



Activity Guide: Group Video Discussion

The Basics are five fun, easy, and powerful ways to help all our children get a great start in life. Each Basic has a corresponding video featuring real families with infants and toddlers. In this activity, the videos are a springboard for a group discussion about ways to turn everyday moments into learning moments.

This activity is flexible. It can cover one of the five Basics. Or, it can be implemented as part of a series covering all five. So, think ahead about which Basic will be the focus for your session. Another option is to let participants vote on the one they'd like to cover.

Objectives:

- ✓ Foster supportive social connections among participants
- ✓ Model everyday use of the Basics
- ✓ Support self-reflection and planning

Time Required: 30-60 minutes (depending on how much time is allocated for discussion)

Group Size: 5-50 people

Materials:

- ✓ The Palmetto Basics videos (accessed from a flash drive, DVD, or online at palmettobasics.org)
- ✓ Video screen and working speakers
- ✓ Scrap paper for note-taking
- ✓ Pens/markers
- ✓ Chart paper or whiteboard
- ✓ Video handout (included in this packet)
- ✓ Optional: Hang a Palmetto Basics poster to reinforce the video.
- ✓ Optional: Offer food and child care to make family attendance easy.

Preparation:

- ✓ Read through the detailed agenda below.
- ✓ Test the video before your session to make sure it plays correctly and that the sound is loud enough.

Session Structure:



Detailed Agenda

Introductions → Have each person share their name and the ages of their children. If there is time, do a quick icebreaker, for example, “One word that describes how you feel right now” or “An activity you enjoy with your child.” You can also use an ice breaker that has worked for you in the past.

5 minutes

Review Ground Rules → As the facilitator, your role is to establish a safe, supportive learning environment. Review the following list of ground rules with the group and ask if they would like to make additions. One option is to write the list on chart paper ahead of time and post it on a wall.

3 minutes

- ✓ *Show respect to everyone*
- ✓ *Assume positive intentions*
- ✓ *Be open to new ideas*
- ✓ *Help one another*
- ✓ *Focus on solutions*
- ✓ *Make this a trusting, safe learning environment*

Why this Matters → If participants are not familiar with The Palmetto Basics, provide a bit of background. The following is sample dialogue that can be paraphrased.

5 minutes

There is a new community-wide, early-learning initiative called “The Palmetto Basics,” created to support parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers.

*It’s inspired by scientific findings that a **huge amount of brain development—80%—happens in the first three years of life.** This means that as parents and communities, we have a **big opportunity** to give our children a strong foundation for school and emotional well-being.*

*The Palmetto Basics break down a lot of new research on child development into **five strategies** that parents and caregivers can use to make a big difference during this important period. The goal is to make sure that all caregivers in our communities feel encouraged and supported to use the Basics.*

We can make our babies smart.

Watch Video → Introduce the day’s video, or have participants vote on which Basic to cover. Let them know that they will be watching the video **twice**—first to get a general feel, and then again for close observation. (If you are pressed for time, only watch the video once.)

12 minutes

→ **Play the video for the first time.** When it is over, ask participants, “*What struck you most about the video? What did you like?*” Allow a few minutes for discussion.

→ Pass out paper and pens. Offer the following instructions: *Now we are going to re-watch the video. This time, pay close attention and write down the specific parenting strategies that you notice. The goal is to notice and list as many things as you can. Don’t worry, we’re not keeping score. Once we’re done, we will share and discuss what we’ve listed.*

→ **Play the video a second time.**

Small Group Discussions

8 minutes

- Have participants form groups of two or three and share their lists with the other members of their group. (If the group is small, skip this section and move into the Large Group Discussion below.)

