

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2017



KID BITS

Stay informed

Be sure you don't miss out on information from your child's school. Have him show you what's in his backpack each day, and sign up for class or school email lists. If you use an electronic calendar, visit your school website to learn whether you can link to it so important dates are filled in automatically.

Time to relax

Put relaxation on your family's agenda! Each day, set aside 15–30 minutes for an activity that helps everyone unwind. You might find time right after work or on weekend mornings. Together, look at family photos, blow bubbles, or lie on a blanket in the yard and watch the clouds, for example.

DID YOU KNOW?

Little ones often need extra time to think about what they want to say and to put it into words. During conversations, wait and let your youngster speak for herself. Your patience will help her become a confident speaker—and show her how to be a good listener, too.

Worth quoting

"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you." *B.B. King*

Just for fun

Q: What can you add to a bucket of water to make it lighter?

A: Holes!



I'm a student!

Your child has an exciting job—she's a student! Encourage her to embrace her "big kid" role by talking about what successful students do.

I follow routines

From circle time to story time to music class, your youngster's school day is full of fun activities. She can get used to her new routine by making a book about it. Suggest that she draw a picture of each activity (circle time, recess, math) on a separate sheet of paper. Help her write (or let her dictate) captions, such as "We go to the cafeteria for lunch." Staple the pages together, and read her book with her.

I learn something every day

Invite your child to share her new knowledge with you. Reserve a special spot on a bulletin board or the refrigerator to post projects and papers she's proud of. Then, ask questions about what she's learning. *Example:* "I see you



drew squares and triangles. How are the two shapes different? How are they the same?"

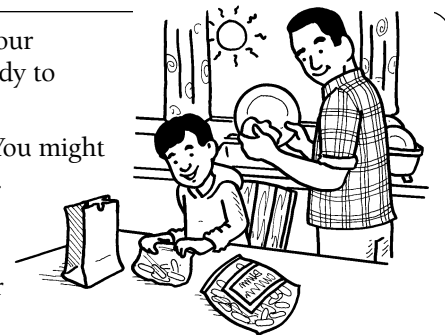
I work with others

Your youngster is part of an important community—her classroom. Play school at home so she can practice working alongside others. Have her create a "learning center" like one in her classroom, and use it together. The two of you could sort and count toy cars in a "math station" or stir together oil and water in a "science lab." ♥

Sunny starts

Starting the day on a positive note lets your youngster head off to school happy and ready to learn. Try these ideas for upbeat mornings:

- Use humor to get your child out of bed. You might sing a silly song or tell a knock-knock joke.
- Give each family member a job to make getting ready a smooth operation. You can wash breakfast dishes while your youngster packs snacks.
- Before you leave the house, hold a "morning huddle." Tell your child what to expect after school, such as who will pick him up or what's for dinner. Then, exchange hugs and an "I love you." ♥



Zippering toward independence

It's fun for kids to learn to button, zip, and tie. Here are strategies that will make your youngster more independent at home and in school.

Buttons. Use stickers to show your child which button goes with which hole in his shirt. Place one sticker next to each button, and put a matching one beside the hole where it belongs. Your youngster can remove the stickers as he fastens each button.



Zippers. To help your child zip his jacket, teach him to say, “1, 2, 3, zip!” On 1, he moves the zipper pull to the bottom of the jacket. On 2, he inserts one side into the other. On 3, he grabs the zipper pull and zips it up!

Shoelaces. Bulkier laces offer a better grip for your youngster's little fingers. Consider replacing thin shoelaces with

thicker ones or swapping out flat laces for rounded ones. *Tip:* Let him try tying the laces when his shoes are off, or have him tie *your* shoes.♥

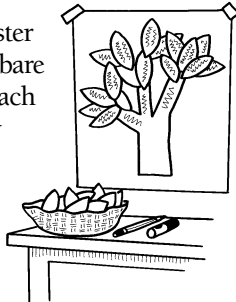


ACTIVITY CORNER

Plant a kindness tree

Does kindness grow on trees? It does when your family tries this activity that encourages your child to be kind to others.

Help your youngster draw a big tree with bare branches and label each branch with a family member's name. Hang her tree where everyone can see it. Next, have her cut leaves from colored paper and place them in a bowl near the tree along with a pencil and a glue stick.



