

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

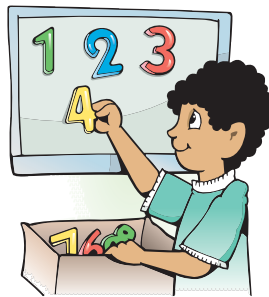
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REINFORCING LEARNING

Parent involvement at the preschool level promotes success in later years

Parents of preschoolers often wonder, "How can I prepare my child to succeed in elementary school?" Research has provided some specific answers:

- **Encourage learning at home.** Read with your child every day, for example, and take "field trips" to new places. Do activities that involve numbers and letters. Most of all, make learning fun!
- **Express high (yet realistic) expectations.** You might say, "I'm so proud that you can read your name. You're going to learn so many words. Someday, you'll be able to read books to me!"
- **Get involved in your child's education.** Keep in touch with teachers. Volunteer at preschool or contribute at home, such as by baking treats for a class party. Talk with your child about how wonderful school is.



Source: Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community on Student Achievement* (National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, 1-800-476-6861, www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf).

TALKING & LISTENING

Following directions takes practice

When children start school, most of the information they receive is verbal. So the ability to pay attention to speech is essential. To sharpen your child's listening skills:

- **Start with one-step directions.** "Please put your coat on." Then suggest two-step tasks. "Please put your coat on and get your backpack." When your child has mastered following two steps, give three instructions at once.
- **Play listening games.** The classic game of "Simon Says" helps children practice listening carefully and following directions. You can also try "Treasure Hunt." Hide a small toy. Then have your child follow your spoken clues until she finds it.
- **Teach a simple task.** Your child might learn to make her bed, for example. "Pull your sheet up to the top of the bed." "Now pull your comforter up." "Put your pillow on top." Add, "Great listening!" when your child is finished.

Source: Lillian Alice Noda, June Mori-Shida & Nancy Chisato Adachi, *Off to a Great Start, Activities for Becoming Your Child's Best Teacher, For Ages 2-5*, ISBN: 0-7802-4207-6 (The Wright Group/McGraw-Hill, 1-800-648-2970, www.wrightgroup.com).

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

Ease separation anxiety

Starting preschool is a huge event for children. To ease the transition:

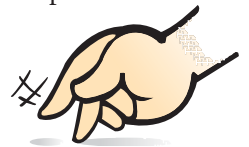
1. **Arrive early.** This allows your child to "warm up."
2. **Leave something.** For example, tuck a family photo in her backpack.
3. **Focus on fun.** "Look, Miss Julie has the water table out! That will be fun!"

Source: Dana Sullivan, "Easing Into Preschool," *Parenting*, September 2002 (The Parenting Group, 1-800-234-0847, www.parenting.com).

BUILDING MOTOR SKILLS

Exercise hands during play

Preschoolers need to develop fine motor skills—muscle abilities that help them write. Encourage art activities, such as painting, cutting, coloring and shaping clay. Play catch. Toss bean bags. String necklaces. Do puzzles. The more your child uses his hands, the better!

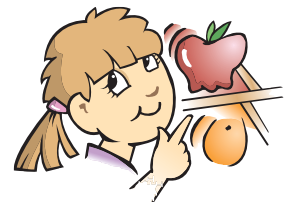


DISCIPLINE

Avoid shopping tantrums

Does grocery shopping bring out the worst in your child? Keep in mind that the atmosphere can be overwhelming for kids. Take these steps to help:

- **Time it right.** Avoid taking a tired or hungry preschooler shopping.
- **Use the cart.** Your child should sit in the child seat—with the safety strap on.
- **Ask for help.** Find things for your child to do: "Can you point to the red apples?"



Source: William Sears, M.D. & Martha Sears, R.N., *The Discipline Book*, ISBN: 0-316-77903-2 (Little, Brown and Company, 1-800-759-0190, www.twbookmark.com).

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Start your day with morning routines

Q: My four-year-old enjoys preschool, but she dawdles every morning. Sometimes it makes us late. How can we start each day happily?

A: Dawdling is common behavior for preschoolers.

They tend to concentrate more on what they're doing than on what they need to do next. But with your help, your daughter can follow simple routines. These time-tested ideas will get her to school on time now, and they're good practice for the future, when being late can hurt her grades.

To help her:

- **Prepare at night.** Make lunches. Stock backpacks, purses and briefcases. Choose the next day's clothes and lay them out. Perhaps most importantly, go to bed at a reasonable hour. A cranky, sleep-deprived child (or parent!) can wreck the best-planned morning.
- **Develop habits.** Have your child do things the same way daily. She might wake up, play for fifteen minutes, get dressed, have breakfast and brush her teeth. Give her something to look forward to, such as listening to children's music in the car.
- **Reward progress.** Offer assistance and reminders. For example, "I'll button your shirt," or "Remember to brush your teeth when you finish your cereal." But let your child do as much as possible on her own. Compliment her responsibility often!



PARENT QUIZ

Are you promoting good manners?

Good manners are essential for social and academic success. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see whether you're encouraging politeness:

- ___ 1. **Do you require** respectful behavior?
- ___ 2. **Do you model** good manners, such as by saying *please* to your child?
- ___ 3. **Do you gently rephrase** impolite things your child says?
- ___ 4. **Do you encourage** your child to greet others with friendly hellos?

___ 5. **Do you help** your child use forks, spoons and napkins during mealtime?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're teaching good manners. For each *no* answer, use suggestions from the quiz to change your answer to *yes*.

"The most valuable gift you can give your child is to listen to the little and big things in his life."
— Kimberly Keith

BUILDING THINKING SKILLS

Allow children time for some unstructured play

When children play together, parents shouldn't plan all the fun. Let the kids decide what to do for a while. Then consider an organized activity, such as reading or coloring pictures. This provides a nice break, which can lead to more free play.

Source: The Riverside Mothers Group, *Don't Forget the Rubber Ducky*, ISBN: 0-671-51125-4 (Pocket Books, 1-877-989-0009, www.simonsays.com).

USING OUR SENSES

Use cooking activities to introduce the five senses

The "art" of cooking lets children use every sense—touch, taste, smell, sight and sound. Let your child get creative with a recipe. Perhaps he could knead dough, choose an extra ingredient, or do a taste test. Talk about how he experiences the food through each sense.



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