Large Group Discussion

12 minutes

- Reconvene the full group. Have participants share strategies “popcorn style” (short comments, with no one person dominating the discussion). Capture comments as bullet points on chart paper/whiteboard. Put check marks next to ideas that come up repeatedly.
- Once the list is complete, discuss the following questions as a group:
 - *Which of these strategies do you already use? When and how do you do them? What is your child learning in these moments?* (Encourage participants to include specific details, e.g., “I respond to my baby’s sounds and facial expressions when I change her clothes.”)
 - *Which strategies would you like to do more? What are some challenges you might encounter? What are potential solutions?*

Review Handout

5 minutes

- Pass out The Palmetto Basics handout that corresponds to the video the group watched (handouts are included in this packet). Give participants a few minutes to review the handout. Once they have read it to themselves, ask if they see anything important that did not make it onto the group’s list. (The handouts are double-sided—one side applies to infants, the other toddlers.)

Take it Home

10 minutes

- Have participants think about their upcoming week, picturing all the routine activities they will do with their child (e.g., mealtimes, taking the bus, grocery shopping, laundry). Then ask them to reflect on the strategies that the group listed, and **chose one that they do not do as much as they would like**. Instruct them to picture the **precise times and places** that they will commit to use that strategy. The more specific they can be, the better. People are more likely to follow through on plans that are specific rather than vague.
- Give everyone a minute or two to think. Then go around the room and invite each participant to share 1) the strategy they chose and 2) the times and places they expect to use that strategy. (Optional: Have participants write their response on an index card to take home as a reminder.)
- Wrap up with a discussion of the **obstacles and challenges** that may need to be managed for them to follow-through. For example, “I am so tired when I get home from work.” See if participants can help each other identify solutions to those challenges. Keep the conversation positive and solution-oriented. The goal is for every person to leave feeling supported and confident about their plan.

If the group will be again meeting in the future, you could start that session by having participants to share their experiences using the strategy they chose.

MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

Guidelines from the Video for Infants (Ages 0 – 12 Months)

Infants thrive when their world seems loving, safe, and predictable. They are affected by your emotions, both good and bad. So, it is important to find strategies that help you cope with stress. Caring for yourself benefits you *and* your child.

HOLD THEM. Hold, kiss, and cuddle your infant. Do not worry about spoiling them. There is no need to hold back on sharing love.

RESPOND TO THEM. Respond in the moment to their signals such as sounds, gestures, and facial expressions. For example, if they smile, smile back. Let them take the lead. See how long you can go back and forth. You will be teaching them how relationships and communication work.

COMFORT THEM. When upset, infants have a hard time calming down on their own. They depend on you to help manage their emotions, so comfort your child when they get fussy or cry. Over time, by responding, you will help them develop more self-control. You also teach them that they can count on you.

PLAY WITH THEM. Your baby loves to look at your face. Hold them close, smile, make silly faces, and talk in a playful voice as you go about your day together.

HAVE A ROUTINE. Develop a routine schedule for daily activities like feeding, naps, bathing, reading, and bedtime. Every baby is a little different, so it may take some time to figure out a rhythm that works for your family. Once a routine is established, try to stay with it. Avoid unnecessary disruptions in routines whenever possible. Keep in mind that routines change as your baby gets older. For example, bedtime or nap time may change as the child gets older.

MANAGE HOUSEHOLD STRESS. Stress is normal, but too much stress is bad for a baby's brain development. It is important to have strategies for coping when your life gets stressful. The parents in the video described a few strategies: having a daily routine, sharing childcare and other tasks with a family member or friend, going outside, holding their baby close. Talk to your friends, family, or doctor about ways to deal with stress.



MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

Guidelines from the Video for Toddlers (Ages 12 – 36 Months)

Do everything you can to make your toddler's world feel **loving, safe, and predictable**. Feeling secure in their relationships and surroundings gives them the confidence they need to explore, learn, and take on life's challenges.

CUDDLE THEM. Hug, kiss, and cuddle your infant. Do not worry about spoiling them. There is no need to hold back on sharing love.

RESPOND TO THEM. Watch and respond to your toddler's words, feelings, and behaviors when they are when they are happy as well as when they are upset.

ENCOURAGE THEM. Toddlers get a lot of satisfaction and confidence as they master new tasks. Help your child try new things. Follow their lead when they seem interested in something. Be supportive and encouraging as they take chances.

