

# Social Distancing Can Be Fun!



Fun activities for young children  
that reinforce social distance



# Getting Started

Right now, social distancing is very important and yet, it can be challenging to maintain when you are working with young children. In this booklet, you will find hands-on experiences that encourage social distancing. Many of these are designed to be conducted outdoors where maintaining the required 6 foot distance is much easier. **Any materials printed in red may require a little more time to gather or prepare.**

At Gee Whiz, we use a series of picture symbols to help you identify the developmental areas addressed by each activity. Below you will find a chart that matches each picture to a developmental area. As you review the experiences presented in this guide, you will quickly see that each experience addresses many different developmental areas. For more information on these developmental areas, please check out our User's Guide <https://geewhizeducation.com/geewhiz-curriculum-users-guide/>

## Program Symbols for Developmental Areas

- |                           |                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 🗨️ = Language Development | 🌐 = Social Studies Knowledge        |
| 📖 = Literacy Knowledge    | ❤️ = Social & Emotional Development |
| ① = Math Knowledge        | 🎵 & 🖋️ = Music & Creative Arts      |
| 🔍 = Science Knowledge     | 👐 = Physical Development & Health   |
| ? = Logic & Reasoning     | 😊 = Approaches to Learning          |



Most importantly, thank you for all you are doing during this worldwide crisis. Child care providers are on the front line, providing care for essential workers. You are essential, too! Our hats are off to you!

# Dancing in a Circle

## Developmental Areas Addressed:



### Materials Needed:

- Music
- Hula hoops, jump ropes, string/yarn or sidewalk chalk**

### Purpose/Goals:

During this experience, the children will build gross motor skills, coordination and more as they express themselves through music & movement. Because this game also involves circles, it opens the door for you to introduce/reinforce this shape as well.

### Directions:

Ahead of time, arrange Hula hoops or jump ropes/string or yarn (made into circles) on the grass in your outdoor play space. You will need one for each child. Make sure the Hula hoops/jump ropes/string or yarn are at least 6 feet apart. If you do not have Hula hoops or jump ropes or prefer not to use string/yarn, you can draw circles on a paved surface using sidewalk chalk instead. Again, make sure that the circles are at least 6 feet apart.

Introduce the game, “Dancing in the Circle. To get started, have each child stand inside a circle. Explain to the children that you are going to turn on music. When the music is playing, the children should dance. But when you stop the music, they should freeze in place. Next, turn on recorded music and invite the children to “dance in the circle.” As the children dance, describe their actions as well as the tempo of the music. Then, randomly turn off the music. See if the children can freeze in place. Be sure to describe their positions while they are frozen. Then, turn on another song and repeat. Continue to play the game for as long as the children show interest.



*If you used string/yarn, gather it up and store out of the reach of children when finished.*

# Outdoor Art Studio

## Developmental Areas Addressed:



### **Materials Needed:**

- Large sheets of white paper
- Paint in cups and paintbrushes (for each child)
- Tape
- Paint smocks (if you use these)

### **Purpose/Goals:**

During this experience, the children express their ideas and engage in dramatic play as they pretend to be artists. Instead of painting indoors, the children will use a fence as an “easel.” Being outside will also inspire children to create in different ways.

### **Directions:**

Ahead of time, use tape to attach large sheets of paper to a fence, deck rail, etc. Just make sure to position the papers so they are at least 6 feet apart. Put paint cups and paintbrushes near each sheet of paper.

It’s time to paint! Invite interested children to choose a sheet of paper and begin creating a beautiful work of art. As the children paint, be sure to circulate and engage them in conversations. This would be an extremely appropriate time for you to talk about colors as well. For those children who are more advanced, you may even want to see which colors they can identify. For children who are just beginning to explore color names, be sure to name the colors as the children use them.



As the children paint, be sure to talk about how they are artists. After all, the works of art they create are beautiful! Allow the paintings to dry and then display them in your own “art gallery.” Be sure to take photos of the art gallery to share with parents/guardians.

# Cardboard Box Vehicle Fun

## Developmental Areas Addressed:



### Materials Needed:

- **Large cardboard box for each child**
- Assorted art/collage materials
- **Old jar lids, spools, plastic lids, etc.**
- Tape, glue/old paintbrushes, gluesticks
- Large paper plates
- Crayons/markers
- Index cards (large & small)



### Purpose/Goals:

During this experience, the children will transform simple cardboard boxes into their own unique vehicles. In the process, the children will build fine motor control, express their ideas in a unique way, engage in dramatic play and so much more.

