



BUILDING BLOCKS

DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

Invite your child to build towers and bridges using blocks and encourage them to notice how their choices affect what they create.

As your child stacks and balances blocks, they use their senses to test different materials and notice how actions like adding, removing, or rearranging blocks changes the structure.

Your child can also begin to understand early ideas of spatial relationships and measurement as they compare sizes, heights, and how stable their structures are while they work toward a building a tower or bridge.

STEM LEARNING AREAS:

Engineering: Figuring out how things work and using materials to design, build, test, and improve solutions to problems

Physical Science: Concepts related to objects or things, what they do, and how they move

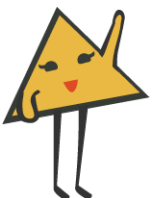
- **Structure & Properties of Materials:** Understanding characteristics of things and how those characteristics impact what things do

Math: Concepts related to numbers, patterns, shapes, and space, and how to use them to solve problems

- **Spatial Orientation:** Understanding the relationships between different positions of objects or things
- **Measurement:** Understanding how much, how long, how heavy, or how full something is

WHAT DO I NEED?:

- Variety of blocks (size, color, texture, material, shapes)



WHAT CAN I TALK ABOUT?:

- Measurement: Tall/Short, Wide/Narrow, Big/Small
- Compare and Contrast
- Spatial Orientation: Top/Bottom, In front/Behind, Above/Under, Next to
- Textures: Soft/Hard
- Materials: Wood, Plastic, Cloth

WHAT CAN I ASK?:

- What would happen if you stack this block on top of that block?
- Which block tower is taller? Shorter? Wider?
- How high can we build with these blocks?
- What would happen if we stacked a big block on top of a small block?



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ADAPTATIONS FOR DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

Every child is different. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested playtime activity. These are only suggested activity adaptations. Consider consulting your child's care team first.



Follow your child's lead and interests. Enthusiastically ask your child questions about what they are doing and what they like.



Answer your child's questions. If you do not know the answer, work together with your child to discover the answer.



Encourage your child to participate in the activity as much as possible. Praise your child's efforts and successes.

ENVIRONMENT

- If possible, limit background noise and distractions
- Place objects within reach
- Use a reacher or grabber to pick up the block off the floor

MATERIALS

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) device
- For children with physical disabilities with fine motor or grasping needs, consider using tools and assistive devices (grabber, reacher, Velcro strap)
- Provide a variety of blocks (cardboard, Legos, wood, soft/fabric. big/small)

INSTRUCTION

- Use a variety of methods of communication (sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage children
- Model and demonstrate how to interact with blocks
- Allow longer waiting time for child to respond and process this activity



Need visual cues?

Visit [STEMIE's Visual Cue Library](#) or check out STEMIE's tips for creating and using visual supports with [A Guide to Visual Supports](#).



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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Record how tall each tower is
- Talk with the child about which building structures seemed the sturdiest. Encourage the child to document their plans in some way.
- Set up small obstacles and challenges for children, such as trying to put a round object (ball) on the tower and support problem-solving around the obstacle.
- Model specific structures (like a bridge with 3 blocks) and see if the child can imitate it.
- Check out these great books about blocks:
 - *When I Build With Blocks* by Niki Alling
 - *Blocks* by Irene Dickson
 - *The Blocks Come Out at Night* by Javier Garay
 - *Bigger! Bigger!* by Leslie Patricelli

