

Doing Laundry

Connect: You can make children a part of this everyday task in ways that are fun for you and your child.

Watch and listen: Look at your child to see what he or she is interested in. Is your baby curious about how the clothes feel? Does your toddler like to take clothes in and out of the laundry basket? Is your preschooler interested in sorting clothes by color?

Curiosity is an important part of mastery. It's the desire to know. And the nice thing about it is you never get there. It's not like you ever get to the point where you know everything or you've mastered everything.

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Extend:

For your baby

- Just because your baby doesn't talk, doesn't mean he or she isn't learning language. Follow your child's gaze to see what seems to intrigue him or her. Try to see this experience through his or her eyes. Then talk to your child about what they're watching or what you're doing: "Now I'm putting the clothes in the washing machine...or "here goes the soap" or "you're watching the clothes spinning in the dryer." Children whose caring adults connect language to their everyday experiences learn to speak, communicate and read better.

For your toddler

- If your toddler likes to take clothes in and out of the laundry basket, have him or her help you put the clothes into the washer and dryer. Ask questions like "Can you find the pants and put them in the dryer?" Or, name colors together. These activities can be fun and help build language and thinking skills.

For your preschooler

- If your child likes to sort things, have him or her make piles of the light clothes and the dark clothes. Older children can also help by finding matching pairs of socks, or finding all of the shirts to put into a pile for folding. These activities can build math and cooperation skills. Feeling useful also helps children feel good, which encourages them to continue to want to be helpful.

These tips were developed for Born Learning by [Mind in the Making](#), a project of the Families and Work Institute and New Screen Concepts.