### Activities for Children 36–48 Months Old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Make a book “about me” for your child.</td>
<td>Save family pictures, leaves, magazine pictures of a favorite food, and drawings your child makes. Put them in a photo album, or glue onto sheets of paper and staple together to make a book.</td>
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<td>Make a bird feeder using peanut butter and bird seed.</td>
<td>Help your child find a pine cone or a piece of wood to spread peanut butter on. Roll in or sprinkle with seeds and hang in a tree or outside a window. While your child watches the birds, ask her about the number, size, and color of the different birds that visit.</td>
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<td>Grow a plant. Choose seeds that sprout quickly (beans or peas), and together with your child place the seeds in a paper cup, filling almost to the top with dirt. Place the seeds 1/2 inch under the soil. Put the cup on a sunny windowsill and encourage your child to water and watch the plant grow.</td>
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<td>Before bedtime, look at a magazine or children's book together.</td>
<td>Ask your child to point to pictures as you name them, such as “Where is the truck?” Be silly and ask him to point with an elbow or foot. Ask him to show you something that is round or something that goes fast.</td>
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<td>Play a matching game. Make two sets of 10 or more pictures.</td>
<td>You can use pictures from two copies of the same magazine or a deck of playing cards. Lay the pictures face up and ask your child to find two that are the same. Start with two picture sets and gradually add more.</td>
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<td>While cooking or eating dinner, play the “more or less” game with your child.</td>
<td>Ask who has more potatoes and who has less. Try this using same-size glasses or cups, filled with juice or milk.</td>
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<td>Practice following directions.</td>
<td>Play a silly game where you ask your child to do two or three fun or unusual things in a row. For example, ask him to “Touch your elbow and then run in a circle” or “Find a book and put it on your head.”</td>
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<td>Encourage your child’s “sharing skills” by making a play corner in your home.</td>
<td>Include only two children to start (a brother, sister, or friend) and have a few of the same type of toys available so that the children don’t have to share all of the time. Puppets or blocks are good because they encourage playing together. If needed, use an egg or oven timer with a bell to allow the children equal time with the toys.</td>
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<td>Make an adventure path outside.</td>
<td>Use a garden hose, rope, or piece of chalk and make a “path” that goes under the bench, around the tree, and along the wall. Walk your child through the path first, using these words. After she can do it, make a new path or have your child make a path.</td>
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<td>Find large pieces of paper or cardboard for your child to draw on.</td>
<td>Using crayons, pencils, or markers, play a drawing game where you follow his lead by copying exactly what he draws. Next, encourage your child to copy your drawings, such as circles or straight lines.</td>
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<td>When reading or telling a familiar story for bedtime, stop and leave out a word. Wait for your child to “fill in the blank.”</td>
<td>Make a necklace you can eat by stringing Cheerios or Froot Loops on a piece of yarn or string. Wrap a short piece of tape around the end of the string to make a firm tip for stringing.</td>
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<td>Listen and dance to music with your child.</td>
<td>You can stop the music for a moment and play the “freeze” game, where everyone “freezes,” or stands perfectly still, until you start the music again. Try to “freeze” in unusual positions for fun.</td>
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<td>Make long scarves out of fabric scraps, old dresses, or old shirts by tearing or cutting long pieces. Use material that is lightweight. Hold on to the edge of the scarf, twirl around, run, and jump.</td>
<td>Put out several objects that are familiar to your child (brush, coat, banana, spoon, book). Ask your child to show you which one you can eat or which one you wear outside. Help your child put the objects in groups that go together, such as “things that we eat” and “things that we wear.”</td>
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Communication
Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child is learning to use complete sentences to tell you all about what’s happening. He also can follow more than one direction at a time. He has probably learned both his first and last name and can tell you if you ask. He loves to have conversations with a friend or maybe a toy doll or bear. He has learned that a voice on the telephone really comes from a person, even though he can’t see the speaker, and your child is more likely to talk than just listen.

Good Night
When it’s time to go to bed, give goodnight kisses all over. Tell your child, “I’m going to kiss you on your knee. I’m going to kiss you on top of your head. Now I’m going to kiss you behind your ear. Good night back there! Good night everywhere!"

Who’s This Person?
Pretend you suddenly forgot who your child is. Say, “What’s your name, little girl? Is it Samantha? Is it Rosita? Do you have another name?” When she tells you her name, you can be very happily surprised!

Love Notes
Put little notes to your child here and there. A note might say, “You are a very helpful brother to your baby sister.” A note on your child’s toy shelf can say you noticed that the toys were put away. A note by the plate at dinnertime can say that Dad will read a favorite story at bedtime. Read these notes to your little one so that he learns reading is fun and important.