Whenever someone notices a family member being kind, select a leaf, write about or draw a picture of the kind act, and glue the leaf to that person's branch. *Examples:* “Tony picked up my toys” or “Mommy held the door for a lady pushing a stroller.” At the end of the week, read all the leaves aloud, and “plant” a new tree for next week.♥

Q & A

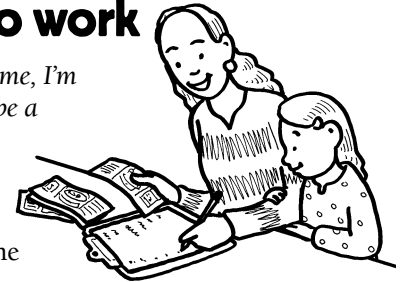
Back to school, back to work

Q: Now that my daughter is in school full time, I'm working days instead of nights. How can I be a part of her school?

A: There are plenty of ways for working parents to be involved. Talk to your daughter's teacher about how you can volunteer from home or at after-school events.

Maybe the teacher needs someone to repair torn pages in books or to collect and count food package labels for a manufacturer's reward program. Or perhaps you could hand out programs before the school musical or type and photocopy an announcement about a class party.

If your workplace would make an interesting field trip, ask your employer about the possibility of having the class visit. Little ones will enjoy seeing how newspapers are printed or going behind the scenes at a restaurant, for instance.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

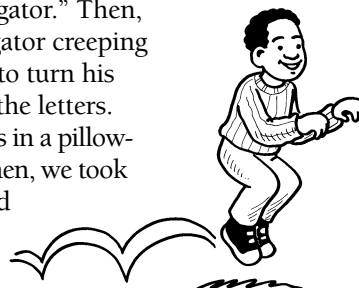
A is for...

When my son Mark started learning his ABCs, he accidentally invented an alphabet game for us. He was playing with his magnetic letters on the refrigerator and said, “A is for alligator.” Then, he pretended to be an alligator creeping across the floor. I decided to turn his idea into a game using all the letters.

I had Mark put his letters in a pillowcase and shake them up. Then, we took turns pulling out a letter and acting out something that started with it. The other person had to guess the

letter. Mark hopped like a bunny for B, and I painted with an imaginary brush when I got P. The letter X was tough, so we worked together on that one—we decided to be pirates searching for treasure because “X marks the spot!”

The “act it out” game is still one of Mark's favorites, and it has been a great way for him to have fun with—and learn—letters and their sounds.♥



OUR PURPOSE

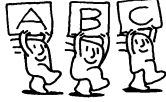
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Be a good sport

Playing games with your child gives you a chance to demonstrate good sportsmanship. Remind everyone to stick to the rules and play nicely. End games on a positive note whether you win or lose. For instance, say, “Good game. Thanks for playing,” and encourage your little one to do the same.

Safety smarts

In stores, teach your youngster to spot employees with uniforms and badges, and explain that he should approach them if he gets lost. Also, help him memorize your phone number. Write each digit on a separate index card, and let him practice putting them in order.

My math “collection”

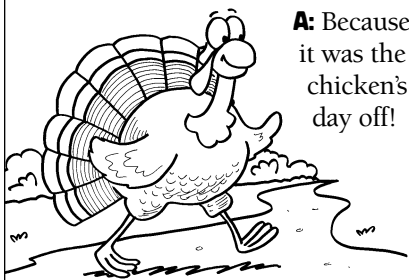
Organizing and playing with a collection of small objects is a fun way to work on early math skills. Suggest that your child gather up stickers, toy cars, or bouncy balls. Then, let her use an egg carton, a muffin tin, or an ice cube tray to sort and count her treasures.

Worth quoting

“The teacher is one who makes two ideas grow where only one grew before.” *Elbert Hubbard*

Just for fun

Q: Why did the turkey cross the road?



A: Because it was the chicken's day off!

