

Say hello to Ms. Michaela

Hello! My name is Michaela Edwards! I'm currently pursuing my education in Early Childhood Education with hands-on experience working with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. I have a strong passion for nurturing young children's growth during these critical early years, and I'm especially dedicated to creating safe, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning environments. My ultimate goal is to own and direct my own daycare center—where I can lead with both heart and professionalism while supporting children, families, and staff. I'm excited for the journey ahead!

Approaches
to Learning

Social and Emotional
Development

Physical Development
& Health

Communication,
Language, & Thought

Cognitive Development

Creative
Arts



Approaches to Learning

Approaches to Learning refers to how infants and toddlers engage with people, materials, and experiences. This includes their curiosity, persistence, initiative, problem-solving, attention, and flexibility. Supporting this area helps children become confident, motivated, and independent learners.

Name of Activity: *Lid Matching Game*

Originating Idea:

To strengthen problem-solving, persistence, and attention span through a trial-and-error task.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

A. Approaches to Learning

KDI: Problem Solving

Materials:

- Several plastic containers with matching lids
- Optional: colored stickers for matching guidance

Lid Matching Game - Toddlers (18–24 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Can you help me find which lid fits each cup?”

Early:

Model placing lids on and off. Offer one lid at a time and praise attempts.

Middle:

Encourage independence: “Try another lid if it doesn’t fit.” Give time to problem-solve.

Later:

Add more containers and challenge them to sort by size or color. Ask, “Which one is the biggest lid?”

End of Activity

Say, “You did such great matching! Let’s put the lids back in the basket and get ready to go outside.”

Follow-up Ideas:

Add this to your quiet area or shelf. Encourage children to teach peers how to play. Introduce shape sorters next week to extend problem-solving.

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Name of Activity: *Tunnel Time*

Originating Idea:

To promote initiative, persistence, and flexible thinking through physical and exploratory play.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

A. Approaches to Learning

KDI: Initiative

Materials:

- Pop-up tunnel or fabric tunnel
- Scarves, soft balls
- Low obstacles (pillows, foam blocks)





Tunnel Time - Toddlers (24–36 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s crawl through the tunnel! I wonder what we might find on the other side!”

Early:

Sit at the other end encouraging the child to come through. Model crawling first.

Middle:

Place a favorite toy or scarf at the end to motivate persistence. Say, “You can do it—keep going!”

Later:

Add small obstacles such as pillows or foam blocks and encourage children to carry a soft toy through the tunnel. Invite children to pretend the tunnel is a cave, train tunnel, or secret passage and take turns crawling through.

End of Activity

Say: “We’re done crawling for now. Let’s stretch and get ready for circle time!”

Follow-up Ideas:

Add tunnel to gross motor area during free play. Create an obstacle course next week to further extend physical persistence and creativity.

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Name of Activity: *Crinkle & Crunch Exploration*

Originating Idea:

To spark sensory curiosity and initiative by offering infants a chance to explore different textures and sounds in a safe and open-ended way. This activity supports attention, initiative, and exploration as described in *Tender Care and Early Learning*.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

A. Approaches to Learning

KDI: Initiative

Materials:

- **Crinkle paper (tissue, wrapping paper, crinkle toys)**
- **Fabric swatches (silky, bumpy, soft)**
- **Soft sensory blanket**
- **Basket or low bin to hold materials**
- **Mirror (optional for added curiosity)**



Crinkle & Crunch Exploration - Infants (6–12 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s see what fun sounds and textures we can find! Look at all these colorful crinkly things.”

Early:

Lay the infant on a soft blanket. Offer one material at a time. Gently crinkle items near the infant’s hands or ears to spark engagement. Use simple language: “This one goes *crunch crunch!*”

Middle:

Encourage reaching and grabbing. Place several items around them and let them choose. Narrate what they’re doing: “You found the soft one! What does it feel like?”

