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Dear Parents,

Let's face it: school days can be chaotic. There's the morning hustle to get the kids awake, dressed, and off to school. After-school activities flood the afternoons: sports, language programs, and classes on computer coding (yes, that's a real thing now). Trying to tackle homework amidst cooking dinner and settling sibling arguments fill the evenings. Oh, and let's not forget the dilemmas and distractions of raising a child in the digital age—the perils of parenting in a world with YouTube are endless!

Schools desire parent involvement not because they want to add to your already hectic schedule, but because studies have shown that students are more successful when there is a strong connection between home and school. Creating a supportive and positive learning environment at home fosters knowledge, sparks curiosity, and builds self-confidence.

This parent guide will not burden you with more tasks and to-do lists; rather, it will empower you with useful tools, meaningful advice, and resourceful activities to help you create opportunities for learning in the moments that make up your everyday life.

Not every activity in this book needs to be completed. Choose what works best for you and your family. Take small steps. Live in the moment with your child. If you do that, you will naturally create a learning environment that will connect your home and school beautifully and seamlessly.

Let's Build!

Eager Engineers ➔ What do you get when you give your second grader some building materials, and the time and space to create? You get amazing feats of engineering that only a child could conceive. This is a chance to let your little eager engineer's creativity and problem-solving ability shine. Let your child explore, test, and observe with these hands-on engineering activities.



Stockpile Supplies

It's never too late to start hoarding materials for your child to use for engineering projects. Recycling items is a great way to get started. Another trick is to keep an eye out for items on clearance at your local shopping centers. Dollar stores are also a great place to purchase materials. Here is a list of items that make great building supplies:

- aluminum foil
- bottles, cartons, jugs (milk, soda, water, etc.)
- cans (tin, aluminum)
- cardboard boxes (cereal, shipping, tissue, etc.)
- chopsticks, craft sticks, toothpicks
- cotton swabs
- cups (paper, plastic)
- plastic utensils
- playing cards
- play dough/modeling clay
- pool noodles
- rolls (paper towel, toilet paper, gift wrap)
- scissors
- scrap paper/junk mail
- straws
- string, rubber bands, ribbons
- tape, glue, paper clips



Going Up ↑

Challenge your child to use the building materials you give him to build the following:

1. a ladder—tall enough to go from the floor to the top of an upside-down laundry basket
2. a staircase—going from the floor to the seat of a dining room chair or couch
3. an elevator—that can lift a small object off the ground using a simple winch



Parent Pointer

Explain to your child that a winch is a simple machine that uses one or more cylindrical containers in conjunction with a rope, cable, or chain to pull or lift heavy objects.



Awesome Advice

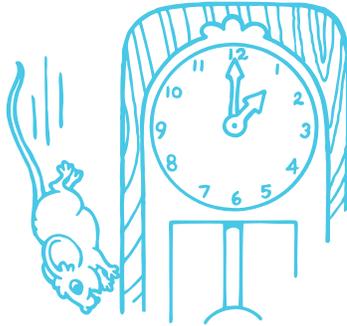
If your child is having a difficult time engineering an elevator, help him make one using some string, a small plastic container, an empty ribbon spool, and a chopstick.

Animal Antics

Your child is sure to love these simple and silly engineering activities inspired by familiar fairy tales and nursery rhymes.

Mousetrap

Recite the nursery rhyme “Hickory Dickory Dock” with your child. Give her various building supplies. Challenge her to build a trap that will catch the mouse so that the mouse can be released outside.



Parent Pointer

Discuss with your child how she plans to lure the mouse into the trap, and once it is in there, how she plans to release the mouse. How will she carry the trap outdoors?

Three Bags Full

Recite the nursery rhyme “Baa, Baa, Black Sheep” with your child. Give her various building supplies, along with three handfuls of cotton balls. Challenge her to construct three bags that will hold the sheep’s wool.

A Fence for the Five

Recite the nursery rhyme “Five Little Ducks” with your child. Give her various building supplies. Challenge her to build a fence that will keep the five little ducks from wandering away from their mother.

Wolf-Proof House

Read the fairy tale “The Three Little Pigs” with your child. Give your child various building supplies. Challenge her to build a house that can withstand the huffing and puffing of the Big, Bad Wolf. Have her blow on the finished house to test the structure. If it fails, encourage her to try again!



Fun for Frogs

Recite the nursery rhyme “Five Little Speckled Frogs” with your child. Give him various building supplies, a few small rocks, and a bowl full of water. Challenge him to build a diving board that the five little frogs (rocks) can jump off of and land in a pool.



Outdoor Learning

Have your child build this project outside so that your home doesn’t get wet during the testing process!

Beds for Bears

Read the fairy tale “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” with your child. Give your child various building supplies, along with a few napkins or tissues to serve as blankets. Challenge her to build three beds: one large bed for Papa Bear, one medium-size bed for Mama Bear, and one small bed for Baby Bear.



Awesome Advice

Explain to your child that failure is an important part of the engineering process. Engineers learn from their mistakes and then build stronger, more successful structures.