TALK ABOUT FEELINGS. Help your toddler name their feelings. You can say what you think they are feeling and let them know that their feelings are ok. Help them problem-solve when they are frustrated or upset.

INVOLVE THEM. Find simple ways to involve your toddler in chores and other activities around the home. This makes them feel helpful and provides opportunities for learning.

HAVE A ROUTINE. Routines make life predictable. Children feel secure when they know what to expect. Develop a schedule for daily activities like feeding, naps, bathing, and bedtime. Have some routines that signal when your child will transition from one activity to another. Once a routine is established, try to stay with it.

MANAGE HOUSEHOLD STRESS. Stress is normal part of life. In fact, it is important for children to experience some stress so they learn ways to cope. However, too much stress can be harmful. It is important for adults to have strategies for coping with their own stress so it doesn't get passed on to their children. The parents in the video described a few strategies: having a daily routine, sharing childcare and other tasks with a family member or friend, going outside, holding their baby close. Talk to your friends, family, or doctor about ways to deal with stress.



TALK, SING, AND POINT

Guidelines from the Video for Infants (Ages 0 – 12 Months)

Babies are learning language from birth. As one mother says at the end of the video, “They can understand a lot more than you think they can.” This process depends on the amount that people speak to them. The more they hear, the more they learn. It doesn’t matter if they can’t respond back yet. Babies and toddlers learn about sound patterns and the meanings of words before they can say those words.

TALK A LOT. Talk to your baby from the time they are born during activities like changing, feeding, and errands. Describe what you are doing (“Are you ready to take a bath now, or are you ready to eat?”). Label the objects around you by naming and pointing to them.

CONNECT. Get nice and close—be in physical contact with your baby. Make eye contact to establish a connection. Talking is a way to express love to your child.

USE A PLAYFUL, LOVING VOICE. Talk with a gentle, playful voice. Exaggerate the sounds of the words. This may feel silly at first, but it is actually very important. Babies pay extra attention and learn more when you talk this way.

GO BACK AND FORTH. When your baby makes a sound, show excitement in your face and voice! Respond to their sound with words. See how long you can keep the “conversation” going. It is very powerful when the two of you can stay focused on each other for a while.

USE REAL WORDS. Don’t just use “baby talk”; it’s important to also use real words. The more words your baby hears, the larger their vocabulary will grow. Think of words as nourishment for your baby’s brain!

SING. Sing songs to your baby. This is a fun way for them to learn language. You might have certain songs for special times of the day, like bath time or before bedtime.

USE ANY LANGUAGE. Speak in whatever language you are most comfortable speaking (like the mother who uses both Spanish and English in the video). All languages are equally beneficial for children’s language development. It’s great if children grow up speaking more than one language!



TALK, SING, AND POINT

Guidelines from the Video for Toddlers (Ages 12 – 36 Months)

Toddlers learn language from interacting with the people around them. How much and how quickly they learn depends on the amount that people speak to them. Toddlers are very curious! Answering their questions is a way to teach them about the world. By involving them in conversations and listening to them, you will come to know the fascinating person they are becoming.

INVOLVE THEM. Involve your toddler in what you are doing (like the father who involves his son in picking out bananas at the grocery store). Describe the things you do together. Encourage them when they try something new. Your toddler is figuring out how the world works so even routine tasks are full of learning opportunities.

EXPRESS INTEREST. Get down on your toddler's level and express interest in what they're doing. When you show that you value what they do and what they have to say, you are building their confidence.

LISTEN. Listen to your toddler's questions and answer them. Have a conversation. Powerful learning takes place when you go back and forth in a conversation. It builds their concentration and thinking skills.

ADD WORDS AND IDEAS. Help grow your child's vocabulary by expanding on what he says. For example, if he says, "doggie," you can respond with, "Yes, that is a doggie. That doggie is brown and soft."

USE YOUR HANDS. When you talk about something, point to it. This helps your child connect new words to the objects they represent. You can also encourage your child to point to things.