Later:

For infants who are sitting up or crawling, place items at different distances to motivate movement and exploration. Encourage comparison: “This one is rough... this one is smooth.”

End of Activity

“Time to put the crinkly things away. We’ll save them for another day. Let’s go wash our hands and get ready for snack!”

Follow-up Ideas

- Add crinkly and textured materials to a sensory bin or soft play area.
- Offer similar materials during tummy time or diaper changes for continuity.
- Create a texture board with glued-down swatches to encourage ongoing interest.
- Repeat this activity weekly with new textures or materials to extend attention and curiosity

Social & Emotional Development

Social & Emotional Development refers to how infants and toddlers learn about themselves, build relationships with others, and understand their emotions. This includes forming secure attachments, developing a sense of trust, expressing emotions, managing feelings, showing empathy, and engaging in social interactions with peers and adults.

Name of Activity: *Mirror Me, Mirror You*

Originating Idea:

To support self-awareness and emotional expression by encouraging infants to explore facial expressions in a mirror.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

B. Social and Emotional Development

KDI: Distinguishing self and others

Materials:

- **Unbreakable mirror**
- **Caregiver's face (smiling, silly, surprised expressions)**
- **Soft blanket**



Mirror Me, Mirror You - Infant (6–12 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Who’s that in the mirror? Let’s look at your happy face!”

Early:

Lay infant in front of mirror, smile, and use simple emotion words: “You look happy! See your big smile?”

Middle:

Hold infant and stand together in front of mirror. Make different faces and label them: “I’m feeling silly!” “Now we’re surprised!”

Later:

Encourage the infant to touch the mirror or mimic your expressions. Name their feelings as they react.

End of Activity

Say, “All done with the mirror! Time to sing our cleanup song.”

Follow-up Ideas

- **Add the mirror to tummy time or dramatic play**
- **Create laminated family photo cards for infants to explore**
- **Take pictures of different facial expressions for classroom use**



Social & Emotional Development

A collection of sensory bottles and colorful balls on a blue textured mat. The bottles include a red one with a white cap, a clear one with colorful beads, a yellow one with glitter, a dark green one with glitter, and a blue one with water. There are also several colorful balls in yellow, orange, blue, pink, and purple.

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Name of Activity: *Emotion Bottles & Calm Choices*

Originating Idea:

To help toddlers recognize emotions and learn simple ways to self-regulate using sensory tools.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

B. Social and Emotional Development

KDI: Emotions

Materials:

- Sensory/calming bottles (glitter bottles, water with oil)
- Emotion cards or puppets
- Pillows, soft music, stuffed animal
- Visual chart with calm-down strategies

Emotion Bottles & Calm Choices - Toddlers (24–36 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Sometimes we feel happy, mad, or sad. Let’s see what helps us feel better when we’re upset.”

Early:

Introduce sensory bottles one at a time. Narrate what the child is doing: “You’re watching the glitter—**are you feeling calm?**”

Middle:

Let the child pick a bottle or puppet and name how they feel. Offer calming choices: “You can hug the bear or squish the pillow.”

Later:

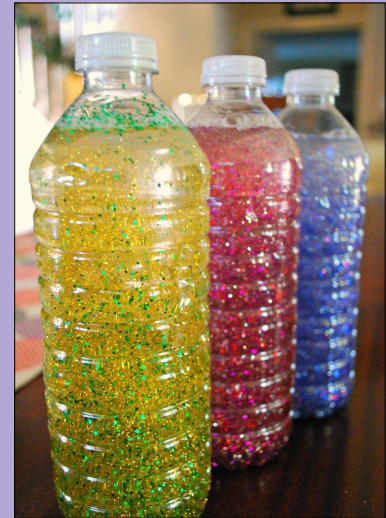
Support using the visual chart. Ask, “What helps you feel better when you’re mad?” Encourage verbal or gesture responses.

End of Activity

“Let’s put our calm things back in the basket and get ready for outside play.”