Exploring feelings

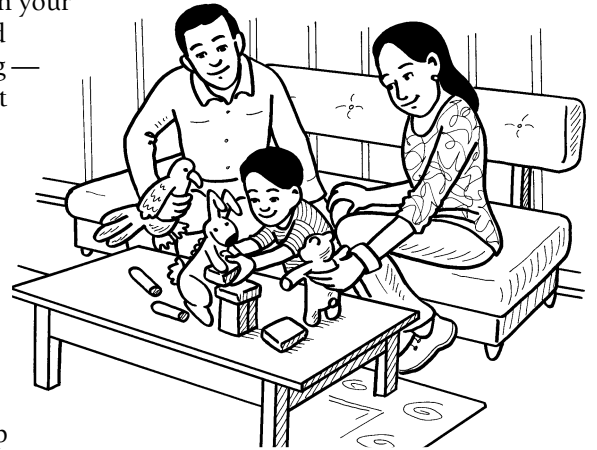
Developing empathy starts with your child's being able to recognize and understand how others are feeling — a tall order for someone who's just beginning to grasp his own emotions. Use these activities to build empathy.

Sing a silly song

This twist on “If You're Happy and You Know It” helps your youngster name feelings. Replace *happy* with a different emotion (*excited*, *sad*) and the action (“clap your hands,” “stomp your feet”) with “make a face.” Both of you should make a face that matches the feeling. For “If you're *surprised* and you know it,” you could open your eyes and mouths wide. Then, pick another emotion, and sing again.

Act it out

Enjoy this game to show your little one that people don't always feel the same way. Take turns naming something (spiders, brussels sprouts, haircuts), and have everyone act out how



they feel about it. One person may act scared of spiders, for example, while another might show curiosity. Try to guess each other's emotions.

Use your imagination

Pretend play lets your child put himself in another person's shoes. While playing with dolls or stuffed animals, you could say, “The parrot feels mad that the bunny knocked over his blocks.” Your youngster might add, “The bunny feels sorry, and he's going to rebuild the tower.”♥

Let's go to the library

Show your youngster that the library is a wonderful place to read and have fun by making regular trips there. Here are tips:

- Let your child sign up for her own library card. It's free, and she will feel grown up when she uses her card to check out books.
- Browse the library's calendar to find events she would like, such as craft workshops, story times, and puppet shows.
- Have your youngster invite a friend along. A library playdate encourages children to enjoy books together.
- Hold a “treasure hunt.” Take turns picking things to find, perhaps a magazine with “kids” in the title or a biography of a scientist. Your child will get to know the library's different sections.♥



Learning on your feet

Some days it may seem like your little one came with a built-in case of the wiggles. The upside? Young children often learn best when they are moving around. Try these active skill-building ideas.

Letters and numbers. Ask your youngster to use chalk to draw the alphabet in a long, winding path on the driveway or sidewalk. Have her hop to each letter, naming it as she lands. Next, she can make another path, this time writing numbers (1–10 or 1–20) to count as she jumps.



Colors and shapes. Combine actions with colors or shapes for your child to find in your house or yard. You could ask her to jump to something green (a bush) or tiptoe to something square (a table). Now she gets to tell you what to look for and how to move to it. *Tip:* Once she has mastered this, give her

two-step and then three-step instructions (“Gallop to something blue, and march to something round”).♥

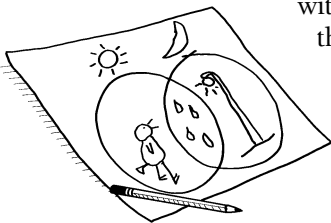
ACTIVITY CORNER



Daytime, nighttime

What does daytime look and sound like? How about nighttime? Invite your child to explore differences between day and night with this project.

Help your youngster draw a Venn diagram—two giant circles that overlap in the middle. He should label one circle with a sun and the other with a moon.



In the morning, snuggle together

near a window

or on a porch to observe sights and listen to sounds. In his “sun” circle, have him draw pictures of what he sees (shadows) and hears (the “peep-peep” of birds). Do the same thing at night. In his “moon” circle, he could draw bright streetlights or an owl hooting in a tree.

In the space shared by both circles, encourage him to draw what he observed both times (rain falling, trees rustling in the wind).♥

Q & A How to tame interruptions

Q: My son often interrupts when I’m talking to someone. It makes having a conversation challenging. What can I do?

A: Youngsters always seem to be bursting to tell you something the moment you start talking to anyone else. It is possible to limit the interruptions, though.