### Directions:

Ahead of time, cut the bottom and flaps from a cardboard box for each child. The boxes should be big enough so the children can stand inside them and pull them up around their mid-section.

Who wants to make their own vehicle? Pose this question to the children as you set out the materials listed above. Put the art/collage materials, glue/old paintbrushes, etc. on a table but have the children take turns getting what they need and then returning to their boxes (which are positioned 6 feet apart).

Invite the children to use the materials as desired to transform their boxes into vehicles. They may choose to use paper plates for wheels or even a steering wheels. They may decided to glue on jar lids, spools, etc. for buttons/knobs to create a dashboard. As the children create, be sure to engage them in conversations. More advanced children may even want to make license plates and driver's licenses.

When the children finish their vehicles, set up an obstacle course outside that they can "drive through." Position the obstacles so they are 6 feet apart and tell the children that in order to be "safe drivers," they must wait until the vehicle in front of them clears the obstacle before they move forward.

# "Paint" It with Water

## Developmental Areas Addressed:



### Materials Needed:

- **Bowl or other container of water for each child**
- **Paintbrush or paint roller for each child (like you would use when painting a room)**

### Purpose/Goals:

During this experience, the children will not just build fine motor control and eye-hand coordination, they will also explore the concept of evaporation.

### Directions:

Ahead of time, fill a bowl or other container with water for each child. Also, locate a large paintbrush or a paint roller (like you would use when painting a room) for each child.

It's time for some water fun! Put out a bowl/container or water with a paintbrush or roller for each child. Position each bowl/container and paintbrush/roller near something that would be safe for the children to "paint" with water in your outdoor play space. Make sure that the water containers and brushes/rollers are at least 6 feet apart.

As children become curious, invite them to "paint" with water. The children can dip their brushes/rollers in water and then use them to "paint." As the children do so, be sure to describe the actions of nonverbal children.

Encourage those children who are more verbal to describe their actions for you.

With your more advanced children, discuss the concept of evaporation. As the children paint with water, encourage these children to make predictions about what they believe will happen to the water they paint on the objects. Be sure to ask open-ended questions to really get the children thinking such as, "What do you think is going to happen to the water you painted on the (name of item)?" and then follow up with, "Why do you think that?" Then, encourage the children to observe their water painting over time. Were their predictions correct?



# Can You Carry It?

## Developmental Areas Addressed:



### Materials Needed:

- **Large plastic cooking spoon (for 3+) or plastic bowl (for Toddlers/Twos) - 1 for each child**
- **Plastic Easter egg, tennis ball or small plastic ball for each child**

### Purpose/Goals:

This experience challenges the children's coordination and balance. At the same time, it also requires children to practice following oral directions.

### Directions:

This game is really going to require the children to build coordination skills while practicing patience and persistence! Because different developmental levels will need adaptations, we are providing options.



Toddlers/Twos: Give each child a plastic bowl and put a plastic Easter egg or tennis/small plastic ball in the bowl. Then, give the children simple directions to follow. Make sure to give directions that require the children to go in different directions so they remain 6 feet apart. For instance, you might say, "Jose...please carry your egg/ball to the tree and come back" while you say, "Sarah...please carry your egg/ball to the sliding board and then come back."

Threes/Fours/Advanced Preschoolers: These children can put their egg/ball on a large plastic spoon which they will then attempt to carry to a destination you describe. Again, you will give each child a different direction. Because these children are more advanced, you can give them multi-step directions such as, "Amir... please carry your egg/ball to the fence, touch it with your other hand, then walk around the sandbox and come back to me." Your most advanced children may even want to assume a leadership role and help you come up with directions to give other children. Again, just make sure to send the children in different directions so they maintain a 6 foot separation at all times.

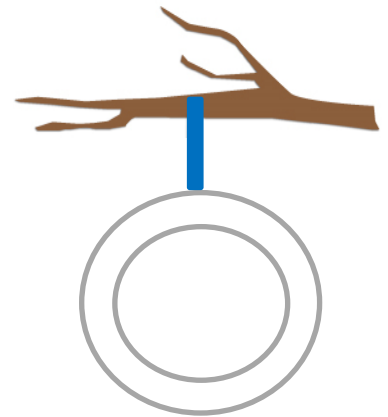
# Ready? Aim? Toss!

