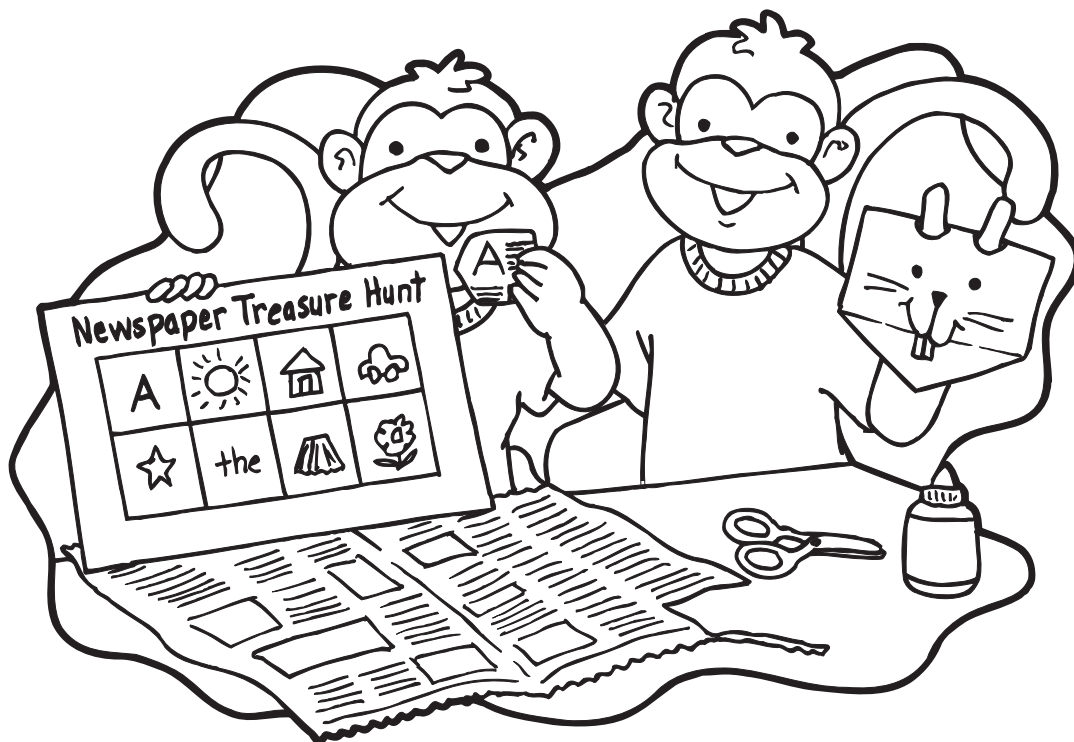


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INTRODUCTION

This book contains many 'quick tricks' – activities that help children learn a variety of skills. The tricks show how to transform materials that are close at hand into intriguing learning materials and props for educational play. These tricks are designed around children's interests. Preschool children learn best from hands-on experiences with learning materials. Therefore, your children will be encouraged to talk and be excited about learning.

Enjoy the activities in a casual, informal setting and atmosphere. The emphasis is on having a thinking and learning experience, not in getting a correct answer. If your children offer incorrect information, ask them how they figured that out and suggest other ways to explore. Remember that young children's brains have not finished developing. They are concrete thinkers and their way of looking at things is different from adults' methods. Children build their knowledge and their problem-solving abilities through repetition of activities like those in this book.

Everyday materials and your enthusiasm are all that are needed for these quick tricks. Your children will enjoy helping gather materials. Only a few activities require advance preparation. Some tricks call for the use of photos. With digital cameras and computer printers, making paper copies of photos is inexpensive and easy. Or use processed photos from other cameras. Make photocopies of these pictures and then use the inexpensive photocopies in the activities. Some copy machines will enlarge or reduce copies, which is convenient for some of the tricks in this book.

Use these quick tricks in any order. Relax and enjoy the time you spend doing the activities with your children. You will see their skills grow and their thinking and reasoning skills expand while together you delight in the fun of exploring and learning.

Clipping Hair Clips

A Quick Trick with Paper Plates and Hair Clips



Gather These Materials:

textas
several heavy-duty paper plates
35 cm lengths of bulky wool, six for each plate
stapler and staples (for adult use only)
assorted plastic hair clips

Where: anywhere

How: Ask any child to use the textas to draw a face on a paper plate. Gather three pieces of the wool, hold them by one end, then tie them together in a knot at that end of the bundle. From this knot, braid three strands of wool into one braid, tying a knot at the bottom of the braid to hold it tight. Repeat with the remaining wool, making another braid. Staple a braid to each side of the plate face. Repeat with more plates, making several faces with braids.

