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How to Help Your Child Learn to Use the Computer Mouse

Although most children do not have the motor skills and spatial concepts to be able to use a computer mouse at age two, many who are interested in using computers develop these skills and learn to use a mouse some time between ages two and four. After many years of testing interactive products with very young children and observing their attempts at mouse use, Sesame Workshop researchers have come up with some suggestions that often help children develop the basic components of mouse use.

Stages of Learning

Depending on the child's age and level of motor development, working through these activities and stages of learning to use the mouse may take anywhere between a few minutes and a few months. For some children, it just takes some time for their motor development to reach a stage where mouse use comes easily to them. Many parents find that it can take a few weeks or even a few months for their preschool children to refine their skills to the point that they are able to use software on their own, without adult help. If your child continues to have difficulty using the mouse to the point of frustration, you may want to consider starting him/her on Sesame Street® First Steps and saving Sesame Street® Play, Learn and Grow™ until your child is a little older.

Five Easy Steps to Help Your Child Learn about Mouse Use

1. Make Lots of Room for Mouse Movement

Clear a large space in front of the computer monitor. Although adults generally move the mouse using small finger or hand movements, young children often use whole arm movements, which require a lot of room! Mouse pads are often not big enough for the large movements children make, so use either the table or desk surface or a large vinyl place mat as a large mouse movement area.

2. Introduce the Mouse and its Movement

Put your child's hand on the mouse and then put your hand on top of the child's hand to demonstrate how to hold and move the mouse. It is often natural for young children to want to "drive" the mouse the way they would drive a toy car, turning the mouse to change the direction of cursor movement on-screen. In addition, the fact that you sometimes need to pick the mouse up and reposition it is not intuitive to young children. They often just continue moving the mouse along one continuous path until it comes to the edge of the desk or runs into the monitor or some other obstacle. Use your hand on top of the child's hand to model the kind of mouse movement (picking it up and re-placing it) that is required to effectively control the movement of the cursor on-screen.

3. Refining Your Child's Skills

Work with your child on just controlling the movement of the mouse first, without worrying about clicking on anything yet. Point out the cursor on-screen, and direct your child's attention to the way the cursor moves in response to the movement of the mouse. Once your child can move the mouse effectively without needing your constant assistance, try the activity in step four.

4. Mouse Fun

Place your finger on the screen and ask the child to try to move the cursor to your finger. When the cursor is near your finger, giggle and say "That Tickles!" or "You got me!" and place your finger in a new position to try again. Young children often enjoy this game, and it helps them master mouse movement skills. Start by placing your finger at the very top or bottom of the screen, or the very left or right edge of the screen, since it is more difficult for children to stop the cursor in the middle of the screen.

5. Clicking Objects on Screen

Clicking objects on-screen can often be very challenging for young children, for a variety of reasons. First, young children often have great difficulty stopping a movement, and they get very frustrated when they want to click on objects but can't get the cursor to stop on them. In addition, some young children have trouble pressing the mouse button without moving the mouse in the process. You may need to help your child hold the mouse steady while he or she presses the button to make a selection. Alternatively, if your child continues to encounter difficulty and frustration in trying to click without moving the mouse, just ask your child to move the cursor to the desired object and let go of the mouse; then you can provide the click to select.

Mouse Settings

If your child is having a lot of difficulty controlling mouse movement and getting the cursor to stop on a desired location, you may want to adjust the "Cursor Speed and Acceleration" settings on your computer until your child becomes more proficient at mouse movement. Here's how to do this:

Windows

- o   Double-click the "Mouse" icon on the Control Panel
- o   Click on the "Pointer Options" tab
- o   Under the Motion area, move the pointer speed slider all the way to "Slow"

Macintosh OS X

- o   Go to "System Preferences"
- o   Double-click the "Keyboard and Mouse" icon
- o   Select the "Mouse" tab
- o   Set "Tracking Speed" to "Slow"
- o   Set "Double-click Speed" to "Slow"

For a proficient mouse user, these settings will provide frustratingly slow mouse movement, but they often help young children who are having difficulty with the motor skills necessary for mouse use.

Getting Started

Minimum System Requirements

For Microsoft Windows

450MHz or faster processor (or equivalent), 128 MB of RAM, 1GB Free Hard Disk Space, CD drive, Microsoft Windows XP/Vista.

