



STRING TELEPHONE

DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

Invite your child to build a “String Telephone” using two cups and a piece of string. Encourage them to talk, listen, and explore sounds.

Help your child notice and explore how the cups and the strings made of different materials and different lengths make different sounds. Encourage them to try loud and quiet voices, high and low sounds, and fast or slow talking to hear how the sound changes.

As your child tests different materials and string lengths, they begin to learn they what works best, helping them explore how their actions and materials affect sound.

STEM LEARNING AREAS:

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

- **Sound:** Vibrations that can be heard or felt when objects move
- **Structure & Properties of Materials:** Understanding characteristics of things and how those characteristics impact what things do

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

WHAT DO I NEED?:

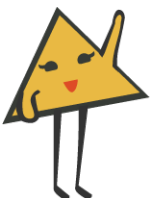
- Cups (paper, plastic, safety-cut cans)
- Variety of strings:
Material, Length, Width

WHAT CAN I TALK ABOUT?:

- Sound
- Volume: Loud/Quiet
- Vibrations
- Materials: Yarn, Plastic, Paper, Metal, Rope, Thread, Ribbon
- Size: Short/Long
- Senses: Feel, Hear

WHAT CAN I ASK?:

- What happens if we use a shorter/longer string?
- What happens if the string hangs loose/is pulled tight?
- What happens if we use different types of cups/string?





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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

- Minimize distracting sounds and activities
- Put materials within reach
- Provide borders for the areas to stand when using the string telephone
- Make sure your child has a comfortable place to sit or stand during this activity

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, cups with handles)
- For children with hearing impairment, have the child hold the cup and ask what they feel when speaking into it
- Provide a variety of different cups (plastic, wood, metal, sizes) and strings (yarn, ribbon, rope)

INSTRUCTION

- Use a variety of methods of communication (sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage children
- Model and demonstrate how to interact with materials
- With a third person, make sure the child can experience and try both ends of the phone with support. Start close together and slowly move apart
- Use visual and verbal prompts when it is your child's turn to listen or make a sound.
- Allow longer waiting time for child to respond and/or 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:

- Hum a familiar tune, make a familiar animal sound, or say a familiar word through the phone to see if your child can recognize it. Then encourage your child to do the same while you listen.
- Find additional materials and explore whether sound will travel through those as well.
- Make a real phone call to a family member or friend and compare and contrast that experience to the string phone.
- Check out these great books about telephones:
 - *Telephone* by Mac Barnett
 - *Eva and the Impossible Tin Can Telephone* by Victoria Roth
 - *Making a Telephone* by Brooke Rowe

