



# Build -A-Brain Yarn Activity

*Early literacy for lifelong achievement*

**Objective:** Parents will understand how connections are built in their child’s brain and how they can impact early brain development.

## Activity Steps:

### **Part 1 – Building a Brain**

- Gather participants in a circle, up to 10 or 12 people.
- As you hold the ball of yarn, explain that we are going to demonstrate a growing brain through the use of a ball of yarn.
- Start by telling participants that we are each going to describe something we like to do with our young child (or would do if we had one). For example, play in the park, make pancakes, play ball, read together. After we each describe our activity, we throw the ball to a person across the circle from us while holding on to the string. In this way, we demonstrate how activity creates pathways in the brain, and eventually creates a web of connections.
- Start the web by describing your activity, “I like to pick berries with my child”, and throw the ball to someone across from you after calling the person’s name.
- After the ball has traveled to visit each participant, it comes back to you.
- Tell the parents that each person represents a brain cell, or neuron.
- Explain how the string represents pathways, or synapses, in the brain. By doing these activities with our children, we are helping to develop their brains and build pathways. Make sure to recognize fully the great things families already do with their children.

### **Part 2 - Repetition**

- Now you are going to demonstrate how repeating an activity thickens and strengthens the connections you have made.
- Pick out one of the participants who is a reasonable distance away. Ask him or her what it is that she does with her child. She may say, for example, “play jump rope.” Demonstrate, through throwing the ball of yarn back and forth, while holding on to the string, how repeating the activity builds the connections thicker and stronger.
  - You may say something like, “Let’s say you really love jumping rope with your child, so you do it today (pass once), and tomorrow (pass again), and the day after that (pass again). Ask, “What’s happening to this connection?” (It’s getting stronger.)

### **Part 3 - Losing Pathways**

- Now ask the group what they think happens when they stop doing a particular activity with their child.
- Choose another volunteer and show how if you do not make a routine of an activity, the connection will weaken.
  - You may say something like, “Let’s say you like jumping rope with your child, but your rope breaks, and then you are too busy to get a new one. What happens to the connection?” (It’s weak.)
- End the activity by saying, “But if we start doing those activities again, we build up and strengthen the pathways, we can continue to build the brain.” Pick up the yarn again, and end with a strong web!

### **Materials:**

Ball of yarn