For the MAC

PowerPC® G3 500MHz or faster processor, or Intel Core™ Duo 1.83GHz or faster processor, CD drive, Mac OS X v.10.2.x and later

Installing the Program

For Microsoft Windows

To install the software on Microsoft Windows:

1. Insert the Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™ CD-ROM in your CD drive.

    -   If AutoPlay is enabled on your computer, a dialogue box will appear. Click on the Install button.

    -   If AutoPlay is not enabled, click on the Start button on your Windows taskbar, select Run, and then type *d:\setup.exe* and click on OK. *Note: If your CD drive is in a different location than* d*, substitute that letter instead.*

    -   In Windows Vista, if you have trouble finding the Run command in your Start menu, you can also go to Computer, use the *right* mouse button to click on the icon for your CD drive, select Explore from the menu that appears, and then double-click on the "Autorun" application.

2. Follow the on-screen directions to complete the installation.

To start the program, double-click on the Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™ icon on your desktop.

For the Mac

To install the software on the Mac:

1. Insert the Sesame Street® Learn, Play & Grow™ CD into the CD-ROM drive.
2. Double click the CD icon & launch the Sesame Street® Learn, Play & Grow™ installer.
3. Follow the instructions on your screen to complete the installation.

To start the program, navigate to the folder *Macintosh HD/Applications/Sesame Street/ Learn Play and Grow /*. (Or, if you picked a different folder during installation, navigate to that folder instead.) Once there, double-click on the Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™ icon to launch the game.

For your convenience, you might want to create an alias to launch the game from your desktop. Click once on the Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™ icon to select it, then hold down the Cmd (Apple) key and press the letter l. An icon for the new alias will appear. Click and drag the alias to your desktop. (Be careful not to move the actual application by mistake. The Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™ alias icon will be the one with the arrow in its bottom left corner.)

Uninstalling the Program

For Microsoft Windows

Windows Vista:

1. Click on the *Start* button, then select *Control Panel (or Settings>Control Panel). Click Uninstall a program*.

2. Select Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™, and then click *Uninstall*. Follow the on-screen directions to complete the uninstall.

Windows XP:

1. Click on the *Start* button, then select *Control Panel (or Settings>Control Panel)*.

2. Double-click Add/Remove Programs.

3. Select Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™, and then click *Remove*. Follow the on-screen directions to complete the uninstall.

For the Macintosh

Drag the Sesame Street® Learn, Play & Grow™ folder to the Trash & empty the Trash.

Product Registration and Support

Registering your Sesame Street® Product

Before you start playing Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™, please take a moment to register your product with us. Once you do, you'll be entitled to:

- Free Technical Support: We're committed to making Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™ work for you. If you have any questions, please contact our support staff.

- Registered User Discounts: As a registered user, you're eligible for special prices on many new products and bonus offers on our other best-selling software products.

Technical Support

Don't panic! Our friendly technical support staff is ready to help:

- Visit our website at www.novadevelopment.com/support/ for frequently asked questions and troubleshooting tips.

- Call us at 818-591-6245. Technicians are available Monday through Friday.

Muppet Hosts

Big Bird, Cookie Monster and Elmo are here to guide you through the activities.

Getting Around

Star Pointer

Your mouse pointer is a star. As you move the star around the screen, some objects will highlight or sparkle, inviting you to click on them.

- Bob, Maria, or the Muppet host identifies some items when you roll the star pointer over them.

- If you pause the star pointer over an item, the Muppet host will give you a hint about what to do next.

- You can click on the Muppet host at any time to hear the instructions again.

- The star pointer works the same way in all the activities.

Forward/Back Icons

Two green arrows appear at the bottom of the activity window, one facing right and one facing left.   To move to the next activity or return to the previous activity, click on one of these arrows.

Click on this arrow to return to the previous activity.

Click on this arrow to move to the next activity.

Difficulty Levels & Hints

Some of the activities have progressive levels of difficulty. The program tracks correct and incorrect answers, and if you are able to answer a series of questions correctly, without using any hints, the game progresses to the next level.

If you answer a question incorrectly, the Muppet host offers hints to guide you to the correct answer. If you have repeated difficulty answering the questions, the game automatically moves back to the easier level.

The Muppet hosts offer encouragement and congratulations throughout the game.