Put the faces and a container of hair clips in a basket. Show the children how they can attach hair clips to the braids and remove them, returning the clips to the container. After they've had many opportunities to play with the activity, encourage them to put a matching pattern of hair clips on each braid.

Variation:

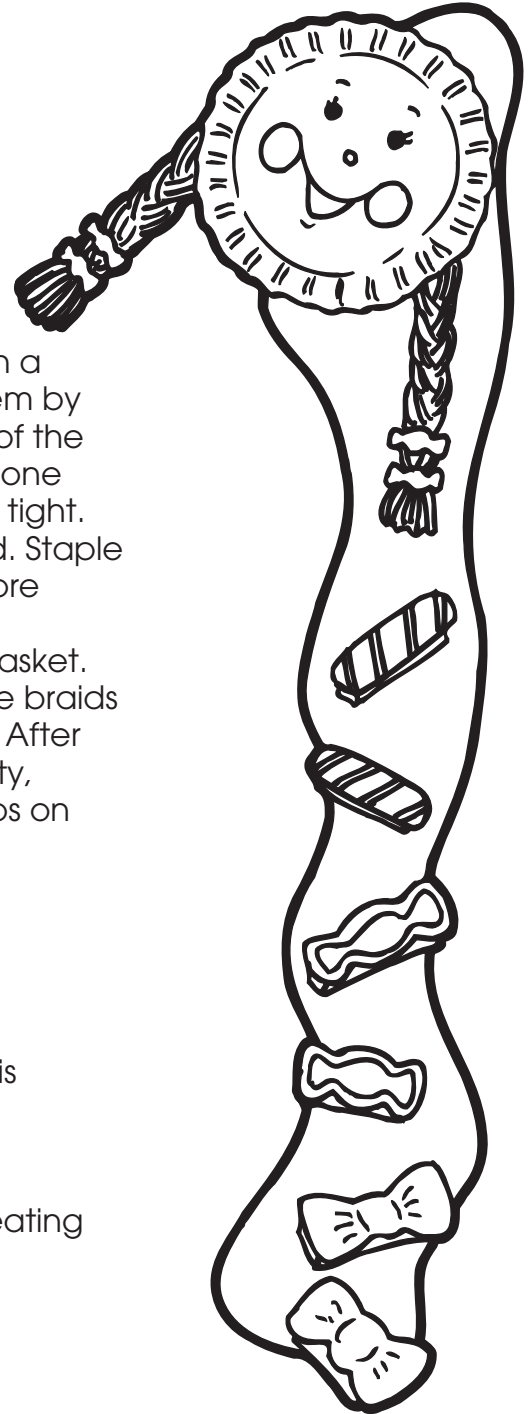
Let the children braid the wool hair themselves.

Note:

A hot glue gun can be used instead of a stapler. Do this away from the children.

This activity helps children learn about:

increasing small motor control, following directions, creating and repeating patterns, braiding and observing.





Half a Mask

A Quick Trick with A Paper Plate

Gather These Materials:

textas
white paper plates
scissors
glue
assorted craft items (construction paper, paints, crayons, feathers)
stapler and staples
drinking straw

Where: at a table

How: With a texta, draw a line across the centre of a paper plate. Have the child cut the plate in half and use one half for a mask. Help them make a mark at the halfway point along the straight edge of the plate and cut a small semicircle at that point. This opening in the mask will rest on their nose. (Assist children who need help.)

Hold the plate half, curved side up, over the upper part of the child's face, with the opening resting on their nose. Have the child use their fingers to indicate where their eyes are. With a texta, make a mark at those two points on the plate. Remove the plate from the child's face and cut an eyehole around each mark.

Have the child decorate the mask with the assorted craft items. Suggest hair, eyebrows, animal stripes, ears, robotic features and more. Help the child staple a drinking straw along the side of his mask. Show them how to hold the mask in place while using the straw as a handle.

Variation:

Have children make up impromptu scenes while 'wearing' their masks. Talk about ways they can change their voices and movements to take on their new identities.

This activity helps children learn about:

engaging in dramatic play.