Show your son a polite, quiet way to get your attention. Maybe he could put his hand on your arm or hold your pinky finger. Then, use another signal to let him know you’ll give him a turn to talk soon. You might pat his hand or nod. When you reach a stopping point in your conversation or hang up the phone, give your child your full attention while he talks.

Waiting politely takes practice, and your son may need a few reminders. But once he knows how to get your attention, he’ll be less likely to interrupt.♥



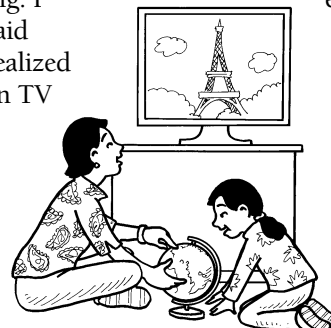
PARENT TO PARENT Make the most of TV

One day while my daughter Rachel was watching TV, she accidentally turned on the closed-captioning. I offered to turn it off, but she said she liked seeing the words. I realized this was an opportunity to turn TV time into learning time.

Rachel enjoyed telling me which words she recognized, and I pointed out new ones for her to learn. When the commercials came on, we talked about the show.

I suggested that we each try to predict what would happen next and tell what clues we used from the program. We enjoyed seeing how close our predictions came—and making new ones.

I know it’s important to limit Rachel’s screen time, but I’m happy to make the time she does spend watching TV a little more educational.♥



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Sick-day policy

As flu season gets under way, review the school illness policy. It will explain when to keep your youngster home (if he has a rash, is vomiting, or had a fever in the past 24 hours, for instance). Following the rules will help others stay healthy—and ensure that your child can rest, recover, and return to school as soon as possible.

Saying “I’m sorry”

Nobody’s perfect. Even good parents make mistakes. When you do, offer your youngster an apology and an explanation. *Example:* “I’m sorry I was late to your game. I wrote down the wrong time.” You’ll show her how to apologize—and she’ll see that her feelings are important to you.

Reveal the number

Let your child practice number recognition with this “magical” activity. Use glue to write numbers on a sheet of cardboard. Once dry, put plain paper over the numbers, and have your youngster rub lightly with the side of an unwrapped crayon. He can name the numbers as they appear.

Worth quoting

“Children learn to smile from their parents.” *Shinichi Suzuki*

Just for fun

Q: The more you have of me, the less you see. What am I?

A: Darkness.



Conversations build language skills

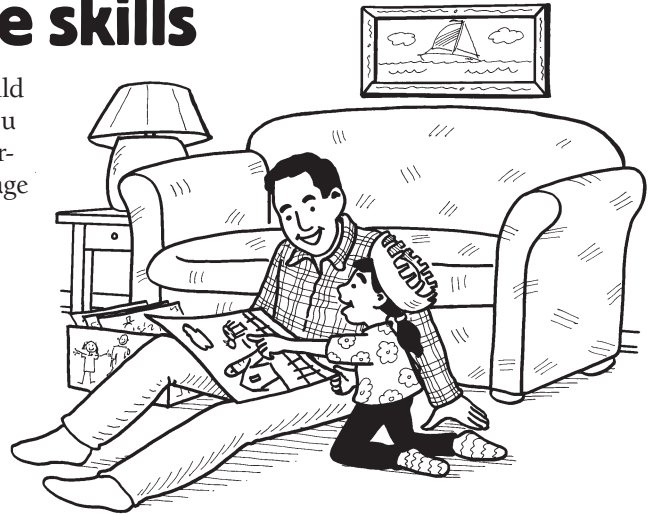
You talk to your child every day—what if you could use those conversations to build language skills and make her a better speaker and listener? With these tips, you can.

Share opinions

Let your youngster practice stating her opinion. During a family project, ask for her input. Perhaps you’re organizing your pantry. You might have her suggest which foods to put on which shelf. Or if you’re planning a T-ball game, she could decide what to use for the bases and the scoreboard.

Imagine “what if…”

Stretch your little one’s imagination while she learns to take turns during a conversation. Say “What if…” and let her finish the sentence (“...our leopard gecko could talk?”). Then, pass around a beach ball (or a toy lizard), and the



person holding it tells what she imagines while others listen. (“The gecko would say, ‘Take me outside to play!’”)