Note: Automatic tracking of difficulty level is for the current game session only. When you quit Sesame Street® Learn, Play and Grow™, this tracking information is discarded.

Main Menu

After the animated introduction ends, Big Bird introduces the "activity blobs" and asks you to choose one. Select from six different activity areas: Colors and Shapes, Letters, Numbers, Things in Common, Art, and People in Your Neighborhood. Or click the Exit button if you wish to leave the game.

If, at any point during the game, you wish to change activity areas or exit the game, click on the Main Menu button in the upper left-hand corner of the screen and the blobs will reappear.

Activities

COLORS & SHAPES

Identify the Color

Learn to identify colors, with help from Big Bird. A color splotch appears on the screen. Place the star pointer over the splotch to hear the color's name. Click on the splotch to play a short animation and then move on to the next color. You can continue to play this activity or click on the right arrow to start the next activity.
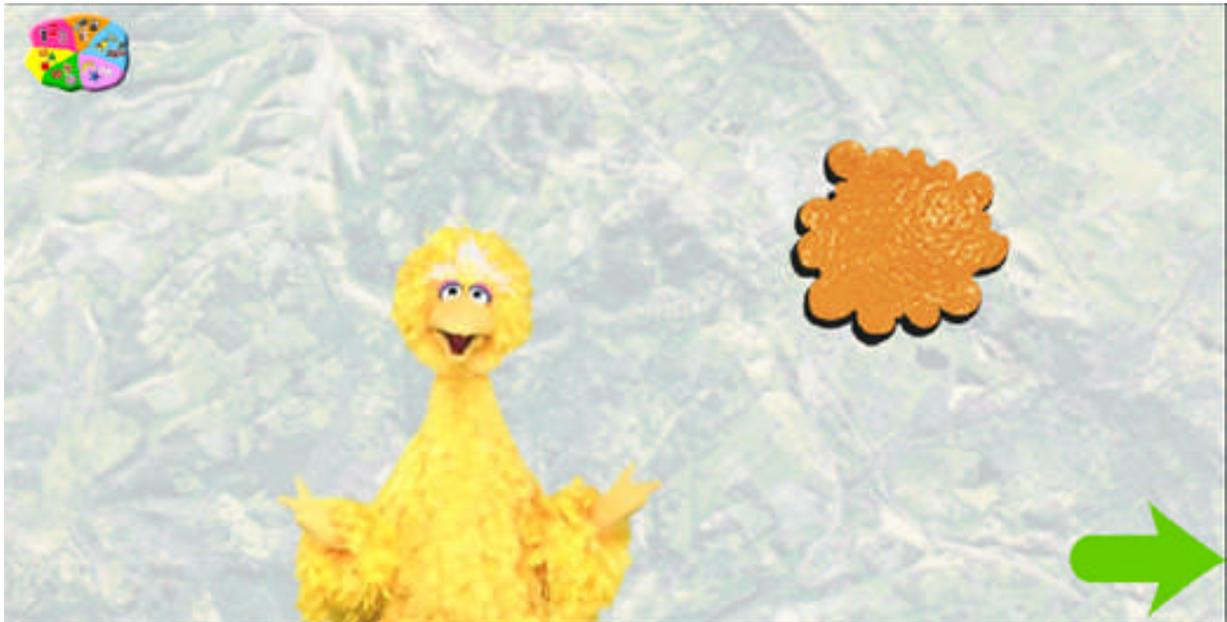
Find the Color

Three color splotches appear, and Elmo asks you to pick out a particular color. This activity has two levels of difficulty: In the second level, you choose different colored objects instead of splotches. Place the star pointer over a splotch to hear the color's name. Click on the splotch to see it animate and progress to the next round of colors. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

Identify the Shape

Identify shapes with Cookie Monster. A single shape appears onscreen. Place the star pointer over the shape to hear what it is. Click on the shape to see it animate and progress to the next shape. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

Find the Shape

Work with Elmo to find a particular shape. Three shapes appear on the screen and you must find the correct one. This activity has two levels of difficulty: In the second level, four shapes appear instead of three. Place the star pointer over a shape to hear its name. Click on the correct shape to view a short animation and then progress to the next shape. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