Follow-up Ideas

- **Make a permanent cozy corner with calm tools**
- **Introduce a “feelings check-in” routine at circle time**
- **Use puppets in group to act out emotional situations**



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Name of Activity: *Pass the Ball, Friend!*

Originating Idea:

To support social interaction, turn-taking, and early friendship skills by encouraging toddlers to play cooperatively with a peer and an adult.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

B. *Social and Emotional Development*

KDI: Relationships with Peers

Materials:

- Soft balls (various textures, colors, sizes)
- Carpeted area or mat
- Music player (optional for transition cues)



Pass the Ball, Friend! - Toddlers (12–24 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“We’re going to play a game with our friends and take turns rolling the ball!”

Early:

Sit closely with two children. Model rolling the ball: “I roll to you, now you roll it back.” Help guide their hands if needed.

Middle:

Encourage verbal or non-verbal communication: “Say ‘your turn’ or use your hands to show your friend.” Praise even small attempts at cooperation.

Later:

Let toddlers initiate rolls on their own. Add a third child for group play or sing a song while passing: “Roll, roll, roll the ball to your friend today...”

End of Activity

“All done rolling! Let’s say ‘thank you’ to our friends and go wash our hands for snack.”

Follow-up Ideas

- **Leave balls in the group area for continued turn-taking practice**
- **Pair this with books about friendship or helping**
- **Encourage rolling and turn-taking outdoors with larger balls**

Physical Development & Health

Physical Development & Health refers to how infants and toddlers learn to move, control their bodies, and develop fine and gross motor skills. It also includes developing body awareness, healthy habits, and self-care routines. Caregivers support this area by providing safe environments for movement, nutrition, rest, and active play that encourages coordination, strength, and independence.

Name of Activity: *Push, Pull, Go!*

Originating Idea:

To promote balance, walking, and coordination by using push and pull toys in a safe environment.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

C. Physical Development & Health

KDI: Moving the Whole Body

Materials:

- Push toys (shopping carts, toy lawnmowers)
- Pull toys with string (wooden animals, cars)
- Clear walking path (no tripping hazards)
- Music for movement cues (optional)



Push, Pull, Go! - Toddlers (12–24 months)



Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s get moving with our push and pull toys. Which one do you want to use?”

Early:

Offer stable push toy to help new walkers. Stay nearby for support.

Middle:

Encourage back-and-forth walking. Say: “Can you push it to the rug and back?”

Later:

Add obstacles or ramps for challenge. Narrate effort: “You’re working so hard to get it over the bump!”

End of Activity

“Let’s park our push toys and sit for a water break.”

Follow-up Ideas

- **Create a mini “track” for walking practice**
- **Use this activity before outdoor gross motor time**
- **Send home a handout with similar movement ideas for parents**

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Name of Activity: *Let's Get Dressed!*

Originating Idea:

To build self-care skills, fine motor control, and body awareness through playful dressing practice with real or pretend clothes.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

C. Physical Development & Health

KDI: Moving Parts of the Body

Materials:

- Basket of real toddler clothing (jackets, hats, socks, shoes, mittens)
- Large doll or stuffed animal for modeling
- Child-safe mirror
- Child-sized coat rack or shelf

Let's Get Dressed! - Toddlers (24–36 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s help our friends (or dolls) get dressed—then try it ourselves! What do we put on first?”

Early:

Model helping a doll put on a jacket or hat. Offer help and simple directions: “Put your arm through!”

Middle:

Encourage toddler to try putting on a sock or open shoe. Use the mirror for feedback. Celebrate each small success: “You got one foot in!”

Later:

Support them in layering two items (e.g., hat and jacket) or trying fasteners like Velcro or snaps. Ask: “What do you need when it’s cold?”

End of Activity

“Let’s hang up our clothes now and get ready for snack time.”