Travel down memory lane

Children love to hear and tell stories from their lives. Start by asking your youngster to recount a memory. (“Tell me about our trip to the farm.”) Use questions to prompt her to add details. “What color was the goat?” Next, she can pose a question for you. This is a great way to work on asking and answering questions, an important skill for keeping conversations flowing.♥

A conference checklist

Parent-teacher conferences provide a glimpse of your youngster’s progress. Make the most of your meeting by preparing a list of questions to ask, such as these:

- ✓What are the most important things my child will learn this year?
- ✓How does he get along with other students?
- ✓What does he do well?
- ✓What can we work on at home?

- ✓What does my youngster like to do during free time?
- ✓What is the best way to reach you?



Tip: Tell the teacher what your child says about school. Also, let her know about any changes at home like a new baby or a grandparent moving in.♥

Respect at home, respect at school

Respectful children tend to work and play well with others, leading to more success in school and better behavior at home. Encourage your youngster to practice showing respect with these ideas.

Role play. Take turns naming everyday activities (walking in the school hallway, playing in the sandbox) and acting them out respectfully. If your child is pretending to walk in line, he could put a finger to his lips to show he's staying quiet out of respect for people in nearby classrooms.



In an imaginary sandbox, he might move carefully around another youngster's castle—that shows respect for the hard work that went into building it.

Write an acrostic. Help your child make a “R-E-S-P-E-C-T” poster to hang on the refrigerator. Have him write the letters vertically down the side of a sheet of paper.

Then, help him write an example of respect for each letter, such as “Remember manners” or “Earth belongs to everyone, so don't litter.” Suggest that your youngster illustrate each one. He might draw himself remembering his manners by thanking the host of a birthday party, for instance.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

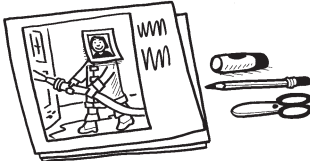


Look, I'm the helper!

Firefighters, police officers, teachers, nurses—your town is full of people who help others. Your child can learn about the jobs of community helpers when she stars in her own homemade book.

Materials: old magazines, scissors, glue, paper, photos of your youngster

Let your child browse through magazines and cut out pictures of community helpers (librarian, mail carrier, paramedic). She could glue each one on a separate sheet of paper.



Next, have your youngster glue a photo of her face over each helper's face. She can write or dictate to you what she would do in each job. *Examples:* “I am a teacher. I help children learn.” “I am a police officer. I keep people safe.”

Finally, staple the pages together, and let her read her book to you. Which helper is her favorite? Which one might she like to be when she grows up?♥

Q & A

Siblings: Celebrate strengths

Q: My preschooler doesn't seem to be catching on to colors and letters as quickly as her big sister did. Her teacher says she's developing normally, but I can't help but worry. What should I do?

A: It's great that your daughter's teacher reports she's on track. Keep in mind that every child is unique and develops at her own pace.

Your children probably have different interests, which may affect how and when they learn. For example, one might prefer to sit and read while the other loves nature and enjoys exploring the outdoors.

Try not to compare your girls—little ones often overhear you even when you think you're talking quietly. Instead, celebrate each child's abilities. For instance, have your older daughter play an alphabet game with her little sister. Your younger one can learn her letters while her big sister takes pride in being the “teacher.”♥

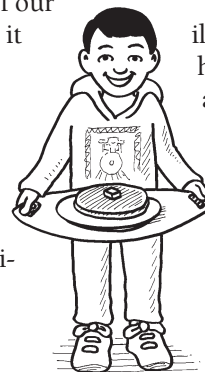


PARENT TO PARENT

Discovering family traditions

In social studies, my son Brady is learning about families and traditions. He was asked to draw a picture of our favorite family tradition and take it in for show and tell.

Brady's assignment led us to realize how many traditions we actually have. There's “Pancake Day,” where we eat pancakes for dinner the first day of every month. It was a tradition in my childhood—and my dad's childhood. Then last year Brady invented “Pajama Night.”



One Friday a month, we put on PJs right after dinner and play board games in the living room.

Brady decided to draw our family eating pancakes. After he shared his picture, he came home excited about traditions his classmates mentioned.

Thanks to his friend Sara, we now have “Crafty Saturdays” to look forward to. For our first one, Brady is going to finger paint while I work on the scarf I'm knitting.♥

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