



# Comfort Play & Teach:

A Positive Approach to Parenting™

## Every Day

### Exploring the Community with Your Child

Your neighbourhood is full of interesting people as well as places to explore with your child. Community helpers and friends he meets provide opportunities for him to play and learn in a place where he feels secure and safe. Here are some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activities to help your child receive the best experiences in his community that may foster his well-being.



#### Comfort

##### If you do this:

- Take walks in your neighbourhood and talk to your child about all the people and places you see
- Read bedtime stories to your child about familiar people and places in the community

##### Your child will:

- Feel like an important part of a conversation and enjoy what is happening around her
- Begin to relate his own experiences to those he finds in books while enjoying some quiet time with you



#### Play

##### If you do this:

- Invite children you meet at the park to join you in playing a simple game like *Ring Around the Rosie*
- Encourage your child to draw or paint pictures that describe his trip to the fire station

##### Your child will:

- Begin to make friends and learn to share and take turns with others while doing something fun
- Remember different things about special places and people and express himself in a creative way



#### Teach

##### If you do this:

- Visit interesting places like libraries, museums, farmers' markets and local parks
- Provide costumes and props so that your child can role play different community helpers like doctor, teacher or grocer

##### Your child will:

- Make important discoveries about his community and find out what he likes to do most
- Make sense of her experiences through using new words and imitating the significant adults in her life



For more information visit [www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca)

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## Ten Ideas for Exploring Your Community with Your Child

1. Enjoy walks in the neighbourhood. Point out interesting features such as buildings, gardens, statues or signs. This will encourage your child to notice things around him and to ask questions about things that make him feel curious.
2. Visit the library and sign out books about familiar people and places in the community, such as firefighters or grocery stores. Your child will have the chance to make sense of her experiences and to share what she knows as you read together.
3. Invite children you meet at the park to join you in playing games like tag or in digging in the sandbox. Interacting with others will encourage your child to practice social skills such as sharing, cooperating and taking turns and it will help him to gain confidence as he learns to play with others.
4. Provide props that encourage your child to role play different community helpers. Play materials can include clothes for dressing up, puppets or books with stories that can be dramatized. She will love pretending to be familiar people from the neighbourhood.
5. Find out about events in your community by exploring local newspapers, the internet and signs posted in your neighbourhood. Are there puppet shows at the library? Is there a farmers' market with vegetables to buy? Your child can meet other people and discover what makes his community interesting and special.



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6. After enjoying an outing like shopping or a museum visit, encourage your child to draw pictures and tell you a story about her experience. Offer to write down her words and help her to create a special booklet about the different things that she saw and learned.
7. Greet community helpers that you meet and encourage your child to say hello, too. This will allow him get to know people who do different jobs and to feel comfortable with those who are there to help and protect him.
8. Attend festivals in different neighbourhoods. Discover the foods, music and celebrations from various cultures that are important to different people. This will open up the world for your child and help him to understand what makes each person unique.
9. Have your child join you in welcoming newcomers to the neighbourhood. Assemble a small basket of cookies you baked together and help your child create a card with a friendly message. This will invite your child to think about other people's feelings and to understand that he is part of a community of caring.
10. Enjoy recreation programs in your neighbourhood where your child can learn new skills with other children such as swimming, arts and crafts, music and sports. Your child will also have the chance to learn from and to trust other grown-ups in the community.



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## Comfort, Play & Teach™ Checklist: Exploring the Community

### Comfort

- I introduce my child to different community helpers so he knows his neighbourhood has many people who care for him.
- As part of my child's bedtime routine, we read stories about people and places she knows. This gives us a chance to talk about our community and to relax.
- When playing at the park we invite other children to join us in simple games. This builds my child's confidence as he learns to make new friends.

### Play

- My child has dramatic play props that let her explore the roles of community helpers like teachers and firefighters. This helps her to use her imagination.
- My child and I participate in community programs where he can explore music, sports, art, and crafts with other children.
- After we visit places in the community, I encourage my child to draw pictures and tell me a story about what she learned from the experience.



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## Teach

- We visit places in the community such as museums, gardens, libraries and shops and learn about how these make our lives more beautiful and interesting.
  
- When we walk in the neighbourhood, I point out different things and ask my child to share what he notices. This helps him pay attention and builds his language skills.
  
- I take my child to special festivals that are happening in different neighbourhoods so she can explore new foods, music and celebrations.



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## Sand Play at the Park

Taking your baby to a local playground is a wonderful way to give him an opportunity to play and interact with others. With your support, he will begin to understand how to share and take turns. Important social skills grow through the **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time that you spend with your baby.

### Materials You Will Need

- Toys to play in the sand such as buckets, shovels, plastic bowls and cups

### Instructions

- Talk to your baby and tell her that you will be going to play at the park. Pack all needed items such as hat, sunscreen and playthings.
- Sit near your baby as she touches the sand, empties and fills her bucket and tries to interact with other children there.
- Join in your baby's play, to demonstrate ways she might use the bucket and shovel and to help her practice social skills needed for playing with other children.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Set limits for your baby in a way that's gentle but firm. She may not be quite ready to share her playthings, but it is still important for her to know what is and is not allowed. Praise her efforts when she does share with others, to encourage her to continue this behaviour.