Follow-up Ideas

- Add a dress-up station with real clothes in dramatic play
- Include dressing as part of your daily routine transitions
- Create a visual step-by-step chart for getting dressed independently



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Name of Activity: *Shake, Tap, Bang!*

Originating Idea:

To encourage purposeful hand movements and build fine motor strength by exploring sounds and textures through object manipulation.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

C. Physical Development & Health

KDI: Moving Parts of the Body

Materials:

- Soft rattles
- Wooden spoons
- Empty plastic containers with lids (for safe banging)
- Fabric squares or soft scarves
- Low table or floor cushion (optional)



Shake, Tap, Bang! - Infants (6–12 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s make some music with our hands! What sounds can we make today?”

Early:

Place rattle or object into infant’s hand. Gently guide hand to shake or tap. Use excitement: “Wow! You made a sound!”

Middle:

Let infant explore freely—banging, shaking, or mouthing objects. Narrate their movements: “You’re tapping! That’s a loud sound.”

Later:

Encourage using both hands together or switching items between hands. Offer two different items to compare: “This one is soft... this one is hard!”

End of Activity

“All done with our music fun! Let’s put the shakers away and wash hands before snack.”

Follow-up Ideas

- **Add rattles and spoons to a basket in your motor area**
- **Repeat this activity using real instruments (drums, bells) later in the week**
- **Record short clips for family sharing to document fine motor progress**



What's That Sound? - Infants (6–12 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s listen together! What do we hear?”

Early:

Shake or crinkle a sound-making toy. Say the word clearly: “Shake!” Pause to let the infant react.

Middle:

Let the infant hold and explore the toy. Label their actions: “You’re shaking the rattle! It’s noisy!”

Later:

Ask simple questions with gestures: “Do you hear that? Where is it?” Model turn-taking with sounds and vocalizations.

End of Activity

“All done listening! We’ll put the toys away and go get ready for bottle time.”

Follow-up Ideas

- Leave sound toys in the infant area
- Incorporate simple songs or rhymes with sound effects
- Record the infant’s babbling or sound responses and play them back



Communication, Language, & Thought

This area focuses on how infants and toddlers express themselves, understand language, and develop thinking skills through communication. It includes gestures, vocalizations, words, imitation, labeling, following directions, asking questions, and engaging in conversations. Caregivers support development by responding warmly, modeling language, and following the child's lead.

Name of Activity: *Talk with the Pictures*

Originating Idea:

To help toddlers express and understand language by using real-life picture cards to make connections between words and their world.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

D. Communication, Language, & Thought

KDI: Speaking

Materials:

- Laminated photo cards of familiar objects, people, pets
- Small easel or table
- Optional: stuffed animals or items that match the cards



Talk with the Pictures - Toddlers (12–24 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s see who we know in these pictures! Can you find the dog?”

Middle of Activity – Scaffolding

Early:

Point to a picture and name it slowly: “Ball.” Let the child look, touch, or repeat.

Middle:

Ask questions: “Where’s the baby?” or “Can you show me the cat?” Encourage pointing or simple words.

Later:

Let the child choose a card and describe it in their own way. Offer expansions: “Yes, that’s a car. It’s a red car!”

End of Activity

“Let’s give our pictures a rest and go play outside!”

Follow-up Ideas

- Post labeled photos around the room
- Send home copies for families to reinforce vocabulary
- Match photos to real objects in the classroom



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Name of Activity: *Puppet Talk Time*

Originating Idea:

To encourage conversation, storytelling, and pretend play by engaging children in dialogue through puppet play.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

D. Communication, Language, & Thought

KDI: Two-Way Communication

Materials:

- Hand puppets (animals, people)
- Child-sized chair or “puppet theater” area
- Blanket or basket for props



Puppet Talk Time - Toddlers (24–36 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s see who wants to talk today! Look—it’s Bear! What should Bear say?”

Early:

Model simple dialogue using the puppet: “Hi! I’m Bear. What’s your name?”

