

## WHAT ARE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT IN EARLY LEARNING?

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We are entering an age in which information is doubling every 2.5 years. Integrating information and innovation is key. In an economy driven by innovation and knowledge, and in diverse workplaces and communities that rely on collaborative relationships and social networking, the ingenuity, agility and skills of the American people are crucial to America's global competitiveness. We continuously develop new technologies, and today's students must adapt to them. Many of the jobs our children may consider as adults have not even been imagined yet.

How do we prepare our children for the challenges and demands of a world driven by technology? Educators use the term "21st century skills" to discuss the knowledge and skills children need to compete globally. These skills include traditional core subjects like reading, math, science and history, and also include an increased focus on technology, critical thinking, executive functions and more. Today's children must know how to reason, think creatively, analyze data and work collaboratively.

The Goddard School has become the first preschool program to join P21, a national organization championing 21st century skills. By teaching our students reading, writing, mathematics and the 4Cs of critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity, we equip Goddard School students with the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. We understand the importance of introducing children to these skills at an early age to build a strong foundation for future learning.

We include the following skills in our daily activities, lessons and learning environments:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
  - Creativity and Innovation
  - Executive Function
  - Communication and Collaboration
  - Technology
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Here are ten easy and fun activities you and your family can do to help your child develop 21st century skills. These activities don't require a lot of planning, expensive toys or technology. Your child's Goddard School teacher will also have suggestions and ideas for meeting your child's individual needs.

1. Cook together. Help your children follow a recipe. Explain the steps as you go along.
2. Shop together. Create a simple shopping list and read the items aloud as you place them in the cart.
3. Travel together. Play simple games, such as How Far Is It? Keep a chart of average temperatures at your destination to help you and your child plan for a family vacation.
4. Play games together. Encourage your children to learn the rules of a game by reading and enforcing the directions. Chutes and Ladders and Candy Land can help children develop their working memories and follow rules.
5. Do projects together. Build something together out of boxes, paper towel tubes and more to inspire creativity and innovation.
6. Involve your children in routine home maintenance work and family decisions.
7. Read to your children. Spend 20 minutes a day reading to preschoolers. Ask your child about what the characters in the book are like, what would happen if the story changed and how the characters might have acted.
8. Do simple chores together, like laundry. Have your children sort items of clothing according to color, read washing instructions, measure detergent and time wash cycles. Following these steps helps children learn how to plan.
9. Use the computer, a tablet or a smartphone to communicate with the children's grandparents and other family members. Before the call, plan what you will do together. You could read a story, sing a song or play an interactive game.
10. Create a family photo album together. Plan what to include, the theme and the sequence of photos together with your child. This encompasses most of the 21st century skills.



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FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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