

A child's interests are

# Windows of Opportunity

to fun and enjoyable learning

Putting things **in**  
and taking things **out**  
are powerful  
learning activities  
for many young children



## Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AT HOME**

### In the living room or family room

- Store your child's toys in a roomy box or basket, or in an easy-open drawer. Teach her to take toys out for play and to put them away afterwards. Make the "putting-away" part more fun by inventing a little rhyme or song to sing as you work together. "Fast or slow, in they go!"
- Give your young child access to several interesting storage places or containers in your family's main living space. These might be a box or shelf with children's books; a table drawer filled with child-safe items like art-and-craft supplies, family games, and wooden insert puzzles; or decorative items like a basket of pretty stones or seashells to empty and fill again and again. The idea is to let him freely explore lots of interesting open-and-close, in-and-out activities.

### Laundry room

- Let your child help you put clothes in the washing machine and dryer, as well as take them out after the cycle ends. Show him how to scoop and pour in detergent and other laundry products.
- Your baby can have fun filling a container with wooden clothespins and dumping them out over and over while you hang your laundry out to dry. An older child might have fun trying to drop the clothespins into a narrow-mouthed bottle like an empty plastic milk bottle.

### Kitchen and dining room

- Show your little one how to open and close different kinds of containers as a way to involve him in helping you prepare meals and snacks.
- Give her access to a low cabinet she can open and close to take out, play with, and put away safe kitchen equipment like wooden bowls and spoons, plastic ware, and cooking pots.
- As you prepare recipes, let him be your assistant cook—filling and pouring ingredients from measuring cups/spoons into your mixing bowl.
- Show her how to sort different sizes of forks and spoons into the right-sized sections of a flatware holder.

### Out in the yard

- Put letters in and take mail out of your mailbox.
- Fill a small watering can from an outdoor spigot and pour the water on flowers and other plants.
- Tear open seed packets, take out seeds, and use a small finger to push seeds into garden soil.
- Let your child help you open and fill bird feeders.

### Bath tub at bath time

- Provide a variety of fun, unbreakable cups and bottles she can fill and empty over and over as she plays with the bath water and soap bubbles.

# Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AWAY FROM HOME**

## Every day in the community

- Be aware of all the putting-in and taking-out opportunities that are part of your daily routines as you move about your neighborhood and community, then share them with your young child. For example, your child can:
  - Slip stamped envelopes and packages into a mail slot at the Post Office;
  - Insert your house key into the keyhole on your front door;
  - Push litter through the swinging door of a sidewalk trash can;
  - Insert and/or remove change from a banking machine or self-checkout station at the supermarket and then unsnap your coin purse and tuck the money inside;
  - Place the family's donation envelope in the collection basket at religious services;
  - Weave his body in and out between the upright posts on a fence or balustrade that you pass regularly when out for a walk (He'll look forward to it each time!); and so much more.

Your little one will enjoy the interesting in-and-out activities and feel pride in being able to "help" you in so many important ways!

## Playground or park

- Involve your young child in helping you pack a carryall with toys (sandbox toys, for example), snacks, and other supplies for your outing and in unpacking them when you reach your destination.
- Show your child how to have fun filling his sand pail or other container using a toy spade or other kinds of "scoops." Let her fill it with water, sand, gravel, sticks, hardwood mulch, pine needles, or other things in the park that interest her.
- A child who loves putting in and taking out will probably enjoy doing these kinds of activities with his whole body. Take advantage of playground equipment that has interesting openings, tunnels, tubes, or tires he can crawl and slide through. Exciting fun!
- Help your child discover her own in-and-out pastimes in the park. Wouldn't it be fun to gather acorns like a hungry squirrel and poke them into a knothole in a tree trunk? Such natural opportunities abound. Just use your imagination!

## Visits to friends and family

- Store a couple of fun in-and-out materials—like a box of colorful building blocks—in a cupboard or closet at a favorite relative's house. This will become a beloved toy your child will associate with that place and look forward to taking out and playing with on each visit.
- Take along a variety of in-and-out materials when your child accompanies you in the car. While you're busy driving, she might amuse herself taking the lids off and putting them back on a variety of small plastic containers. Put a child-safe toy or noisemaker inside each one to add sound and discovery to the fun.

## Public library

- Help your little one return library books you've enjoyed at home by placing them into the correct return container or "book-drop" chute.
- Discover with your young child all the putting-in/taking-out opportunities presented by library resources like photocopiers, microfiche viewers, and wooden puzzles in the children's section.

## Other community resources

- While on an outing with your child, you might use an automatic teller or a snack-vending machine or a supermarket's customer-operated check-out station. Think about all the in-and-out opportunities these kinds of activities provide and find ways to let your little one take part. Show your child how to insert bills and coins, remove cash and receipts, reach in to retrieve a snack purchase, drop purchases into shopping bags, and have all sorts of other putting-in and taking-out fun.