Middle:

Encourage children to “talk” to the puppet or use one themselves. Ask questions: “What does your puppet want to eat?”

Later:

Support child-led storytelling: “What happened next?” Help children take turns using puppets to act out ideas.

End of Activity

“Let’s put the puppets to sleep and clean up our stage. They’ll be back tomorrow!”

Follow-up Ideas

- Create a puppet bin in the dramatic play area
- Record children’s puppet conversations and turn them into stories
- Use puppets to retell favorite books or real classroom events



Cognitive Development

Cognitive Development refers to how infants and toddlers think, explore, and figure things out. This includes memory, problem-solving, imitation, classifying, and understanding cause and effect. Children build knowledge through active exploration, repetition, and meaningful relationships with people and materials in their environment.

Name of Activity: *Where Did It Go?*

Originating Idea:

To support object permanence and early problem-solving by allowing infants to watch and search for partially hidden objects.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

E. *Cognitive Development*

KDI: Object Permanence

Materials:

- Small soft toys
- Washcloths or scarves
- Low basket or tray
- Soft blanket or mat



Where Did It Go? - Infants (6–12 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“I see your teddy bear! Oh no—where did it go?”

Middle of Activity – Scaffolding

Early:

Partially hide the toy under a cloth. Encourage looking or reaching. Say, “Where is it?” then reveal and say “There it is!”

Middle:

Hide the toy fully and give the infant a chance to search. Gently support them in lifting the cloth.

Later:

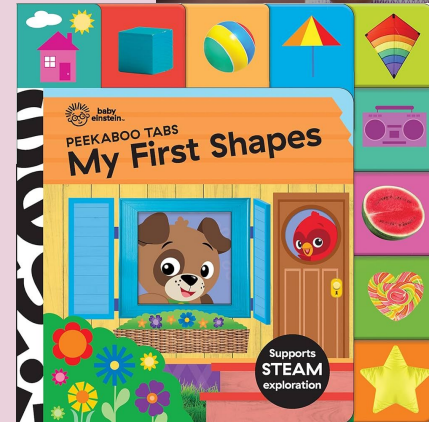
Invite the infant to hide the toy themselves. Offer several cloths or boxes to increase complexity.

End of Activity

“All done playing hide and seek! Let’s clean up our toys and get ready for bottle time.”

Follow-up Ideas

- Repeat during floor time or diaper changes
- Add peekaboo-style books to the classroom library
- Add a mystery box to explore new objects daily



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Name of Activity: *Stack and Crash!*

Originating Idea:

To support exploration of size, sequence, and cause and effect by stacking and knocking down towers.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

E. *Cognitive Development*

KDI: Cause and Effect

Materials:

- Stacking cups or foam blocks
- Soft toys or figures
- Low shelf or carpeted area



Stack and Crash! - Toddlers (12–24 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s build a tower and see what happens when it falls down!”

Early:

Model stacking two or three blocks. Let the toddler knock them down. Say: “You made them fall! Boom!”

Middle:

Encourage the child to build with your help. Talk about what happens: “It got too tall—uh-oh!”

Later:

Challenge the child to build taller towers or predict what happens with soft vs. hard blocks.

End of Activity

“We’re all done stacking! Let’s pick up the blocks and put them in the bin.”

Follow-up Ideas

- Add stacking materials to the block area
- Use blocks to create bridges, roads, or ramps next week
- Introduce stacking rings or nesting boxes

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Name of Activity: *Match It Up!*

Originating Idea:

To encourage memory and classification skills through object and picture matching.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

E. Cognitive Development

KDI: Exploring Same and Different

Materials:

- Sets of matching objects (2 red balls, 2 blue cups, 2 stuffed animals)
- Matching picture cards (animals, food, shapes)
- Small tray or mat

Match It Up! - Toddlers (24–36 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Let’s find things that are the same! Can you find the other red ball?”

