

sparkler

# Ready to Grow

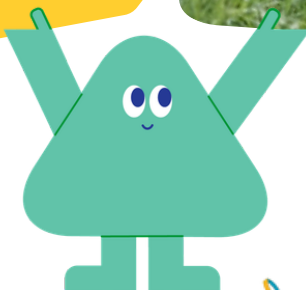
Spark early learning! Grow your child's heart, words, mind, and body and access local San Francisco resources!

brought to you by

San Francisco Department of  
Early Childhood

Early Connections

Care. Play. Grow.



# WELCOME TO



Early Connections

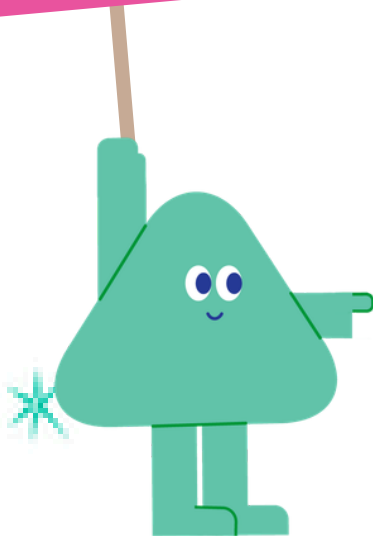
Care. Play. Grow.

## About Early Connections @ the SF Department of Early Childhood

The SF Department of Early Childhood (DEC) is San Francisco's largest funder of early childhood programs. Its vision is to weave together family, community, and system supports so that all children who grow up in San Francisco have a strong foundation of nurturing, health, and learning.

DEC supports SF children and families through:

- Early Care and Education Programs
- Parenting Support
- Child Development Programs



Topic	Page
<b>Spark Early Learning:</b> How you can play, learn, and access SF resources with Sparkler	p. 3
<b>Developmental Milestones:</b> Learn about child development from prenatal through age 5	p. 5
<b>Parenting and Child Development:</b> Overview of tips for grown-ups in Sparkler	p. 8
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<b>Local Resources:</b> Guide to local San Francisco resources for young families.	p. 13

# WELCOME TO sparkler

## Help Your Child Get a Strong Start!

Children learn through play! Sparkler is a mobile app that helps parents with young children (prenatal-5) check on their children's early development and use that information to spark early learning through play. It's available in English, Spanish, Chinese, French, and Arabic for iOS and Android, smartphones and tablets.

## We all have questions.

From the day new parents discover that they are expecting a baby, they have questions: Are they growing and learning as they should be? What can we do today to help my child learn to climb stairs... draw circles... solve problems... read books? Should I be worried?



### Know

Use the app to complete the mobile Ages & Stages Questionnaires® to understand your child's development starting at 2 months.



### Play

Get inspired to learn together through play with our library of 2000+ off-screen activities to grow children's hearts, words, minds, and bodies!



### Grow

Follow your child's progress. See all that you accomplish together!



### Connect

Get handy nudges, plus answers to your questions about child development and parenting.



**Understand and support your child's early learning and development with Sparkler – starting prenatally and through age 5.**

# Get Started With Sparkler!

1

## Download the app.

Scan the QR code below to download the mobile app onto your smartphone or tablet. Once you've installed the app, scan the QR code again to link up with the SF code — which will connect you with the Centralized Access Point at Support for Families. If you're affiliated with a school, family resource center, or other program, ask them for their unique code to link with them. If you scan the QR code (rather than type in the access code), skip right to step 4.



2

## Open the App. Tap "Create a new account."

Tap on "Email address" or another method to create your new account. (Skip this step if you scanned the QR code above.)

3

## Enter your program's access code.

Typing in the access code will connect you with your school or program. (Skip this step if you scanned the QR code above.)

4

## Now it's time to set up the parent or caregiver's Sparkler account.

Enter your email address and create a password that you'll remember. On the following screen, enter your name and contact information.

5

## Set up your child's profile.

The most important thing to share on this screen is your child's correct birth date (and weeks prematurity if your child is under 2 years old). The birth date allows Sparkler to assign the correct play content and screenings.

6

## You'll see the names of the organizations that are "Sponsoring Partners."

These are the organizations that are supporting you with Sparkler. They'll be able to see your screening results and other Sparkler engagement in order to offer your family support and resources. You can always add/subtract/edit which organizations you're linked with later.

all about...

# DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

## WATCH THEM GROW

As children grow, they tend to develop skills in the same order and at around the same age as other children. Each new skill is a step — a milestone — in their development.

## KEEP TRACK

Knowing what new skills you should expect your child to develop and when helps you know if their development is on track.

## USE THE ASQ IN SPARKLER

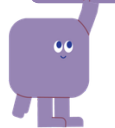
You can use Sparkler to check your child's growth and development (2 months - 60 months) with the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ), a series of questionnaires that provides a snapshot of how your child is developing. Scan the QR code to learn more about the ASQ in Sparkler.

## LEARN THE SIGNS, ACT EARLY

Learn the Signs, Act Early is a program from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that helps adults learn about and monitor their child's early development. Scan the QR code to learn more about "Learn the Signs" in Sparkler's app.

## YOU CAN HELP!

Children learn and practice new skills by playing! Use what you learn from completing the ASQ and developmental milestones to choose play activities that support your child's development. Sparkler has more than 2,000 play activities to choose from — designed by early childhood educators — to help families grow their children's hearts, words, minds, and bodies through age 5.



# DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES







Sparkler organizes developmental skills into four main categories, or domains:



Here are some of the milestones most children reach in each domain.

Scan the QR codes to view more milestones for your child's age.



<b>2 months</b>	Smiles at you	Makes sounds other than crying	Watches you move	Holds head up when on tummy	
<b>4 months</b>	Smiles to get your attention	Makes sounds like "oooo" and "aahh"	Looks at their hands	Pushes up onto elbows when on tummy	
<b>6 months</b>	Knows familiar people	Takes turns making sounds	Reaches to grab a toy	Rolls from tummy to back	
<b>9 months</b>	Reacts when you leave	Makes sounds like "mamama" and "bababa"	Looks for objects when dropped	Sits without support	
<b>1 year</b>	Plays simple games with you	Says "mama" or "dada" or other special name	Looks for things they see you hide	Walks, holding onto furniture	
<b>15 months</b>	Copies other children while playing	Tries to say one or two words besides "mama" or "dada"	Follows directions given with both a gesture and words	Takes a few steps on his own	

# DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES







Sparkler organizes developmental skills in to four main categories, or domains:



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<b>18 months</b>	Moves away from you, but makes sure you are close by	Follows one-step directions without any gestures	Copies you doing chores	Walks without holding on	
<b>2 years</b>	Notices when others are hurt or upset	Says two-word phrases	Points to things in a book when you ask	Kicks a ball	
<b>30 months</b>	Plays near other children, sometimes with them	Says about 50 words	Uses things to pretend	Jumps with two feet	
<b>3 years</b>	Calms down within 10 mins after you leave	Talks with you in conversation	Draws a circle when you show how	Strings large beads or macaroni	
<b>4 years</b>	Changes behavior based on location	Says sentences with four or more words	Names a few colors of items	Catches a large ball most of the time	
<b>5 years</b>	Follows rules or takes turns when playing games	Retells a story with at least two events	Counts to 10	Hops on one foot	

# \* TIPS FOR GROWN-UPS

## Examples from Sparkler's Library

Sparkler's tips for grown-ups (in the KNOW section) help families learn about child development and simple ways that they can help their children. Here are a few examples:

### For New Parents



Newborn Sleep



Preparing Siblings  
for the New Baby



What to Look for  
in Infant Child  
Care

### Child Development



Learning Math  
Through Play



Big Feelings



Separation

### Parenting Skills



Bedtime



Managing  
Stress



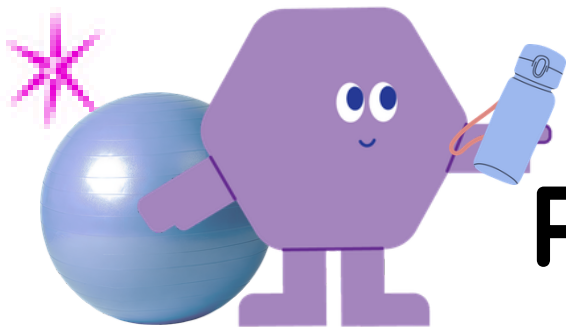
Potty Time!



# sparkler

## PLAY ACTIVITIES

Playing is one of the best ways to help your child learn and practice new skills. Sparkler has a growing library of fun, interactive play activities starting in trimester 1 of pregnancy and going through age 5. On the next few pages, find a few activities to get you started playing with books, balls, and blocks. Scan the QR codes to find more activities in your app!