SING. Singing is a fun way to expose your toddler to language. Children love the melody and rhythm of music. They will remember the words and sing along with you. Songs can be incorporated into daily routines like dressing and cleaning up.

USE ANY LANGUAGE. It doesn't matter what language you speak with your toddler. All languages are equally beneficial.

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COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

Guidelines from the Video for Infants (Ages 0 – 12 Months)

Everyone is born to be a “math person!” Infants are pre-wired to learn simple math ideas, including small numbers, patterns, and making comparisons. You don’t need to be a math teacher to start preparing your child to be a problem solver. There are fun and simple activities that you can do now to build math and thinking skills.

MOVE IN RHYTHM. Clap, tap, rock or kiss your baby in a steady rhythm. Count while you do it. Like the father in the video, you can count while you push your child on a swing. Have fun. This is a way to teach your child about patterns and counting.

COUNT OBJECTS. Count groups of things, starting with small numbers. For example, count your child’s toes or pieces of fruit. Infants learn through all of their senses, so hold objects up for your child to see and touch. “Look, there’s one...two socks. Two socks.”

COMPARE. Provide opportunities for your child to touch and explore things that are the same and different. For example, let your baby shake things that make different sounds, or touch fabrics with different textures. Talk about how they are similar or different.

USE MATH WORDS. When you talk to your infant, use words related to math ideas like quantities or comparisons. For example, words like “more, less, big, small, tall, short, round, square.” You don’t need to set aside special time to do this. You can use math words whenever you are with your child.

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COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

Guidelines from the Video for Toddlers (Ages 12 – 36 Months)

Becoming good at math begins long before a child enters school. In fact, toddlers can learn simple math ideas, including numbers, patterns, sizes, shapes, distances, and making comparisons. In the words of one father from video, young children are like “sponges...so every moment is a teaching moment.”

COUNT. Count with your toddler. In the video families counted all kinds of things, including books, strands in a braid, and sides of a triangle.

MAKE GROUPS. Children learn to say strings of numbers before they truly understand the *meaning* of numbers. So, after they can count numbers out loud, the next leap is to understand how many things each number stands for. “Five” isn’t just a word that comes after “four”—the word five represents five *of something*. Count objects and put them in a group so your child can see the whole set.

MAKE IT A GAME. Make counting into a game, like the father and daughter in the video who clap after every 10 lines in the sidewalk.

NAME SHAPES. Look for shapes around you. “The clock is a circle. Do you see any other circles?”

MATCH AND SORT. Make a game of matching and sorting objects. Your child can match and sort items by their shape, color, size, or other features (like the mother and daughter matching socks while doing laundry).

MAKE MATH A PART OF LIFE. Involve your child in your daily activities and talk about things that are related to numbers such as shapes, size, and distance.



EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

Guidelines from the Video for Infants (Ages 0 – 12 Months)

Movement and play are good for children’s bodies—their coordination, strength, and overall health. They are also ways that children explore and learn about the world. Each stage of development comes with new opportunities for learning.

GET ON THEIR LEVEL. Get down on your child’s level and play with them. See the world from their point of view!

FOLLOW THEIR INTERESTS. From the very beginning, your baby is intensely interested in the world around them—people, objects, colors, sounds, and how it all works. Pay attention to what engages your child. Talk to them about those things (even if they don’t talk back!) and support their exploration.

GIVE THINGS TO HANDLE. Provide objects of different colors, shapes, and textures to play with. Handling objects helps with hand-eye coordination and motor skills. Use everyday objects. You don’t need fancy toys to keep your baby’s attention!

LET THEM MOVE AROUND. Let your baby explore their surrounding by reaching, rolling, scooting, and crawling. This is good for coordination. It also strengthens their “mind’s eye” as they see things from new angles and sense where they are in space. Just make sure they are safe!

