



Playtime Connections: Puzzles

CONNECTING & LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Puzzles	<p>Puzzles are fabulous toys for your child’s development and family fun! Be sure to look for puzzles of good quality and try to find some that have realistic looking pictures. Some puzzles make different sounds – which just add to the fun and learning! Puzzles can easily be incorporated into your everyday routines. Routines are things you do every day with your child. These routines include getting the mail, washing dishes, doing laundry, running errands, playing, etc. – things that are consistent and repetitive. Play Routines include playing with objects, moving your body, exploring objects with your senses, learning social interactions, communicating with others and singing songs!</p>
Different Types of Puzzles	<p>Knob Puzzles – These puzzles are the easiest for children to use. They are made from chunky pieces of wood and the pieces do not connect. Each piece has a knob attached for little hands to use as a handle to guide the puzzle pieces. These are perfect for younger children and are great for working matching pictures.</p> <p>Chunky Puzzles – These puzzles are chunky pieces of wood without handles. Children are able to easily hold and manipulate the chunky pieces and match them into the correct space. Since the child has to use their whole hands to hold these chunkier pieces, they are working on their fine motor skills, along with matching and visual skills.</p> <p>Peg Puzzles – These puzzles are usually made of wood and are similar to the knob puzzles, but they have smaller pegs attached to them. They are the most advanced version of the inset puzzles and work on fine motor, matching and naming pictures, and social play as these puzzles can be completed by two or three children together.</p> <p>Frame Puzzles – These puzzles lay the foundation for classic jigsaw puzzles. Frame puzzles are made from cardboard, and the pieces are interlocking, and they all fit into one frame. The frame helps children by guiding the pieces into the correct place as the background of the frame board indicate the shapes of the pieces (like a blueprint of the actual puzzle pieces).</p> <p>Jigsaw Puzzles – These puzzles are the classic cardboard puzzles we know and love. The pieces interlock together without a frame or guide.</p> <p>Floor Puzzles – These puzzles are usually quite large and can be assembled on the floor, or a large table. They have big interlocking jigsaw puzzles pieces without a frame.</p>
PLAY	<p>The different types of puzzles require different grasps and fine motor skills. Whether your child is grasping a knob puzzle piece, or a chunky wood piece, they are working on strengthening the muscles in their hands and working on manipulating objects. Smaller peg puzzle pieces work on using the pincer grasp – which is needed for a variety of fine motor skills including handwriting. Some puzzles have latches and locks for your child to work on. These puzzles provide good practice for everyday activities.</p>

MOVE	For younger children, place the puzzle board on the couch or ottoman, and the puzzle pieces on the floor. Encourage your child to squat down and pick up the pieces, then stand up to place them on the board. For older children, place the puzzle pieces across the room and encourage your child to crawl, hop, run, jump from one side of the room to the other to place them in the puzzle board.
EXPLORE	Some puzzles come with different textures and sounds. Encourage your child to interact with different textures and talk about how they feel. Are they rough, smooth, bumpy? Use lots of language to describe the way they feel. Some puzzles have different sounds for animals, transportation, etc. If you have puzzles with sounds, encourage your child to play with them and see how they respond to the different sounds.
LEARN	Puzzles are a great toy for working on turn-taking and requesting skills. Give your child one puzzle piece to put on the board, then say, “my turn” and place your puzzle piece. Encourage your child to ask for “more” or indicate “my turn” to get another piece. Hand your child one puzzle piece at a time. See if they can find the matching picture on the puzzle. If they need help, cover up a few of the pictures on the puzzle board to limit their choices. Puzzles are also great for building expressing language skills. Instead of asking “what’s this?,” point to a puzzle piece and use the phrase, “I see” and then pause and see if your child can fill in the blank by naming the picture.
TALK	While playing puzzles, be sure to talk about what you and your child are seeing and doing. Hearing words while playing helps build their vocabulary and language development. You can use phrases such as “I see car” and “I hear sheep.” Target words: puzzles, on, off, more, in, out, etc.”
SING	Children love music and it’s a great way to reinforce language and movement.

Puzzle, Puzzle

Puzzle, puzzle – 1, 2, 3
 Puzzle, puzzle – A, B, C
 Puzzle, puzzle – you and me
 We can do puzzles together.

Let’s Build a Puzzle

Let’s build a puzzle – you and me.
 What kinds of pieces do you see?
 I can count them one-by-one...
 Puzzles with you is so much fun!

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

Brainstorm other daily routines where you can target some of these skills.

PROBLEM SOLVING, REFLECTION & FEEDBACK:

Think about how things went when you tried these activities with your child. What went well? What will you do differently or try next time?

