



# STEM MOMENTS: EVERYDAY FUN WITH SCIENCE

Young children, beginning from birth, are naturally curious about science, or the study of the natural world. They are drawn to questions that help them make sense of their world like how birds fly, why leaves change color, and which objects sink and which float in the tub. At the same time, young children are also fascinated with the process of doing science—exploring cause-and-effect, discovering patterns, and more.

In the early years, children use scientific practices like:

- Making observations and noticing similarities and differences;
- Asking questions;
- Describing animals and plants, and natural processes like rainstorms;
- Predicting what will happen next in a process;
- Providing explanations for processes they observe—such as why there is thunder;
- Using tools to further exploration, such as binoculars, a shovel, or measuring cups.

By following your child’s lead, describing his actions and discoveries, and guiding this learning, you help your child begin to understand big ideas about science.

## LEARNING STEM THROUGH PLAY: PARENT-CHILD PLAY ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT SCIENCE SKILLS

**0–12 MONTHS** Play games that help your baby understand cause-and-effect—like figuring out the doors and buttons on a busy box or learning to flick the light switch from your arms.

**12– 24 MONTHS** Give your young toddler opportunities to explore the natural world through her senses—like looking at, touching and tasting different fruits at snack-time. Ask questions like, What do you see? What does it feel like? How does it taste? Talk about what feels smooth or rough, the colors you see, or how a food tastes sweet or sour.

**24–36 MONTHS** Give your toddler simple tools to safely explore and discover—like using a magnifying glass to look closely at the colors and textures of veggies before you put them in the salad or using a strainer to separate leaves from sand in the sandbox.

**3–5 YEARS** Encourage your preschooler to notice the plants and animals in his world. Offer him a little bag or bucket to collect different leaves, rocks, or seeds at the park. Talk about all the animals the two of you see on the way to the bus-stop. Which fly? Which climb? Where do they live? What do they eat? Talk together about your child’s observations and questions. It’s okay if you don’t have all the answers...just let your child know: “We can find out together!”



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