Activity Page

Testing Abilities: Observing Your Child in the Car

What do we have?

> Car keys
> A parked car

Parenting behavior

- ☐ Communicating
- ☐ Designing/guiding
- ☐ Nurturing
- ☐ Responding
- ☐ Supporting learning

How can we do it?

1. Ask your child if they know where the car keys are kept. Watch to see whether they know, and whether they can reach them.
2. Go to the car together. Ask them to open the front door, and don't help. Notice what they manage on their own.
3. With the car off and no other children around, ask your child to show you how they would get into the car. Were they able to open the door on their own? What did they do next?
4. Talk together about this rule: "Never get into a car without a grown-up. I am with you right now, so it's OK, but never do this on your own."
5. If you feel your child is ready, show them how to open the car door from the inside using the handle or the button. Not all children will yet understand the right time to use this skill or how to use it in a safe way.
6. Afterward, use what you noticed. Whether your child is able to open the car door on their own or not, always keep cars locked, even in the garage or driveway. If your child isn't able to do this on their own today, they could develop that skill tomorrow. It happens quickly.

Note: This activity page was written by Kids and Car Safety with funding sponsored by Honda.

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What's in it for us?

Cognitive

a. Young children are curious and drawn to buttons, switches, and anything that makes something happen. Testing cause and effect is one of the many ways they experiment and learn.

b. Talking about which jobs belong to grown-ups helps your child sort their world into categories, a skill they are building through their toddler and preschool years.

Connecting across development

> **Motor:** Opening a car door, climbing in and out, and pushing a button all take strength and coordination that grow quickly.

> **Language:** Naming parts of the car gives your child words for things they see every day.

Safety tip

Never have the car on, and ensure there are no other children around when testing your child's ability during this activity. Childproof any doors that lead outside with knob covers or stick-on alarms. This way children cannot slip out unnoticed.

Kids and Car Safety
Love them ♥ Protect them

parents as teachers

Continued learning

A child buckled in a car seat may be able to get out on their own without a parent realizing it.

Have your child sit buckled in their seat. Ask them to get out by themselves. Notice what they can and cannot do.

Repeat this activity with your child as they grow. This will help you check their developing abilities and your assumptions about them. As they grow, their new motor and cognitive abilities will add new considerations for safety.

Book sharing

Read books about cars, trucks, and the people who drive them. Talk about the features of a car (wheels, horn, doors, etc.) and what each one does.

Observing my child's development ...

Reflecting with my child ...

Keeping it going ...

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