

FAMILY GUIDE

Welcome to the *World at Home*. We know that children thrive with routine, especially when there are big changes around them. This website has been designed to bring the comforting rhythms of our **Bright Horizons**® child care centers right into your home, with guided learning opportunities that follow a similar schedule to that of our classrooms. We know there's a lot here to digest. Our intent is for you to use what works for you. Think about all the things you need to accomplish while you're at home, and add in as much activity as you feel supports your child and your own needs. It's our way of supporting your child's learning, even while you are safely at home.

Setting the Stage for Learning At Home

At Bright Horizons we strive to bring elements of home into our classrooms. The *World at Home* provides ways for you to bring our classrooms into your home. A few things to help you along:

- ▶ **Right-sized work spaces:** Coffee tables with child-sized chairs or pillows to kneel on are the perfect height for children to do their fun work. Put shelves underneath or baskets beside to hold toys and books.
 - **Tip:** Set something out on the coffee table for your child to explore when they wake up in the morning; set out something different when they wake up from nap.
- ▶ **A place all their own:** Small, cozy places are magical. And they're easy to make. Put a crib mattress on the floor with some pillows and blankets. Use two chairs and a blanket to make a tent. Use your cozy spot to offer your child books, photo albums, and quiet toys like puzzles or small blocks.
 - **Tip:** If you're working at home, put your cozy nook in your work area so you can supervise your child while you answer important emails.
- ▶ **Set the "tone" for learning.** Sounds inspire activity. Soft instrumental music is perfect if you want your child to focus independently. City or construction machine noise is great for building with plastic bricks or blocks. Pick your activity, and stream to fit.
 - **Tip:** Pick a specific song to play as a reminder that it's time to clean up.
- ▶ **Use open-ended toys:** Toys that sing or talk only do one thing, so they lose children's attention in a hurry. Open-ended toys — blocks, dollhouses and furniture, cars, sandbox buckets with a collection of small balls — will keep their attention much longer.
 - **Tip:** Pull out and group all the open-ended toys your child has. It will make them easy and inviting to play with.
- ▶ **Create a writing area:** Provide a variety of paper, envelopes, pencils, scissors, and stamps. Staple together paper to create your very own books. Include baby board books, children's dictionaries, or note cards (on a ring) with a word on each (e.g., LOVE, MOMMY, DADDY, GRANDMA/PA, NAMES OF SIBLINGS/ANIMALS, for example).
 - **Tip:** Mail a picture or letter to someone. It's a good lesson, and a good way to stay connected with friends.

*Ordinary objects make extraordinary play things – and you have them right at home!

- ▶ Fabric napkins make wonderful dancing scarves.
- ▶ Kitchen items — old pots, pans, plastic bowls of different sizes, measuring spoons, wooden spoons, ice tray, cookie sheet, muffin tin — are your new math, science and sensory tools.
- ▶ Recycled materials (paper towel rolls, empty milk cartons, water bottles, newspaper or magazines) are all perfect for STEM and art projects.
- ▶ Boxes (delivery, shoe, pizza...any box!) offer endless opportunities with cardboard.
- ▶ Laundry baskets are imagination zones. Get in, weave scarves and ribbon through the holes, or use to catch balls.
- ▶ Ribbons make wonderful dancing accessories or (when laid on the ground) “tightropes” to walk across.
- ▶ Giftwrap turned over offers endless white paper to draw on.
- ▶ Old clothes are fuel for dress up:
 - Short skirts make for great dresses
 - Older sibling sport shirts
 - Shoes, boots, slippers
 - Hats

Important safety note — ties and long scarves are not safe for children under 5.

Tips for Parents...

- ▶ Choice has power! When children have some control over their choices, they feel respected and more at ease than when adults make all the decisions. Work in choices where you can. Children under 5 do well with two choices, an either or situation. Save choices that are more open for older children.
- ▶ Change it up! Your children don't need access to all of their toys and books at once. Switching out puzzles, toys, and books every few days keeps things fresh and interesting — and gives kids time to focus.
- ▶ Don't forget free play. Independent free play is important. Children will pull you in when they're ready. An only child might need help to get their play started, but you can look for opportunities to step back and follow their lead.
- ▶ Give yourself a head start. Waking before your children gives you a few moments of quiet time for coffee or a short meditation.
- ▶ Designate a “meeting” spot: A small door mat or similarly sized object can become a “magic carpet” where you can gather for things like activities, stories, walks, or clean up.
- ▶ Make snacks a choice. Put food out for thirty minutes in the morning and afternoon. Children can come when they are ready. Give a reminder before snack is being put away.
- ▶ Take the weekend off! It's easy to forget what day it is — even for adults. Make a visual calendar to show the “school” when you are following a school schedule, and let the weekend days unfold more naturally. Younger children might prefer a paper chain where each day is a link that they can take off before bedtime.
- ▶ Make lunch at breakfast! Use breakfast time to cut up some fruit for the day or make sandwiches for lunch.