Identify a Color/Shape

Select a color and a shape. Once you've selected both, Big Bird will tell you what you have made. You can continue to click colors and shapes to see all the variations. Continue playing, click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity, or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.
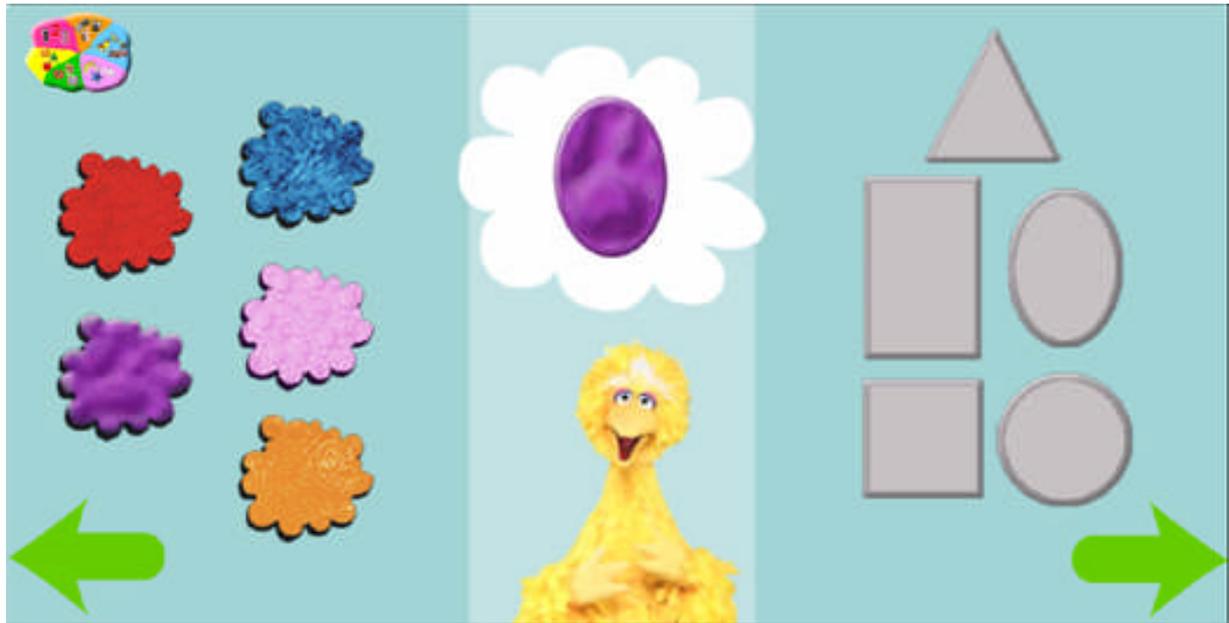
Make a Color/Shape

Elmo is thinking of a color-shape combination. Can you make it for him? Once both the color and shape are correct, a short animation plays and Elmo requests a new shape and color. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to return to the first Colors and Shapes activity.

LETTERS ACTIVITIES

Identify the Letter

Learn to recognize uppercase and lowercase letters with Big Bird. Move the star pointer over each letter as it appears to hear Bob or Maria say its name. Click on the letter to see the next letter. Click on the right arrow to move to the next activity.

Find the Letter

Three letters appear on the screen, and Cookie Monster asks you to find one of them. This activity has two levels of difficulty. Level one uses uppercase letters. Level two uses lowercase letters. If you have trouble finding the correct letter, Cookie Monster offers hints to guide you to it.   Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

Identify the Letter Sound

Uppercase and lowercase letters appear side by side. Elmo tells you their name and the sound they make. Click on a letter to see something that starts with that letter and move to the next one. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

Find the Letter that Makes the Sound

Big Bird asks you to pick a letter based on the sound it makes. If you pick the right letter, an animation plays and the next group of items appear. If you answer incorrectly, Big Bird provides hints to help you find the correct answer. This activity has two levels: In level one, the letters are uppercase; in level two, they are lowercase.