## Prenatal

### FEATURED ACTIVITY: SHINE A LIGHT

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. At around 22 weeks, your baby can start to perceive light and dark! Try shining a flashlight on your belly to see if your baby moves.
2. Shine the light on one side and wait a few moments for a response. If you don't feel anything, try the other side or lower or higher on your belly.
3. Your baby might respond by moving, or he/she might be sleeping right now. Try again later! Note: This is not a test of your baby's wellbeing, so if your baby doesn't respond to the light, it's not a sign of anything wrong! This is just for fun.



#### WHY?

Your baby is starting to perceive the world in more ways now — including touch, vision, and hearing!



Yoga Series: Trimester  
3 Yoga



Fill Your Water



Baby Talk



sparkler

# PLAY ACTIVITIES

Play to support your child's growth and development.



## Books

### FEATURED ACTIVITY: NAME THAT BOOK

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Listen as I recite the first few lines of one of our favorite books!
2. Do you recognize the story?
3. Can you find the book on the shelf? Let's read!

#### WHY?

Reciting lines from familiar stories helps to exercise your child's memory.



Try "READ TOGETHER"  
with your 0-18 month  
old baby



Try "GOODNIGHT  
MOON PICTURE HUNT"  
with your 18-36 month  
old



Try "SILLY READING"  
with your 3-5 year old

# PLAY ACTIVITIES

Play to support your child's growth and development.



## Balls

### FEATURED ACTIVITY: PASS THE BALL

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Let's pass a ball back and forth. Watch it closely!
2. I'll roll, toss, or bounce the ball to you.
3. Now you pass the ball back to me! Let's keep going!

#### WHY?

Passing a ball back and forth helps your child practice watching a moving object.



Try "FOLLOW THE BALL" with your 0-18 month old



Try "ROLL, TOSS, BOUNCE" with your 18-36 month old



Try "BALL DROP" with your 3-5 year old

## PLAY ACTIVITIES

Play to support your child's growth and development.



## Blocks

### FEATURED ACTIVITY: BUILD AND BOOM!

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Let's build a tower! How many blocks can we stack?
2. Let's count our blocks as we build.
3. When we're finished building, it time to knock our tower down. Ready? 1...2...3...BOOM!



#### WHY?

Learning how to say the counting words in order: one, two, three, four, etc. is an important math skill. The last number counted equals the total number of blocks.



Try "REACH AND GRASP" with your 0-18 month old



Try "PATTERN TOWER" with your 18-36 month old



Try "ARCHITECT" with your 3-5 year old



# Access San Francisco Resources

Find free local resources to support your child's early learning and development.

## Early Connections: Care. Play. Grow

### Early Connections at the San Francisco Department of Early Childhood

The Department of Early Childhood offers free developmental screenings, as well as connection to early intervention services for children who need them. This initiative is called Early Connections.

Scan for intake form:

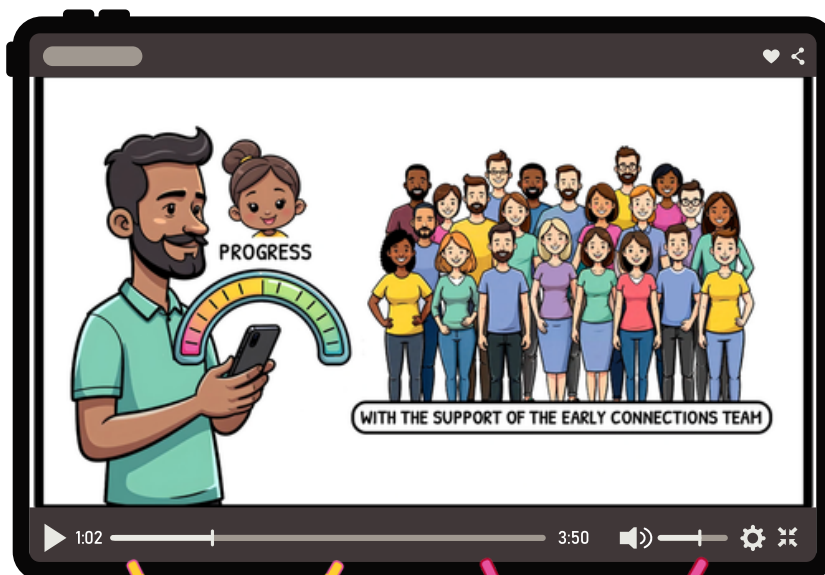


### Centralized Access Point

You can contact the Centralized Access Point through Support for Families. There you will find information about developmental playgroups for parents and children 0-3 years old, care coordination, local family resources, referral services, and other local and citywide support services. You can also get answers to your questions and advice on upcoming milestones in your child's development. All services are free and require no insurance or referrals.

