

### Ready, Set, Have Fun

You are an important person in the lives of the children and you do many things to help children learn and grow. Children need well-chosen activities to help them develop successfully. By offering a variety of appropriate and interesting things for children to do, you provide many opportunities for children of all ages to develop physically, mentally, emotionally, and creatively. When children are busy learning, experimenting, and creating, they are well behaved and directed. Well-planned activities make your day go more smoothly and both you and the children are happier- busy learning and growing together.

### Choosing Good Activities for Children

There are many activity books available for you to use. However, not all of them contain good or appropriate activities for young children. It is sometimes hard to know if an activity is good or not. Here are some things to ask yourself to help you judge whether or not to use a particular activity:

- Is this activity a “hands-on” activity? Can the children do something with the materials?
- Can the children use their own imaginations, ideas, thoughts, and methods?
- Are there opportunities for the children to discover new information with the activity?
- Is the activity meaningful to the children? Does it relate to the children’s own experiences?
- Is the activity appropriate for the children’s ages, developmental levels, and interests?
- Is the activity directed by the child or by the adult? Who does most of the work, you or the child? (The activity should be directed by the child, and the child should do most of the work.)
- Can the child work on the activity for as long or short a period of time as the child wants?

### Tips for Guiding Successful Activities

- Establish basic rules and limits for children, such as “Scissors are for cutting paper only.” Set clear and reasonable expectations and follow through on your expectations. Involve preschoolers and school age children in setting rules for using materials.
- Have any materials that children will need ready to go, so there is no waiting time.
- If you are showing children a new material or way of using a material, give short and specific directions. Check to see if children understand your directions and then let children try it on their own.

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- Keep an eye on all on-going activity. When children begin to lose interest, it is time to change the activity.
- Select activities that follow children's interests.
- Give advanced notice when changing activities, so children can finish what they are doing, "In five minutes, it will be time to clean up for lunch. You can set your collage on the counter here so that the glue can dry while we eat."
- Provide a clean up system. "Remember, paper goes back in the paper box before you leave the art table."
- Ask children to reflect on activities. "What did you think of using sponges for painting?"
- Focus on children's effort, rather than the product.

*Leading the Way for Child Care in North Dakota*

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