



Milestones Learning Center Family Minutes

A resource from our family to yours

January 2024

National Puzzle Day: January 24, 2024



Parents are always interested in finding the right educational tools and toys for their child. Often not realizing that what is marketed as educational does not fully meet the needs of young children. So, what makes something a learning toy? Toys should engage motor skills, encourage language, and challenge new skills gradually. Children learn each time they play but it is important to provide them with tools that will help them exercise the brain. One of these toys is puzzles.

Puzzles are the perfect gift for young and old.

Why Puzzles?

Puzzles are designed for all age groups and offer so much. Studies show that solving connections in puzzles reinforces connection between brain cells by releasing dopamine that helps regulate mood, concentration and memory. Puzzles provide a much better opportunity to relax, making it easier to fall asleep and properly switch off.

Puzzles help to improve visual and spatial reasoning. Puzzles can certainly increase a person's IQ. A University of Michigan study by Dr. Susanne Jäggi discovered that by engaging in jigsaw puzzles or riddles for 25 minutes daily, you may improve your IQ by up to four points!

How to introduce puzzles to your child.

Puzzles can be introduced at a very young age starting with those which are simple in design and pieces with knobs or pegs. As your child develops skills, introduce small jigsaw puzzles starting with 6-9 pieces. As they progress, show them how to sort the pieces by outer edge and middle pieces. Encourage them to take breaks and

come back to a puzzle when they appear to struggle.

Puzzles develop:

1. Fine motor skills
2. Gross motor skills
3. Visual perception
4. Eye-hand coordination
5. Shape recognition
6. Attention-span
7. Problem-solving skills
8. Independent play
9. Cognitive development
10. Confidence
11. Perseverance





Why does my child become frustrated when doing puzzles?

There are a number of reasons a child might avoid puzzles or become frustrated when working on a puzzle. One natural aspect of development in young children is learning to become independent. A child will express frustration when wanting to complete tasks on their own and then experience challenges. This frustration can stem from not having fully developed the problem solving skills to understand a task, not having fully developed the motor skills needed, or still developing language comprehension. As a parent offering gentle encouragement, giving praise for attempts, and acknowledgement of emotions will support your child to continue to try.

How to Find Puzzles

Check the clearance isles of many home stores or even consignment stores. Like books, puzzles can be expensive and once it is done your child might not show much repeat interest after a certain skill level. Work with family and friends to share or swap out puzzles, pick theme puzzles to reflect holidays or special interests your child might hold. Also, check your local library which will often have a puzzle section that can be checked out/ borrowed. Like a new book, puzzles can be a wonderful reward or gift.

Creating Your Own Puzzle

You can make your own puzzles by simply cutting a picture into pieces for your child to put together. This can be a photo taken or a drawing they, or you, created. Also you most craft stores you can purchase blank puzzle pieces that allow you to create images on them for you to take apart for your child to re-assemble.

Preserving the Memories

Puzzling can become a fun addiction. Children might not want to take their puzzle apart once they see it come together. There are a few ways to preserve the work and memories made by putting it together:

- 1) Take pictures of your progress and once finally completed. Make a puzzle memory album.
- 2) You can glue the puzzle together and frame it.
- 3) Place the puzzle under glass.

Bonus

Make it a family project! Puzzling helps everyone in the family. Not only do children benefit but studies show that this type of activity can reduce memory loss and dementia later in life.

READ ABOUT IT

Where Oliver Fits by Cale Atkinson

Oliver has always dreamed about where he will fit. Will he be in the mane of a unicorn? The tentacle of a pirate squid? The helmet of an astronaut? When he finally goes in search of his perfect place, he finds that trying to fit in is a lot harder than he thought. But like any puzzle, a little trial and error leads to a solution, and Oliver figures out exactly where he belongs.

Where Oliver Fits is a sweet and funny story that explores all the highs and lows of learning to be yourself and shows that fitting in isn't always the best fit.

<https://www.amazon.com/Where-Oliver-Fits-Cale-Atkinson/dp/1101919078>



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