- **Contact:** [earlyconnections@supportforfamilies.org](mailto:earlyconnections@supportforfamilies.org) or 415-920-5040
- **Learn More Online:** Early Connections is online at [www.sf.gov/early-connections](http://www.sf.gov/early-connections)

Learn more about Early Connections in this video!



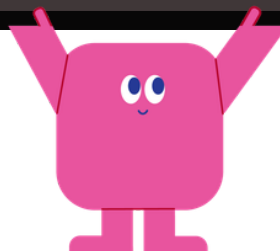
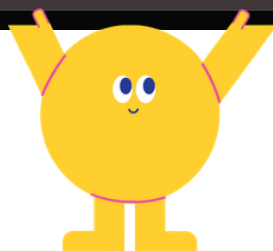
English



Spanish



Chinese



# FREE Developmental Playgroups

## DEVELOPMENTAL PLAYGROUPS

Through Early Connections, SF DEC is offering free playgroups for families with 0-3 year olds with questions or concerns about their child's development. Reach out to CAP ([earlyconnections@supportforfamilies.org](mailto:earlyconnections@supportforfamilies.org) or 415-920-5040) to learn more about these groups, available across the city:

**Children's Council:** Children's Council invites families and their caregivers to participate together in Developmental Playgroups for children aged 0-3 who have mild to moderate disabilities, learning differences, and/or complex medical needs. We understand that children learn best through play. These playgroups will ensure accessibility for all children to engage in developmentally appropriate, inclusive, sensory-based and hands-on learning activities.



**Felton Institute:** Felton's Supporting Early Education, Development & Socialization (SEEDS) program provides vital support for families with young children who are looking to boost their children's development. Established in 2024 with funding through the San Francisco Department of Early Childhood, our two primary service areas include Developmental Playgroups and Care Coordination, all designed to address the unique needs of children and their families.



**Project Commotion:** Project Commotion's mission is to foster healthy development in children of all abilities through purposeful movement, play, and family and community relationships. Jardín Family Playgroups, a part of Project Commotion, offers joyful developmental playgroups for families with children 0-3 who are curious about their child's development. In partnership with speech language therapists, Project Commotion's movement instructors create a garden of possibility for families and their children to grow together.



**Slippery Fish:** Slippery Fish's eight-week playgroups for children 6-36 months include an individual meeting with our teachers at the start and close of the series, so each child's development stays at the center of every session as they explore our indoor/outdoor classroom. Families take home a new book and toy each week, plus practical strategies to keep the learning going at home.



**Sparkler:** Sparkler is working with the National Center for Families Learning and multiple San Francisco organizations — including Wu Yee, Kai Ming, FACES SF, the SF Public Library, and Re'Optima FRC — to offer our Play With Purpose playgroups to families with children 0-3 years old. In the nine-week program, families learn about early development and how they can play and engage with their children in ways that support early development. Each week, families receive books and toys — and practice strategies — to support learning and engagement.



### San Francisco Public Library

The San Francisco Public Library has 27 branches across the city of San Francisco as well as their main location, offering books, events, and special programs to families — from yoga and storytime to music classes. SFPL and DEC are offering families **free books** for their home libraries through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Sign up online at <https://legacy.sfdec.org/imagination-library/>.

**Events:** Scan the QR code to find events at local libraries

**Learn more** about early literacy online at <https://sfpl.org/kids/educators/early-literacy-kids>

Scan for SFPL events:



**A Network of 25 Family Resource Centers (FRCs) in San Francisco.**

You'll find welcoming community spaces where you can get free support, advice, and contacts. At an FRC, you can participate in parenting workshops, support groups, family events, and learn about child development and parenting. Get help finding resources such as housing, food, employment, domestic violence, legal aid, and much more. Services are free and accessible.