Middle of Activity – Scaffolding

Early:

Model how to match: “This is a cup... can you find another cup?” Use real objects.

Middle:

Offer choices and ask guiding questions: “Which one looks like this?” Encourage pointing, then placing matches side by side.

Later:

Introduce picture cards and challenge child to find the match or sort by color/size. Add more complex sets.

End of Activity

“We matched so many things! Let’s put them back and stretch for movement time.”

Follow-up Ideas

- Add matching objects to shelf baskets for independent exploration
- Introduce color sorting and puzzles
- Use photos of classroom items or friends for more meaningful matching



Creative Arts

Creative Arts for infants and toddlers refers to how young children express themselves through music, movement, visual arts, and dramatic play. It fosters sensory exploration, imagination, and emotional expression while supporting language, motor, and cognitive development. The focus is on the process, not the product.

Name of Activity: *Finger Paint Exploration*

Originating Idea:

To support sensory and creative expression by encouraging infants to explore color and texture using safe finger paint.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

F. *Creative Arts*

KDI: Exploring Art Materials

Materials:

- Non-toxic edible finger paint (or colored yogurt/pudding)
- Large paper taped to floor or tray
- Smocks or bibs
- Damp cloth for cleanup



Finger Paint Exploration - Infants (6–12 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“Look at the colors! Let’s see what your fingers can do.”

Early:

Gently guide infant’s hand into paint and onto paper. Narrate their actions: “You made a blue smudge!”

Middle:

Let infants independently pat, smear, or clap paint. Offer more colors and describe the textures.

Later:

Encourage two-handed exploration. Add sponges or textured brushes for variety.

End of Activity

“All done painting! Let’s clean your hands and get ready for story time.”

Follow-up Ideas

- Display artwork at child’s eye level
- Repeat with new textures (foil, bubble wrap, fabric)
- Include painting during tummy time using sealed bags



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Name of Activity: *Dance with Ribbons*

Originating Idea:

To support musical expression and creativity through free movement and dancing with colorful ribbons.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

F. *Creative Arts*

KDI: Responding to Music

Materials:

- Soft music (classical, lullabies, or upbeat toddler tunes)
- Ribbon rings or scarves
- Open space



Dance with Ribbons - Toddlers (12–24 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“We’re going to dance and move our ribbons all around!”

Early:

Model waving the ribbon slowly and gently. Help toddlers hold it and move together.

Middle:

Encourage them to wave fast/slow, up/down. Narrate: “You’re twirling your ribbon!”

Later:

Let children try moving with the beat. Pause the music and try “freeze” movements for listening skills.

End of Activity

“It’s time to put our ribbons away. Let’s stretch and sit down together.”

Follow-up Ideas

- Leave scarves in dramatic play area
- Use different music styles for variation
- Let children explore dancing in front of mirrors



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Name of Activity: *Make a Music Band*

Originating Idea:

To encourage exploration of sound and rhythm while supporting group play and self-expression.

Curriculum Area & KDI:

F. *Creative Arts*

KDI: Responding to Music

Materials:

- **Homemade instruments (shakers, pots and spoons, tambourines)**
- **Small drums or rhythm sticks**
- **Carpeted area for group play**
- **Simple song or rhythm pattern**



Make a Music Band - Toddlers (24–36 months)

Beginning of Activity

Opening Statement:

“We’re making music today! Let’s be a band and play together!”

Early:

Let children pick an instrument. Model how to use each and encourage one-at-a-time play.

Middle:

Try a call-and-response rhythm (e.g., “Tap, tap—your turn!”). Sing a familiar song while playing.

Later:

Let children experiment with volume and tempo. Ask, “Can we play loud? Now soft?”

End of Activity

“Let’s place our instruments in the bin and clap for our music band!”

Follow-up Ideas

- Rotate new instruments each week
- Add instruments to dramatic play
- Play a “clean-up song” using real instruments

