

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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## DISCIPLINE

### Modify your child's behavior

It's not unusual for children to have challenging traits. Learning to cope with them is the key.

For example:

- **If your child dislikes change**, prepare him for what's coming next. "When Daddy gets home, we need to stop playing. Then we'll make dinner together."
- **If your child seems negative**, help him have fun. Talk about happy times. Encourage joyful actions, such as jumping into a pile of leaves.
- **If your child is highly sensitive**, try to make him comfortable. Advise others about what puts him at ease. Avoid large crowds, or try short visits to busy places.
- **If your child has trouble sitting still**, plan physical activities, such as playing tag. When it's "quiet time," try reading books for as long as he can enjoy them.
- **If your child wants to be in control**, give him choices when possible. "Would you like peas or corn for dinner? You can choose."
- **If your child gets angry easily**, help him calm down. Have him try counting to 10 when he's frustrated.



Source: Nancy Firchow, "Management Strategies for Problematic Traits of Temperament," SchwabLearning.org, [www.schwablearning.org/print\\_resources.asp?type=articles&r=494](http://www.schwablearning.org/print_resources.asp?type=articles&r=494).

## DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

### Build your preschooler's sense of space

Adults can pack suitcases and draw maps. A "sense of space" allows them to do such things. Try these ideas to help your child with spatial relationships:

- **Let your child** hide objects and find them.
- **Use toys with wheels**, such as race cars. Help your child notice what they drive *under* and *through*.
- **Talk about** where things are located (*in, out, up, down*, etc.).
- **Play hide-and-seek**. Use descriptive words, "He's not *behind* the tree."
- **Have your child stack items**. Ask what's on *top*, in the *middle* and on the *bottom*.
- **Take walks** and discuss *near* and *far*, *here* and *there*.
- **Ask your librarian** to recommend books that can teach your preschooler about spatial relationships.

Source: Dorothy Eimon, *Learning Early*, ISBN: 0-8160-4014-1 (Checkmark Books, 1-800-322-8755, [www.factsonfile.com](http://www.factsonfile.com)).

## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Give your child plenty of time to solve problems

Your child can't get a toy to work and you're tempted to step in. Sometimes it's better to pause. Give your child time to think and experiment. She may figure it out—and be proud of herself!

## USING OUR SENSES

### Have learning fun with smelling, tasting, touching

Most people use sight and hearing to learn. But other senses teach important lessons, too.

Try these ideas:

- **Play a smelly game**. Choose several items with definitive scents, such as a lemon. Have your child close his eyes. Can he guess what he smells?
- **Have a sweet, sour, salty day**. Have your child identify foods such as fruit, pickles and chips. As he tastes each one, ask him to describe it as *sweet*, *sour* or *salty*.
- **Teach opposites by touch**. Have your child feel the difference between *warm* (not hot!) and *cool* water. Or let him touch a polished stone (*smooth*) and sandpaper (*rough*).



Source: Becky Daniel, *The Jumbo Parenting Journal*, ISBN: 1-56822-963-1 (Instructional Fair, TS Denison, 1-800-417-3261, [www.teacherspecialty.com](http://www.teacherspecialty.com)).

## READING READINESS

### Ask questions about stories

Children often interrupt while parents read aloud, and that's okay. Answer your child's questions. Ask some of your own, too. For example, "What do you think might happen next?" "What do you think the character should do?"



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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Encourage your child to be patient

**Q: My daughter will go to kindergarten next September. Her pre-school teacher suggests that we work on her patience. How can we do that?**

**A:** Kindergarten teachers are used to dealing with five-year-olds, so they don't expect perfect behavior. But school is much easier for children who are patient. Here are some things to practice:

- **Paying attention.** Give your child experience listening to entertaining stories. Start with short books. Gradually introduce books that are longer.
- **Earning privileges.** In many classes, children work before they play. Give your child responsibilities before she plays each day, such as brushing her teeth.
- **Minimizing interruptions.** Don't jump to take care of your child's every desire. For example, if you're on the phone and she wants a cup of juice, she can wait a few minutes.
- **Expressing emotions.** When you see your child getting upset, encourage her to tell you how she feels before she loses control.
- **Cooperating.** Children must share and take turns at school. Gently encourage these skills in fun social situations, such as at a playground.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you teaching your child to measure?

Preschoolers enjoy and learn from measuring. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your child is learning to measure.

- \_\_\_ 1. Do you chart your child's growth where he can see it?
- \_\_\_ 2. Do you let your child use a scale to weigh various things?
- \_\_\_ 3. Do you help your child arrange items by size?
- \_\_\_ 4. Do you use measuring cups and spoons with your child?
- \_\_\_ 5. Do you count seconds with your child to measure time?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means your child is having fun with

measuring. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz to change your response to *yes*.

*"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it."*  
—Rachel Carson  
The Sense of Wonder

## MAKING TIME COUNT

### Play time is learning time

Playing is one of the most important ways to prepare your child for school. Here are some activities for your child to do:

- **Create.** Help your child draw, color, cut, glue and paint. This encourages thinking and small muscle skills.
- **Build.** Provide some brightly colored blocks for your child. Encourage him to experiment with building.
- **Pretend.** Play make-believe games with your child. Encourage him to put on plays for relatives.

Source: Sylvia Rimm, *Dr. Sylvia Rimm's Smart Parenting, How to Parent So Children Will Learn*, ISBN: 0-609-80121-X (Three Rivers Press, 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com).

## BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

### Promote consideration

It's natural for preschoolers to focus on themselves. But they should consider others' needs, too. To encourage your child to share, try using a kitchen timer. Say, "You have three more minutes to play, and then it will be Susan's turn. I'll set the timer."

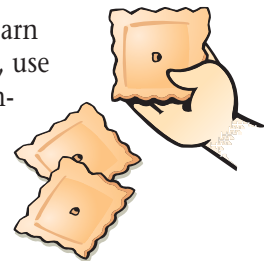
Source: Karen Horsch, "Control-Freak Kids," *Parents*, June 2003 (Gruner + Jahr, 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).

## BUILDING MATH SKILLS

### Add movement to help your child learn to count

To help your child learn what numbers mean, use movement. For exam-

ple, walk down stairs and count them together. Or let your child count three crackers as she hands them to a friend. Help her see that numbers represent things.



Source: Becky Daniel, *The Playful Child*, ISBN: 1-56822-956-9 (Instructional Fair, TS Denison, 1-800-417-3261, www.teacherspecialty.com).

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