Identify the Thing that Starts with the Letter or Sound

Elmo helps you learn the sounds and letters that begin words. Hold the star pointer over an item to hear what it is called. Click on the letter or picture to advance to the next set. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.
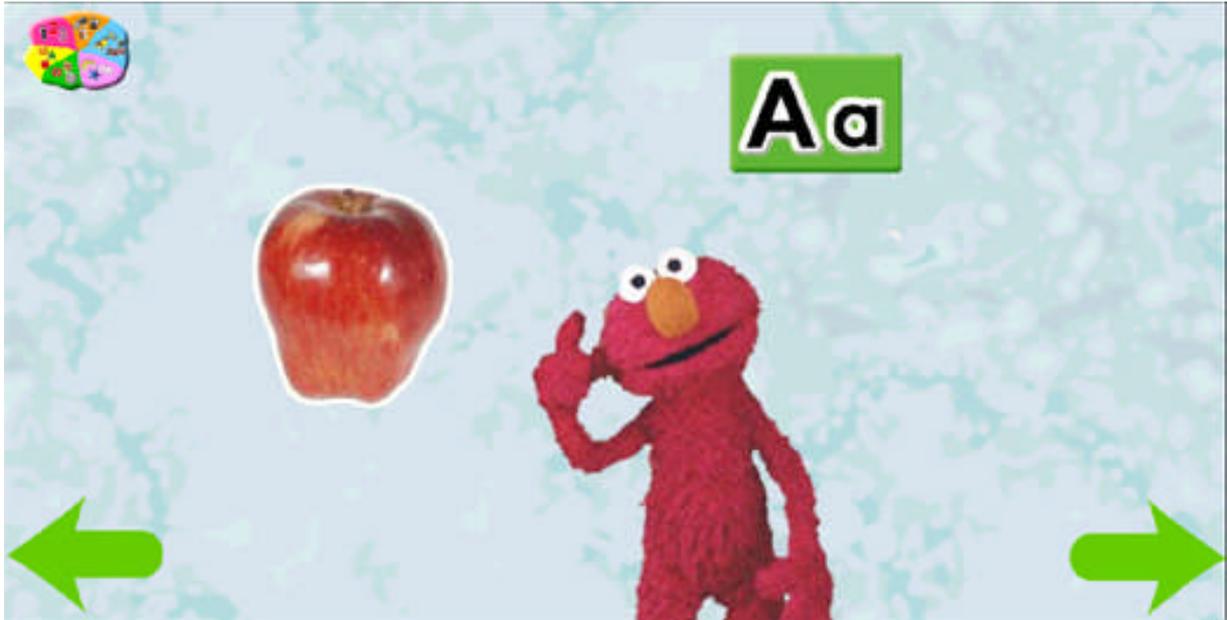
Find the Thing that Starts with the Letter or Sound

A letter appears on screen, and Big Bird asks you to find the picture of the thing that begins with that letter. If you choose the right item, an animation plays and the next group of items appears. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow return to the first Letters activity.

NUMBERS ACTIVITIES

Identify the Numeral

Learn to identify numerals with Big Bird. Move the star pointer over the numeral to learn more about it. Click on it to view an animation and move on to the next numeral. Click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

Find the Numeral

Find a numeral with Cookie Monster's help. This activity has two levels of difficulty: In level one, three numbers between 1 and 5 appear; in level two, 4 numbers between 1-10 appear. Cookie Monster asks you to find one of them. Click on the correct numeral to see a short animation and then progress to the next set. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

Identify the Group

Big Bird helps you learn about quantities of objects in groups of one to ten. Move the star pointer over a group to hear more about it, then click on it to view a short animation and move on to the next group. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.

How Many Are There?