## Developmental Areas Addressed:



### Materials Needed:

- **Hula hoops or posterboard circle (with center cut out)**  
- You will need 1 for each pair of children
- **String/yarn**
- **Small plastic balls or old newspaper**



### Purpose/Goals:

This experience invites children to practice tossing at a target while also following simple directions. This game also opens the door for you to reinforce the circle shape. For more advanced children, it provides the opportunity for practicing counting skills as well.

### Directions:

Ahead of time, use string/yarn to suspend Hula hoops OR large posterboard circles from trees in your outdoor play space. You will need one Hula hoop or posterboard circle for each pair of children.

As children show interest, introduce the game, "Ready? Aim? Toss!" First, divide the children into pair and position one child on each side of the suspended Hula hoop or posterboard circle. Then, give each child a small plastic ball OR have him/her make a ball using old newspaper. Next, to play the game, have the children take turns tossing their balls to try to get them through the hoop/circle. If you are working with Toddlers, Twos and even Young Threes, keep in mind that these children will probably want to retrieve their "own ball" after they toss it. This is fine. In this case, the children can just keep switching sides.

More advanced children can attempt to toss the ball through the hoop/circle with their partner on the other side. They will probably have fun trying tossing their balls at the same time to see what happens. These children can also be challenged to identify the shape of the hoop/circle and to count the number of times their ball goes through the hoop and then number of times it misses. They can keep track using tally marks on a sheet of paper.



# Finding Colors

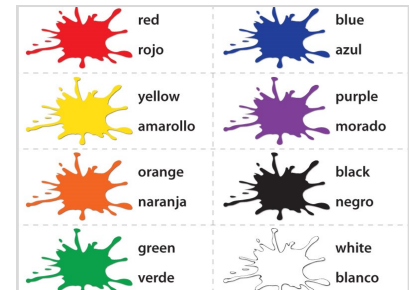
The Color Cards you will need for these experience can be found on page 10.

## Developmental Areas Addressed:



### Materials Needed:

- Paper lunch or grocery bag
- Copy of Color Cards, prepared - Print out page 10, cut apart and mount to index cards



### Purpose/Goals:

This experience helps children practice matching and identifying colors. It also invites more advanced children to practice counting skills. You may also want to use these cards to expose children to a language other than English (Spanish).

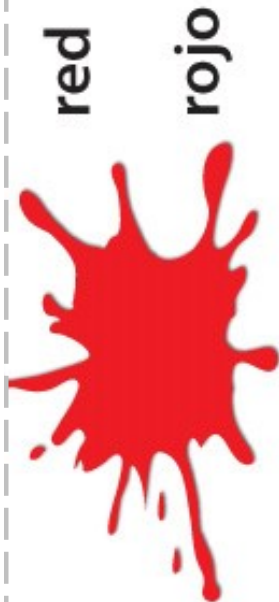
### Directions:

Ahead of time, put the Color Cards in a paper lunch or grocery bag.

Introduce the game, "Finding Colors." To play, have the children take turns pulling a color card from the bag. See if the child can identify the color (if more advanced) or you can name the color for them. Then, have the children look for things that are the same color to touch. Remind them to spread out as they look for items. You can either do this activity indoors or outside ... or both!

As the children find items, challenge those who are more verbal to name what they find. These children can also count the number of items they find that are each color. If you would like, you can record this information on a sheet of paper. Then, at the end of the game, more advanced children can compare and contrast to see which color they found the most, the least, the same, etc.

It would be great to play this game both indoors and outside because the items the children find will be different.



red

rojo



yellow

amarillo



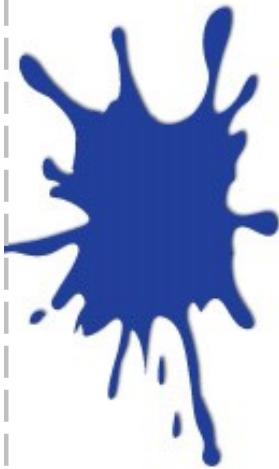
orange

naranja



green

verde



blue

azul



purple

morado



black

negro



white

blanco

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