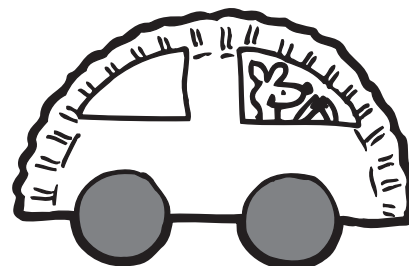
Zoom, Zoom

A Quick Trick with a Paper Plate



Gather These Materials:

white paper plates cut in half (half a plate for each child)
black paper
glue
textas
child-safe scissors
construction paper scraps
chart



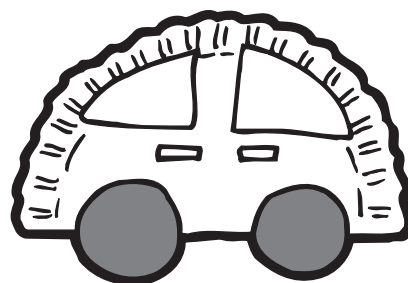
Where: at a table to make the cars

How: Cut the black paper into small circles. (These will be the wheels on the paper plate cars.) Give each child half of a paper plate and two black circles. Have children turn the plates so that the straight edge is on the bottom. These plates will become cars. Have children glue the black circles on the straight edge for wheels, then have them use textas or construction paper scraps to make features for the car. They might add car doors or a driver and passengers. Some may colour the entire car. Encourage all efforts.

Write the words to this song on a chart. Have children move their cars around while they sing the song. Use the chart as desired for language activities.

Tune: 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'

Zoom, zoom goes my little car,
Driving near and driving far.
Around the curves, around the bend,
Up the hills and down again,
Zoom, zoom, goes my little car,
Driving near and driving far.

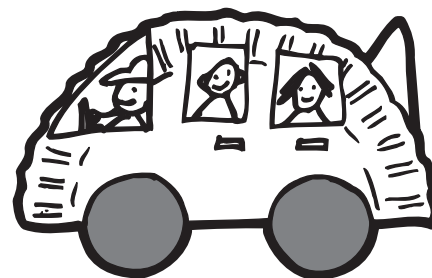


Variation:

Encourage the children to make up more words to the song, telling other places the car goes. For more variety, have them substitute names of other vehicles for the word 'car'.

This activity helps children learn about:

rhythm and rhyming sounds and names of vehicles.





Framed!

A Quick Trick with a Plastic Plate

Gather These Materials:

children's artwork
sturdy plastic disposable plate with a rim (one for each child)
texta
scissors (for adult use only)
child-safe scissors
white glue
wool
tape

Where: at a table

How: Collect children's artwork that you wish to frame. Place a plastic plate on a piece of cardboard larger than the plate. Trace around the plate's bottom. Cut the cardboard just inside the traced image, making a piece that fits inside the plate. This is your template.

Position the template over a piece of artwork and trace around the template. Have the artist cut on the line, trimming the artwork to fit inside the plate's bottom. Spread a thin layer of white glue inside the bottom of a plate and help the child lay the artwork atop the glue, with the art showing. Let the glue dry. Help the child tape a loop of wool on the back of the plate at the top. Hang the artwork in a gallery display.

Variation:

Leftover plates from seasonal parties and birthdays make bright frames.

This activity helps children learn about:

valuing their work and displaying it with pride.



Colourful Flowers

A Quick Trick with Paper Plates



Gather These Materials:

small, white paper plates (one for each child)
textas or paints and paintbrushes
child-safe scissors
green construction paper
glue
permanent texta
colourful classroom items in a basket (more items than children)

Where: at a table to make the flowers
on the floor to use the flowers

How: Give each child a small plate and have them colour it one colour using a texta or one colour of paint. Provide green construction paper and scissors and have children cut out stems and leaves for their flowers. Have the children glue the leaves to their stem and the stems to their flowers. With a permanent texta, write each flower's colour name in the centre of the flower.

Spread the flowers on the floor. Pass the basket of colourful items and have each child select an item. In turn, let each child tell the colour of their item and place the item on the matching colour flower. Repeat the activity as long as it interests the children.

Variation:

For older children who are beginning to recognise letters and words, write each colour's name on an individual index card. Make a card for each flower. Have each child select a colour name card and place the card on a matching flower.

This activity helps children learn about:

learning and using colour names.

