

Stack Them Up, Knock Them Down!

Using Cups with Tiny Hands

Cups of all shapes and sizes can keep your child busy for longer than you might think. Each of these activities builds coordination and control in your child's hand muscles.

Note: Supplies that are underlined can be found in your kit. Supplies in *italics* you might have in your home or you can use something similar.

Tool Tips

Plastic or paper cups are good to play with. But some hard plastics can be sharp if they crack. Choose softer plastic cups for building.

Things to Try with 2 to 3-Year Olds

- **In a line.** Give your child lots of plastic cups all stacked together. They might see how they fit together, like a puzzle. Use tape on a table or the floor to create a line or a shape. Invite your child to take the cups apart and follow the tape to line up their cups.
- **Knock them down.** Give your child some plastic cups. Invite them to try building up. Work together to make a simple tower or pyramid with three cups. Then, let them knock them down!
- **Go wild!** Give your child some plastic cups and other materials like popsicle sticks, pieces of yarn, straws, and more. Add things from your home like *toilet paper tubes* and *egg cartons*. Let them build in any way they choose.



The Basics

Give your child lots of time to explore with plastic cups. Let them follow their interests. They might take apart a stack. Line them up. Build something tall. Scoop and pour water or sand. Sort objects into different cups again and again.



More! 

Things to Try with 3 to 5-Year Olds

- **Bigger and higher.** Give your child lots of plastic cups. Encourage them to build a large pyramid with at least five cups at the bottom. Then make it bigger and higher. Use as many cups as you have. Invite them to try taking a cup out from the middle without the whole thing falling. They'll need very steady hands!
- **Small worlds.** Set out many different materials like plastic cups, popsicle sticks, pieces of yarn, egg cartons, and toilet paper tubes. Invite your child to get some of their favorite *small toys*, like small dolls, animals, or cars. Create a small, pretend world for the toys. Tell stories together about your child's small world. What adventures happen here?
- **Engineering challenges.** Gather materials like plastic cups, popsicle sticks, tape, and more. Write down a few building challenges for your child on small pieces of paper. Ideas could include: Build a structure using all the cups. Build the tallest tower you can. Build a bridge. Crumple up the paper and have your child pick a mystery challenge to try. Then, start building!



Bonus!

Full Body Activity. Find some open floor space in your home. Put a line of tape on the floor. Have your child stack some plastic cups a few feet from the line. Invite them to roll the mini beach ball towards the cups, like bowling. Move the tape line further away for more of a challenge.

Things to Say

“Hmm. How many cups are we stacking?”

Use words about size, height, and amount. Count the cups. Describe your pyramid as tall or short. Children are listening to you and learning new words and ideas as they play.

“If you put three more cups on top, what will happen?”

Ask your child to think about what they think will happen and make a guess. Then actually try it and see what happens!

“It’s okay. Let’s start over.”

It can be frustrating when your tower falls before you’re ready. Encourage your child to keep trying and maybe do something differently. When it is time to clean up, knocking it down can be part of the fun!