**Contact:** Scan the QR code to find more information about Family Resource Centers

**FRC Family Events Calendar:** [legacy.sfdec.org/family-resource-centers/family-event-calendar/](https://legacy.sfdec.org/family-resource-centers/family-event-calendar/)

Scan for more information:



APA Family Support Services	Chinatown	415-617-0061
API Family Resource Network	Citywide	415-617-0061
Asian Women's Resource Center - Gum Moon Residence Hall	Chinatown	415-788-1008
Bayview YMCA Family Resource Center	Bayview-Hunters Point	415-822-9404
Chicano/Latino & Mission Family Resource System	Excelsior, Mission	415-229-0500
Compass Family Resource Center	Tenderloin	855-234-2667
Edgewood Family Resource Center	Bayview-Hunters Point	415-375-7630
El Centro Bayview	Bayview-Hunters Point	415-431-2233
Excelsior Family Connections	Excelsior	415-333-3845
Glide Family Youth and Children's Center	Citywide, Tenderloin	415-674-6200
Good Samaritan Family Resource Center	Mission	415-401-4253
Homeless Prenatal Program	Mission, Potrero	415-546-6756
Joy Lok Family Resource Center	Chinatown	415-391-4890
OMI Family Resource Center	Lake Merced, Oceanview, Stonestown	415-406-1370
Our Family Coalition	South of Market	415-981-1960
Portola Family Connections	Portola	415-715-6746
Potrero Hill Family Resource Center	Potrero	415-795-3591
Richmond Asian Family Support Center	Richmond, Sunset	415-221-5783
Safe Start Initiative Collaborative	Chinatown, Mission, Upper Haight, Visitacion Valley, Western Addition	415-668-0494
South of Market Family Resource Center	South of Market	415-820-3508
Sunset Family Resource Center	Sunset	415-516-5966
Support for Families of Children with Disabilities	Mission, South of Market	415-282-7494
Visitacion Valley Strong Families Collaborative	Visitacion Valley	415-578-9310
Western Addition Family Resource Center	Western Addition	415-202-9770
Young Family Resource Center (Felton Institute)	Citywide, Mission	415-695-8300

**Golden Gate Regional Center (GGRC)**

**The Golden Gate Regional Center offers assessments, interventions, and support.**  
 You can request an assessment for your child. The Golden Gate Regional Center offers early intervention services for children aged 0 to 3 and developmental monitoring for children ages 3 and older. Services offered may include speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, special education, family support, nutritional support, social support, audiology services, nursing care, and other forms of medical or paramedical support. Scan the QR code to complete the referral form.

**Contact:** [intake@ggrc.org](mailto:intake@ggrc.org) or 415-546-9222

**Scan for intake form:**



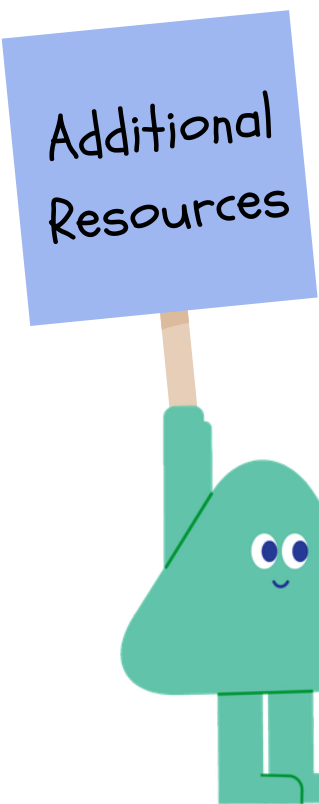

English      Spanish

**San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)**

**The San Francisco Unified School District offers assessments and interventions.**  
 You can request an assessment for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This service is for children ages 3 and older. An IEP may include speech therapy, special education classes, inclusive classes, physical therapy, occupational therapy, ophthalmology services, orientation and mobility services, nursing care, audiology services, and behavioral interventions. Scan the QR code to complete the application or contact the the SF Centralized Access Point at Support for Families ([earlyconnections@supportforfamilies.org](mailto:earlyconnections@supportforfamilies.org) or 415-920-5040) for assistance with the application.

**Contact:** Email : [ecreferrals@sfusd.edu](mailto:ecreferrals@sfusd.edu) or Telephone: 415-401-2525 ext. 1101

**Scan for more information:**

**Housing Support**

SF Planning  
Housing  
Resources



Compass  
Family  
Services



Homeless  
Prenatal  
Services



**Mental Health**

Safe & Sound  
Talkline



Rafiki Coalition



Felton Full Circle  
Family Program



**Food Support**

Free Food  
Locations



**Transportation**

Learn about  
SF options



**Pubic Health**

Learn about SF  
resources