Elmo teaches you how to count objects in a group. Click on the items one at a time to count them. Once all the objects are counted, the total is announced and the next group of objects appears. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to move on to the next activity.
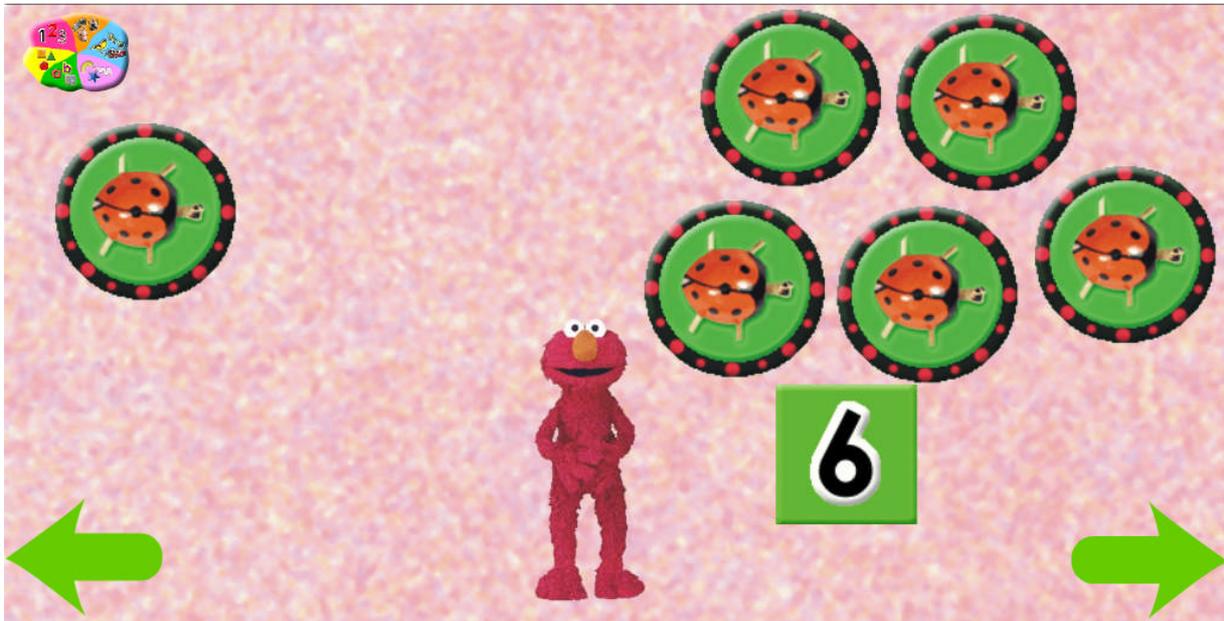
Interactive Numbers Pinball

The pinball video and "Pinball Number Count" song from the Sesame Street® TV show teach number recognition and counting. Click on the screen and an introductory video and song will play. When it ends, click on any of the numbers and a special video will play for that number. Click on the left arrow to go back to the previous activity or click on the right arrow to return to the first Numbers activity.

THINGS IN COMMON

Explore vehicles, animals, and musical instruments with Big Bird, Elmo, and Cookie Monster.

Hold the star pointer over each picture to see it in color and hear the sound it makes. Click on each item to hear what it is called. After approximately 30 seconds to a minute, a new set of items appear for you to explore.

If you click on the right arrow to move on, a new group of items appear on the screen, and Bob sings the classic Sesame Street® song, "One of these Things Is Not Like the Others." What do the items have in common? How are they different? One of them does not belong – can you find it? The Muppet host provides hints, and when you click on the correct choice, a new set of items appears. At any time, you can click on the right arrow to go to the next category, or click the left arrow to go back and listen to the sounds some more.

This activity has three levels of difficulty, mixing categories in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Each category has twelve items, grouped by things they have in common. The categories are:

VEHICLES

Vehicles that Drive on the Ground

Motorcycle

Schoolbus

Fire Engine

Vehicles that Fly through the Air

Jet Plane

Hot Air Balloon

Helicopter

Vehicles that Sail through the Water

Cruise Ship

Sailboat

Motorboat

ANIMALS

Insects

Bee

Katydid

Cricket

Birds

Owl

Canary

Rooster

Animals that Have Four Legs

Horse

Dog

Tiger

INSTRUMENTS

Instruments You Shake or Bang

Drum

Tambourine

Maracas

Instruments You Play with your Mouth

Flute

Digeridu

Trumpet

Instruments that Have Strings

Harp

Guitar

Dulcimer

ART

Have fun with Big Bird and make colorful pictures. Clicking one of the arrows starts a new picture with a different set of art tools.

PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

This activity shows videos of real people and their occupations. Click on a TV and sing along with Bob from Sesame Street® as you learn about the "People in Your Neighborhood."

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Starring the Sesame Street® Muppets

Caroll Spinney and Matt Vogel as Big Bird

Kevin Clash as Elmo

David Rudman as Cookie Monster

And Featuring the Voice Talents of

Bob McGrath as Bob

Sonia Manzano as Maria

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Jim Henson, whose imagination and vision continue to inspire us all, and to Cheryl Henson, for helping to keep the vision alive.

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