**Play:** Engage your baby in filling containers, mixing and piling the sand. As you share and take turns with the various buckets, containers and shovels, he will begin to learn the give and take that is part of being in a social group.



**Teach:** Model sharing and taking turns with your baby. Ask another child, "May I have that bucket when you're finished?" This will introduce your baby to words and behaviours she needs to use in order to play nicely with others.

## Treasure Hunt

This is a game that can be played inside or outdoors. Whether your baby collects toys that she finds around the house, or leaves and pine cones at the playground, finding treasures is a **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity she will enjoy again and again!

### Materials You Will Need

- A small collection of your baby's toys

### Instructions

- While your baby watches, place the toys in different parts of the room within his reach.
- Ask him to find the different items for you. Say, "Where is the doll? Can you bring it to me?"
- Try playing an *I Spy* game to help your baby find his treasure. Say, "I see a green block! Show me the block!"
- Enjoy talking about the different toys and playing with them together after your baby has found them all.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Let your baby know how interesting and special you find the things that she has gathered. Ask her where she found different things and let her take you there. You can both enjoy the wonder of finding an unexpected treasure together.



**Play:** Hide different toys or objects while your baby watches you, and then encourage him to find them. Ask, "Where is your teddy bear? Do you see it under the chair?" or "Can you show me where the toy car is? Bring it to me."



**Teach:** Ask your baby to collect things that are a certain colour, like green leaves, or a certain size, like a long stick. If she collects several objects, count these for her. Found things provide an opportunity to teach her about different concepts.

## Inspiration Walk

Walking in the neighbourhood is a great way for parents and children to enjoy some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time together. As you walk, take time to notice colours, textures and shapes and discover how creative these observations make you feel.

### Materials You Will Need

- A neighbourhood or park to walk in
- Paper and markers

### Instructions

- Take a walk in the neighbourhood or park and look closely at things like all the different colours, textures and shapes around you.
- Ask, “What are some things you can see that are green?” or “Where can you see a circle or square?” or “Can you see something that looks bumpy?”
- Encourage your child to share his observations and when possible to explore the things he finds using other senses. For example, he can feel the texture of grass or tree bark, smell flowers or leaves, listen to the wind.
- After the walk, invite your child to describe anything special she saw or experienced and what she really liked about it.
- Provide paper and art materials. Encourage your child to draw a picture about what he saw and how it made him feel.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Asking your child about the things he notices shows him that you care about his interests and encourages him to share what is important to him.



**Play:** Walking and taking time to stop and explore the things she sees with all of her senses helps your child to notice and describe details in her stories and her pictures.



**Teach:** Your child can learn a lot about different concepts like shapes, colours and textures by looking at and exploring the things he sees every day in the neighbourhood.



## Reading Role Play

This is a fun **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity that will encourage your child to dramatize the words in familiar storybooks. Pretending to be the characters is an excellent way to help bring your child's favourite books to life.

### Materials You Will Need

- Picture books that suggest moving in different ways (e.g., like animals or vehicles)
- Space for your child to move

### Instructions

- Select picture books illustrating actions that your child can imitate (e.g., swimming like a fish, flying like a bird, slithering like a snake).
- As you read the words, encourage your child to invent and demonstrate actions that represent what she sees in pictures. This will help her to connect words in books to meaningful experiences and to remember stories.
- Later on, your child can look at picture books independently and find ways to imitate the characters and actions through dramatic play experiences.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Your child will develop confidence in her emerging literacy skills as she invents actions that represent what is happening in a book.



**Play:** Creative movement allows your child to engage his imagination in learning experiences.



**Teach:** Bringing together literacy and movement activities helps your child to learn by doing, by listening to words and by looking at pictures.

## Fabulous Face Paint

Face painting is a fun and easy way to imagine being someone or something else. You and your child can enjoy some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time together pretending to be animals, insects or community helpers.

### Materials You Will Need

- 1 tsp cornstarch
- 1/2 tsp water
- 1/2 tsp cold cream
- 2 drops food colouring
- Small paper cups
- Cotton swabs

### Instructions

- Stir cornstarch and cold cream together until they are well blended. Add the water and food colouring and stir.
- Repeat the recipe using separate paper cups to mix different colours.
- With the cotton swabs, paint simple designs (e.g., star, heart, or flower) on the face, hands or arms. For easy paint removal later, rub some cold cream on your child's skin before painting.
- When ready to remove the paint, use soap and water.

### Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:



**Comfort:** Provide a hand mirror so your child can admire her reflection. Tell her, “You are the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen!” Encourage her to use positive words to talk about herself. This will help to build her self-esteem.



**Play:** Your child can paint on his hand or arm making spirals, zigzags, dots, stripes and familiar shapes. He will express his creativity as he explores different colours and various simple designs.



**Teach:** Explore the different ingredients and compare them. How do they look and feel before they are mixed together? Are they wet, dry or gooey? How do they change once they are combined? Your child will learn a lot by noticing and describing the ingredients.