



# WASHING HANDS

DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



## ABOUT THIS ROUTINE:

Washing hands is a great opportunity to support STEM learning! Talk about STEM ideas and use STEM words as you and your child brush together.

Next time you wash hands, tell your child you want their help thinking through all the steps.

"I wonder if we can remember all the steps to wash our hands. Let's think about what we need to do **first, next, and last!**"

As you get ready to wash, ask your child what they think needs to **happen first**. Give your child wait time to respond. Talk through the **steps** together, like turning on the water, wetting your hands, adding soap, scrubbing, rinsing, drying your hands, and turning off the water, and. Ask your child to help you put the **steps in order** and think about why the order matters.

Washing hands is a perfect example of computational thinking! Just like following a recipe, washing hands works best when we **follow the steps** in the right **order**. Ask your child: "What do you think would happen if we dried our hands before we rinsed off the soap? What if we forgot to scrub?" Thinking about why the order of steps matters. What happens when we **change** them is a big part of computational thinking!

Start simple! Begin with just one or two steps, like "First we wet our hands, then we add soap." As your child gets comfortable, work together toward three, four, or five more detailed steps. With a little practice, your child can begin to recognize, describe, and follow the full **sequence** on their own.

## STEM LEARNING AREA:

**Computational Thinking:** Concepts involved in programming computers and coding.

Every child is different. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested daily routine. 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.



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ADAPTATIONS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

## WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

### ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENT

- Place materials within reach in a contained space for easier access
- Use stool if your child can't reach the sink

### MATERIALS

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) device

### INTERACTIONS OR INSTRUCTION

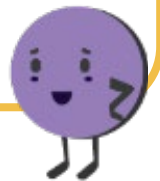
- Provide hand-over-hand support or be physically close by if needed to help your child wash their hands
- Narrate or sign your child's actions
- Adjust the number of steps as needed.
- Use a variety of methods of communication (sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage your child
- Use pictures or icons to signal next steps or each step of the sequence
- Communicate with your child at eye level
- Speak or sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, or body language
- Make eye contact and smile as you talk to your child
- Support children with communication challenges and/or visual impairments by using actual objects or pictures to represent steps of the routine
- Consider using visual cues or a tablet with pictures of the objects to signal next steps or each step of the sequence (see following pages)
- Use Braille on the visual cue cards to support children with visual impairment
- Model and demonstrate how to wash hands
- Let your child know beforehand that a new activity is going to begin



Adaptations are simple changes you can make to your child's space, toys, or activities to help them stay engaged and learn STEM ideas and words during daily routines.

### 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](#).



### Quick Tip:

Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues, such as touch, object, movement, or visual.





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VISUAL CUES FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

## USE TO DIRECT WASHING HANDS



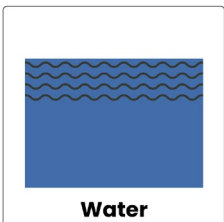
**Wet hands**



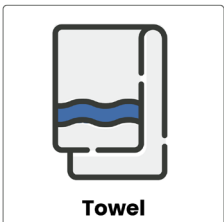
**Apply soap**



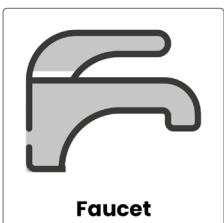
**Rub hands together**



**Rinse hands**



**Dry hands with towel**



**Turn off water with towel**



# WASHING HANDS

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Talk about the steps involved with cooking
- Talk about the steps involved with setting the table for mealtimes
- Mix up steps and mess up on purpose to help highlight that the steps need to go in the right order.
- Check out these books about washing hands:
  - *Germs vs. Soap: A Silly Hygiene Book about Washing Hands!* by Didi Dragon
  - *Pete the Kitty: Wash Your Hands* by Kimberly & James Dean
  - *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick

