rhyme!).



Variations:

- Draw the pictures and numerals on construction paper and back them with sandpaper or apply a piece of self-adhesive Velcro (the hooked side) to each. These also will stick to a flannel board.
- Take photos of each of the objects in the rhyme and back them with small pieces of Velcro.

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A Hunt for Spring

content: *cognition (categorizing)*

setting: *small or large group*

Choose a favorite children's book* that accurately describes spring and changing seasons for your geographical area (or ask your local library for a recommended book). Talk with children about what changes they might notice as spring comes to your area; make a list of children's ideas. Go for a walk in your neighborhood and look for signs of spring. If children are old enough, give each child paper on a clipboard and a pencil so they can draw and/or write the name of what they see. For younger children, write down the items that they dictate to you. When you get back from your walk, talk about what you saw and compare it with the first list that you made. Ask children why there might be differences in the two lists. Consider making a bulletin board display or class book about spring using the children's drawings and writings.

* for example: [The Reasons for Seasons](#) by Gail Gibbons (1996). Ages 5-8.

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The Field Trip Rhyme

[You will need to do the "before" activity below before trying the rhyme!]

Going on a field trip,
Leaving right away.
If we could, we'd stay all day!

Going to the [name of destination]
What will we see?
Use your imagination;
Now tell me.

We might see a _____ and we might see a _____
And we might see a _____ and a _____.
We might see a _____ and we might see a _____
And we might see a _____ and a _____.



Field Trip: Before & After

content: *language, cognition
(prediction, categorizing)*

setting: *large group*

Before: As you talk with children about an upcoming field trip, ask the children what they think they might see there. On a flip chart or dry erase board, write down the children's ideas and incorporate them into the rhyme. Point to the words as you say them (if you're feeling especially artistic, try drawing a simple picture or symbol that younger children can "read"). Keep the list and, when you return from your field trip, make a second list of what the children actually did see. Talk with children about the differences in the two lists.

After: After your field trip, ask children to draw something that they saw on a field trip. Write down each child's description of his/her picture or encourage children to write about their own picture. Then collect the pictures, add a colorful cover, and save as a classroom book. Let children "check out" the book overnight so that they can share the field trip experience with their families.

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Hello, Neighbor!

Hello, [*child's name*], how do you do?

Who is the person next to you?

[*child says next person's name*]

[*Continue until all the children and adults in the group have had a turn.*]

Getting to Know the Neighbors **content:** language, social skills
setting: small group

Create an opportunity for your children to understand a little more about the social nature of a community by getting to know your neighbors. Whether your neighbors are people in their homes or people in a work place, think of some ways that you can get to know them a little better.



Here are some suggestions:

- Help children write letters to your neighbors. Children can tell a little about themselves or about their child care setting. Be sure to ask the neighbors if they could write back and tell a little about themselves, too.
- Have children help make a special treat (a favorite cookie recipe), package it in a special way, make a greeting card, and deliver it to a neighbor.
- Invite a few neighbors over for a little snack. Children can help prepare the menu. Talk beforehand with children about what questions they could ask their guests to find out more about them. Be sure to take pictures.
- As you get to know your neighbors better, perhaps you could invite them over to read to the children or to share a special hobby or interest.

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Picnic Time

Going on a picnic,
Gotta pack a lunch.

What should we bring to munch, munch, munch?
[list children's ideas of food for a picnic]

[You read from list. . .] Let's bring sandwiches,
[children echo. . .] sandwiches, sandwiches.
[continue with all the foods listed]

Ready for a picnic,
Ready with a lunch,
Now we're ready to
munch, munch, munch!

Variations:

- Give each child a picture of a food item. Then, for the second verse, you say: "Who'll bring [sandwiches]?" and the child with that food item answers, "I'll bring [sandwiches]."
- Hold up pictures of food items one at a time and, for the second verse, everyone say, "Let's bring [sandwiches, sandwiches, sandwiches]."

Indoor Picnic

content: collaboration/community

setting: snack or lunch

On a particularly cold and icky day, plan an indoor picnic for snack or lunch. Use your (and the children's) imagination and be as authentic as you like! Here are just a few suggestions for props: blankets to spread on the floor; sunglasses; lemonade; electric fan (for a gentle breeze, of course!); plastic ants; sack lunches; and more.

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Names

Names, names, we all have names;
 Here is a friend to tell hers [*his*]: _____
 [*choose a child*]

Names, names, we all have names;
 Let's join in and spell hers [*his*]: _____
 [*Continue until everyone has had a turn.*]

Name Games

content: language
setting: small group

Activity 1

On rectangular pieces of poster board or other sturdy material, write out each child's name, leaving a space between each letter. Cut the letters apart in such a way that each cut is unique, creating a self-correcting puzzle out of each name. Put all of the



Variations:

- Give each child a card with his or her name printed on it and have the child hold it so that it is facing everyone else when it is his or her turn.
- You keep the cards with children's names printed on them. Hold them up one at a time, having the child identify her or his name by saying it out loud on the second line of the rhyme.

pieces to each name in a small zip-type plastic bag and write each child's name on the corresponding bag. If a child needs more assistance to put the pieces together in the right order, write his/her name on a separate piece of paper to use as a reference.

Activity 2

Write each child's name on a separate rectangle of construction paper so that the letters are 3" high. While children are out of the room or hiding their eyes. Place the name cards all around the room. Then have the children look for their own names. (If they are not yet able to recognize their names, give them a second paper with their names written on it to carry with them as a reference.) Once they have found their name, have them sit down on the floor or at a table until everyone has found theirs. [Note: Children really enjoy this game, so repeat it as many times as you like. You also can make several copies of each name to make the game last longer. You also can do this activity outside as long as there is no wind!]

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