

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Krys Croxall, Superintendent of Program
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

April 2005

ROUTINES

Sneak picking up and cleaning into your child's regular routine

Are toys and clutter overtaking your house? Consider these easy ways to end the madness and encourage your child's responsibility, too:

- **Let your child** be the "Cleanup Police." Have him spot areas in the house that need tidying up.
- **Provide organizers** that are within your child's reach, such as baskets.
- **Label containers** with pictures so that your child knows where to put things.
- **Use sectioned jewelry boxes** or egg cartons to organize rocks and other collectibles. Teach your child how to count and sort items.
- **Give your child visual cues for storage.** For example, line the floor with masking tape to make "garages" for toy vehicles.
- **Have bubbly fun.** Give your child soapy water. Supervise while he washes action figures, play dough tools and more.



Source: Susan A. Miller, "Teacher Secrets for Quick & Easy Cleanups," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, October 2002 (Scholastic, Inc., 1-800-770-4662, www.scholastic.com).

LEARNING THROUGH ART

Promote creativity with painting fun

While it's always fun to paint with a brush, there are many other methods to try. Have your child try painting with:

- **Marbles.** Place a piece of paper in the bottom of a cardboard box. Then cover a marble with paint. Put the marble in the box and roll it around. After your child creates one design, she can dunk the marble in other colors and add to the creation.
- **Household items.** Cut raw fruits or vegetables in half and dip them in paint. Make prints with them. Or check your bathroom—old toothbrushes and shower sponges make excellent painting tools.
- **Fingers.** Let your child try rubbing her fingers in different "paints," such as shaving cream or pudding. You can even add textures, such as flour or sugar.

Source: Becky Daniel, *The Playful Child*, ISBN: 1-56282-956-9 (School Specialty Publishing, 1-800-253-5469, www.childre specialty.com).

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Let your child set the pace

Have you ever tried to teach your child something, such as the alphabet, and she resists? Take a cue from her. At this age, learning should never be boring or stressful. Stick to age-appropriate activities that your child enjoys.

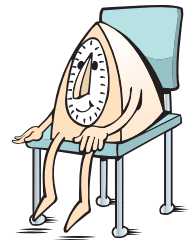
Source: Kendeyl Johansen, "Tools for School: Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten," *Preschoolers Today*, <http://preschoolerstoday.com/resources/articles/schooltools.htm>.

BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN

Prepare your child for spending time sitting still

Much of learning in school is done seated.

To increase your child's ability to sit, use a timer and some music. Turn on a song and play a form of "Musical Chairs." Sit



down and try to stay there for longer and longer times. Start with 15-seconds. Then increase to 30 seconds, and then a minute. Work your way up to five minutes over a period of weeks. While seated, talk, read, color or just rest quietly together.

Source: Dorothy Rich, *MegaSkills*, ISBN: 0-395-63753-8 (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1-800-225-3362, www.hmco.com).

SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

Puppets promote talking

One of the easiest ways to get children to talk about feelings is to use puppets. Keep one or more around, and you may be surprised by what they "say."



Your child can even use decorated socks or small paper bags to have puppet shows or conversations.

April 2005

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

When should children learn manners?

Q: I'd like my four-year-old to be polite. Is this too early to expect her to learn manners?

A: Preschoolers are just starting to relate to other people. So it's a great time to teach them about respect for others. You're right, of course, to have reasonable expectations. For some time, your child will be learning and practicing—not perfecting—her social graces.

These ideas will help:

- **Set clear rules about considerate behavior.** For example, tell your child, "If you need to interrupt, say 'Excuse me.'"
- **Use words your child can understand.** Tell her, "It's not nice to point at a person. Tell me where the person is instead."
- **Talk about the friendly actions of others.** Say, "She said *please* so nicely. That made me want to help her."
- **Encourage sharing.** Explain that "taking turns" is kind, and it helps children make friends.
- **Be a role model.** If you want your child to use polite phrases, focus on doing the same thing. Say, "Thank you honey," or, "Please pick that up."
- **Teach your child** to say, *hi* and *goodbye* when it's appropriate. Your child might even enjoy shaking hands.
- **Compliment your child's good manners.** Admire how grown up she is!

Source: Peggy Post and Cindy Post Senning, Ed.D., "Raising Polite Preschoolers," *Parents*, September 2002 (Gruner + Jahr USA Publishing, 1-800-777-0222, www.parents.com).



PARENT QUIZ

Have you established good family rules?

Family rules affect school life because they build children's self-discipline. Here's a quiz to see if you're setting helpful rules. Give yourself five points for something you always do, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- ___ 1. I explain rules to my child.
- ___ 2. I make rules that teach important lessons.
- ___ 3. I respect family rules myself.
- ___ 4. I choose rules that match my child's abilities.

___ 5. I enforce rules consistently.
How did you score? *Twenty or above is good. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Use the ideas in this quiz to make rules more successful.*

"Being considerate of others will take you and your children further in life than any college or professional degree."

— Marian Wright Edelman

YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Watch, discuss television shows with your child

Families often use television as a way to relax. But when the TV is on, parents aren't "off duty." Instead, they should watch with kids and discuss what they see. Meanwhile, TV shouldn't take up much time. Other activities, such as reading and playing, are essential to share.

Source: Sandra Y. Lee, "Development & Discipline: Smart TV Tactics," *Child*, September 2002 (Gruner+Jahr USA Publishing, 1-800-777-0222, www.child.com).

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

Don't overreact when your preschooler is negative

Many children are naturally happy and carefree. But others are more negative. It is not that they're unhappy, but they may complain more or lack confidence.

Children like this can be hard to cope with. When your child is negative, try nodding and saying, "I see," or, "Gee, that's too bad," in a neutral tone. Special attention, either positive or negative, can feed the complaining.

Source: Elaine M. Gibson, "7 Steps in Coping With a Negative Child," *The F.U.N. Place*, www.the.funplace.com/guild/gibson/7steps.html.

MAKING TIME COUNT

It's okay to read favorite stories again and again

Your child wants to read the same story over and over, but you're tired of it. What should you do? If possible, continue to read it. Repetition helps children learn.

Add excitement by asking questions such as, "Who is your favorite character in this book? Why?"



Helping Children Learn®

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Executive Editor: Jeff Peters. Senior Editor: Betsie Ridnour.
Editor: Patricia Hodgdon. Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares.
Writer: Susan O'Brien. Editorial Assistant: Pat Carter.
Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.
Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.
Copyright © 2005, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005