

May



May's theme is *Animals*. Try these fun activities to learn about animals and play pretend:

Talk Together

- **For your baby:** What animals do you see outside? Name these different creatures for your baby: birds, squirrels, ducks, dogs, cats, rabbits. Which animal does your baby seem most interested in? Make each animal's sounds. Which sound makes your baby giggle?
- **For your toddler:** Baby animals are a special part of spring—can you spot any in your neighborhood? Go on a "safari walk" with your toddler and ask her to tell you when she sees an animal. Does she know the animal's name? The sound it makes? Does she know where it lives (nest, pond, trees, etc.)? Watch these animals with your child and talk about what you see.

Read Together

- Read books that feature different kinds of animals. For babies, try: *Whose Nose and Toes?* by John Butler, *Does a Kangaroo Have*

a Mother, Too? by Eric Carle, *Good Night, Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann, *Baby Animals* by DK Publishing, and *Country Animals, Farm Animals, and Pet Animals* by Lucy Cousins. For older toddlers, good choices include *Over in the Meadow* by Ezra Jack Keats, *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey, *Mrs. Brown Went to Town* by Wong Herbert Yee, *Cock-a-Doodle-Do!* *Barnyard Hullabaloo* by Giles Andreae, *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood, and *I Love My Mama* by Peter Kavanagh.

Play Together

- **For your baby:** Babies are often captivated by watching animals outside or through the window. Stick with your baby and let him watch as long as he wants, though be very cautious about approaching animals you do not know. Teaching your child animal safety begins early. You can support your baby's interest in animals by, for example, installing a bird feeder to encourage birds to visit. For an indoor activity, you can give your baby swatches of fake fur and feathers to touch (both available at craft stores).
- **For your toddler:** Cut pictures of animals out of magazines and glue them to sturdy cardboard. Make sure there are matches—2 pictures of horses, 2 pictures of sheep, etc. Lay these pictures out (face up) on the floor and see if your child can match the animals that are the same. Matching games build thinking skills in your toddler. You can also play "barnyard." With your child, walk and "talk" like an animal—perhaps meow like a cat or "trot" and neigh like horse. Which animals does your child like to be? Turn a big cardboard box into a barn and see if your child would like to pretend to trot in and out.