DO TUMMY TIME. Babies are still learning to control their bodies. If you have a baby, make sure they spend some time on their stomach each day. This is called “tummy time.” When put on their tummies, babies raise their heads and make crawling motions. Gradually, their upper body gets stronger, until they can crawl. Tummy time also gives them a new view of the world.



EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

Guidelines from the Video for Toddlers (Ages 12 – 36 Months)

Movement and play are good for children's bodies—their coordination, strength, and overall health. They are also ways that children explore and learn about the world. Each stage of development comes with new opportunities for learning. See where your child's curiosity takes them. The more you pay attention, the more you will learn about the person they are becoming.

GET ON THEIR LEVEL. Get down on your child's level and play with them. See the world from their point of view! Everything is new for young children, so an activity as simple as a walk around the block offers lots of opportunities for exploration and discovery.

FOLLOW THEIR INTERESTS. Your toddler is intensely interested in the world around them—people, objects, colors, sounds, and how it all works. Pay attention to what engages your child. Talk to them about those things (even if they don't talk back!) and support their exploration.

HANG BACK. Young children are like scientists. They learn a lot in the process of trying to figure something out on their own. If they are working through something or really deep into their play, stand back and see what they can accomplish on their own. If they are stuck, give them just enough help to keep them going so they don't give up. When a child makes a discovery or masters a new skill, they develop a sense of satisfaction and confidence.

STAY SIMPLE. There is no need for fancy toys. Simple objects and materials get children to use their imaginations. Early in the video, a toddler boy becomes interested in a bucket full of rainwater.

PLAY OBSTACLE COURSE. Make a simple obstacle course. You can use blankets, pillow, or boxes. See if your child can go over, under, around, and through these objects. Or go to your local playground if it's nice out!

ROLL A BALL. Roll a ball back and forth to develop coordination and teach about cause and effect.



READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

Guidelines from the Video for Infants (Ages 0 – 12 Months)

The more we read with young children, the more prepared they become to enjoy reading and to do well in school. It is never too early to begin reading. When you read to your infant, they will be learning how books work and developing language skills. Reading is also a special way for the two of you to bond.

READ REGULARLY. Make book time part of your baby's daily routine. They won't understand for a while, but that's fine. What is important is that they hear your voice, see the pictures, and start to develop positive feelings about books.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. Choose books that are sturdy, short, and have simple, colorful pictures.

SNUGGLE UP. Hold your baby in your lap as you read so they can see the pictures and feel cozy.

DESCRIBE THE PICTURES. You don't need to read the words on the pages. Instead, describe what is happening in the pictures. Talk about the colors, shapes, and what the characters are doing. Point to the page as you talk.

ACTIVELY INVOLVE THEM. As your baby develops coordination, involve them more in the reading experience. For example, let them hold the book or turn the pages.

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD. Let your baby guide the reading experience. When they start to lose interest, try another book or stop. Not being forced to keep going will keep them excited about reading.



READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

Guidelines from the Video for Toddlers (Ages 12 – 36 Months)

The more we read with young children, the more prepared they become to enjoy reading and to do well in school. Stories expose children to new and exciting ideas and teach them to use imagination. What they learn about people, places, and things can be important building blocks to success in school. For both parents and children, times together with books form fond and lasting memories.

READ REGULARLY. Try to set aside some time to read together every day. Get books from your local library.

WARM UP. Before you open the book, check out the cover. Read the title. Look at the picture. Ask your child what she thinks the book might be about.

READ AND DISCUSS. Your toddler will learn the most if you have discussions while you read. Respond to their comments and questions about the story. Ask questions that get them to think.

HELP THEM FOLLOW ALONG. Point to the words and pictures. This helps your toddler understand how reading works. Pause to explain the meanings of words that are new to them.

USE EXPRESSION. Use your best reader's voice! Trying different voices for different characters is fun.

ENJOY THE PICTURES. Talk about what is happening in the pictures. You can talk about the colors and shapes you see or what the characters are doing.

BUILD ON THEIR INTERESTS. Build on your child's developing interests. So if they are interested in certain things, consider going to the library and getting some books on those topics.