Where the Creatures Live
Go for a walk outside and look for living things. Ask your child questions about the world around her. “Where do we see birds?” Up in the sky. “Where do bugs live?” Under rocks. Your child may need a little help at first, but soon she will know the answers.

Weather Person
At the start of the day, ask your child to look out the window and tell you about the weather. Is it sunny? Is it raining? Is it cloudy? What will the weather be today? Have your child draw a picture of the sun if the day is sunny, raindrops if the day is rainy, and clouds if the sky is cloudy.

A Card of Love
Collect paper and glue; little craft items such as stickers, stamps, or ribbons; and pictures of favorite things and animals. Make a birthday or greeting card for someone special. Talk about this person, and help your child write a message. Address the card, stamp it, and mail it. This little kindness will bring much appreciation.

Notes:

Don’t Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.
Fine Motor
Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child is becoming more skilled at buttoning and zipping clothing. He can use a fork and spoon to feed himself. He can spread soft butter, hummus, or jam on bread. He can hold a pencil or crayon with his thumb and two fingers and likes to draw. He may be able to draw circles or other simple shapes or letters.

Button-Up Bear
Let your child dress a large stuffed teddy bear or large doll. Make sure the clothes have a couple of large buttons or snaps to let your child practice small finger work. You might even find some baby shoes with Velcro or other similar closures. Tying or buckling shoes is probably too difficult right now. Say, “What a good Papa Bear you are!”

Beautiful Necklace
Cut small circles or flowers out of colored paper, and punch a hole in the center. Then, cut a large plastic soda straw into pieces. Let your child string the flowers and straw pieces with a shoelace. Show her how to make a pattern—flower, straw, flower, straw. She may not always repeat the pattern, but that is okay. Tie the ends, and she will have her own beautiful necklace!

Picking Peas
Buy a few fresh peapods at the market. Show your child how to find the peas inside the shell. Give him a few in a plastic container to shell for himself. When he is finished, rinse off the peas and eat them. Yum!

Sidewalk Artist
Let your child draw pictures on the sidewalk or driveway with colored outdoor chalk. You can also give your child a small paintbrush and let her paint a picture with water. The painting will be fun, and so will the magic of evaporation: “Where did your picture go?”

List Maker
Give your child a small pad of paper with a pencil or pen. Ask your child to help you make a shopping list. Let him write his own “words,” and even draw pictures. When you get to the market, ask him to “read” his list. He is learning the magic of writing by putting meaning with his scribbles.

Little Snipper
Let your child practice cutting with safety scissors. Show her how to open and close the scissors while you hold the paper. Later, show her how to hold the scissors in one hand while she holds the paper with the other. At first, snipping edges is great progress. If she snips off a few pieces, save them in an envelope. Later, she can glue the little pieces on paper for a special art project!

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Gross Motor
Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child can usually kick a ball forward, jump, and perhaps hop on one foot. She likes to do things for longer periods of time now and may spend quite a long time riding a tricycle or pulling things in a wagon. Climbing is getting to be one of her favorite activities. She also enjoys active play with friends. Having used all that energy, she will usually sleep well through the night.

- **Marching in the Band**
  Show your active child how to march like a member of the band. Be sure to get those knees up high! Invite a friend to join you. Add a drum and a flag and make a parade!

- **Kangaroo Kid**
  Show your child how a kangaroo jumps around. Pretend to be a mother kangaroo. With your feet together, jump, jump, jump. Call for your baby kangaroo to follow you. This is fun outdoors or with a friend.

- **Freeze!**
  Let your child dance or move around in any way he wants. When you say, “Freeze,” he has to stop right away in the middle of a motion. Start the movement up again by saying, “Melt.” Take turns playing this silly game.

- **Soccer Fun**
  Give your child a medium-size ball. Show her how to kick it by swinging a foot back, then forward. Turn a cardboard box on its side and encourage your child to kick the ball into the box for a goal. Shout, “Goal!” when your child gets the ball into the box.

- **Airplanes Everywhere**
  Let your child pretend to be an airplane and run with arms outstretched. Show him how to lean to the left, then to the right. Make some airplane noises. Swoop down low, and then fly around in a circle. Time to slow down! Bend down and land.

- **Big Box Basketball**
  Place an open box or laundry basket on a table or surface higher than chair level. Give your child a ball to throw overhand into the box or basket. You can also tie a ribbon across the tops of two chair backs with the box on the other side. Show your child how to throw the ball over the ribbon and into the box: “You did it! Hooray for you!”

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Personal-Social
Activities to Help Your Child Grow and Learn

Your child is becoming more and more sociable. He can be very helpful with household tasks and can take care of many of his personal needs. He plays with other children but still needs support at times to cooperate and share. Your approval and attention are very important to him. He likes being silly and making others laugh, especially you.

**Dress-Up Fun**
Let your child play dress up in some old or interesting clothes. Boots are fun, as well as large hats, belts, and other accessories. A scarf or necklace adds a nice touch. A purse, wallet, or vest also makes the play interesting. Make sure there are some buttons to button, zippers to zip, or gloves to stick fingers into. Put a mirror at your child’s level: “Where are you going today?”

**Counting Turns**
Help your child learn to manage taking turns by counting how long a turn will last. For example, tell your child he can swing until the count of 10 and then it will be his brother’s turn. Count 10 swings out loud: “Okay, now it’s your brother’s turn for 10 swings. Help me count.” Your child will learn that the wait for a turn will soon be over.

**Wonderful Rhythm and Rock**
Read or recite poems and rhymes to your child at special cozy quiet times. Cuddle up and rock a little to the rhythm of the words, or just cuddle and rock. Let your child fill in missing words to a familiar rhyme: “Humpty Dumpty sat on a…” Wall!

**Cupcakes for All**
Let your child help you bake cupcakes. She can sift, pour, and stir as much as she is able. Let her spread icing with a plastic knife. Talk about who the cupcake is for. Place it on a napkin and write that person’s name on the napkin. Let your child share the special cupcakes.

**Counting Goodnight Kisses**
When you put your child to bed, count kisses out loud. Ask your child how many kisses for the chin: “Three? Okay, one [kiss], two [kiss], three [kiss]. How about your nose?” What a happy way to learn to count!

**Counting Cars**
Riding in the car or on the bus, ask your child to count all the blue cars he sees. Help him watch for blue cars and count them out loud. Remember, blue trucks don’t count. Next time, let your child choose what to count!

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Problem Solving
Activities to Help Your Child Grown and Learn

Your busy learner is gaining many skills. She can put puzzles together (six pieces or maybe more), draw some shapes (circles and squares), and identify a few colors. She can match an object to a picture of that object and notices many similarities and differences. She is very curious about how things work, and your answers really help her understand and learn.

- **Box o’ Blocks**
  Collect blocks and small boxes for your child to use for building. Build things together. Cardboard pieces make great roofs, and rulers or paint-stirring sticks make great bridges. Make a town. Add some toy cars and toy people. The town will come to life!

- **Picnic Memory Magic**
  Pretend that you are going on a picnic to help your child develop her memory. Say, “We’re going on a picnic, and we’re bringing apples.” Encourage your child to think of the next item. “We’re going on a picnic and we’re bringing apples and (cookies).” Take turns and keep adding new items. How many items can she remember? This is great fun while riding in the car or on the bus!

- **Mr. Sticks**
  Ask your child to draw a stick figure on a paper plate or piece of cardboard. Say, “This is Mr. Sticks.” Hide Mr. Sticks, and give your child clues to lead to Mr. Sticks: “He’s in a room with water but not the bathroom. He’s in a drawer near a door.” Finding Mr. Sticks earns a big hug. Now it’s your child’s turn to give you clues.

- **Money Management**
  Make play money from green paper. Pretend to be the storekeeper and say, “Those socks cost $2. This lunch costs $3.” Help your child count the right amount of money. Now let your child be the storekeeper. Add to the fun by collecting cereal boxes or empty milk cartons to make a store.

- **Picture Shopping List**
  Cut magazine or newspaper pictures of some foods you’ll be shopping for. Place them in an empty envelope and take them to the supermarket. Let your child pull out the pictures and remind you of what you need. If he is holding a picture of eggs, say, “Yes, we need eggs today.” When you buy the items, be sure to thank him for helping you remember!

- **Set the Table**
  Let your child help you set the table. Put a plate at each place. Now ask your child to count the plates. Ask your child to tell you how many spoons she will need. Help her count them out loud. As she gets better at counting, add other items: “How many napkins do we need? You are a very good helper.”

- **Big, Bigger, Biggest!**
  Gather four or five shoes of different sizes. Make a line on the floor with tape or string, or draw a line on a large piece of paper. Ask your child to line up the shoes. Show him how to start with the smallest, then find the next biggest, then the next, until the biggest shoe is at the other end. Once he has the idea, gather up all the shoes again and mix them up. Ask him how fast he can line them up from smallest to biggest. Ready, set, go! Try this game with other items such as rocks or pinecones.

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