

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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## USING OUR SENSES

### Encourage your child to use all of his senses at bath time

Most young children look forward to bath time. They have soothing water, fun toys and parents' undivided attention. This relaxed time is perfect for sharpening senses. Try these ideas with your child:

- **Sense of smell.** Talk about scents. How was the soap designed to smell? The shampoo? The conditioner? The after-bath lotion? See if they remind your child of real-life scents, such as fruit.
- **Sense of sight.** Discuss what colors you see: "Your toy is green!" Also use different kinds of light. For example, turn off the lights and use a night-light or flashlight. (Always keep anything electrical, including cords, far from the tub.)
- **Sense of hearing.** Experiment with music and sounds. Sing something lively for a silly bath. Hum soft tones for a bedtime bath. Or read a favorite story. Then be silent. What do you hear? Drips? Water draining? Splashes?
- **Sense of touch.** Add bubbles to the bath. Use and describe other materials, such as squishy sponges and soft towels. Notice the temperature of the water, too. How does it compare to water from the faucet?



Source: Carol Baicker-McKee, *FussBusters at Home*, ISBN: 1-56145-262-9 (Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 1-800-241-0113, [www.peachtree-online.com](http://www.peachtree-online.com)).

## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Asking questions provokes thought

Four-year-olds hear many questions that begin with "who," "what," "when" and "where." For example, "What color is that?" or "Where is the car?" To expand your child's thinking, ask questions that begin with "why" and "how" also.

To answer these questions, your child will have to use more than one word. She'll have to think about her answer. You might say, "Why is the

girl frowning in this picture?" Encourage her to respond, "She's sad because ..."

The goal isn't to get a "right" answer. It's to encourage brainstorming and conversation. At first, especially with young children, some answers may not make sense. But if you continue to ask thought-provoking questions, your child's answers will improve.

Source: Don Weinhouse, *Encouraging Potential in Young Children*, ISBN: 0-7641-0252-4 (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1-800-645-3476, [www.barronseduc.com](http://www.barronseduc.com)).

## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Start teaching your child responsible habits early

Responsibility takes a long time to learn, so it's best to start early. Emphasize the importance of being polite, telling the truth and helping around the house. Be a role model. Don't expect perfection, but when your child does well, say how proud you are!

Source: Edwin J. and Alice B. Delattre, *Helping Your Child Learn Responsible Behavior* (U. S. Department of Education, 1-800-USA-LEARN, [www.ed.gov/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/index.html)).

## GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

### Stop your child from accidentally hurting others

It's normal for kids to argue. But if your child hits, it's time to step in. First, remind her that hitting is not allowed. Have her apologize. Then enforce a logical consequence, such as leaving the playground. Remind her that she can't hurt others—and no one should ever hurt her.



## LEARN THROUGH ART

### Create magazine mix-ups

Here's a fun activity that builds muscle skills and creativity. Look through a magazine with your child and find silly body parts. They don't have to be from people, though. He might collect a cat's head, a baby's shirt and a chicken's feet. Help him cut them out and glue them together. Add anything he'd like, such as spaghetti for hair or bananas for arms. Don't worry if your child doesn't finish a whole body. The point is to have fun.



Source: MaryAnn Kohl, *Preschool Art*, ISBN: 0-87659-168-3 (Gryphon House, 1-800-638-0928, [www.gryphonhouse.com](http://www.gryphonhouse.com)).

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Does bravery fade with age?

**Q: When my daughter was a toddler, I thought I had the bravest child in the world. A year later, she's afraid of monsters, the dark and more. Is this normal?**

**A:** Toddlers have few fears because it doesn't occur to them to be afraid. They don't think, "Are monsters real?" or "Is something hiding in the dark?" As they get older, cognitive development changes this. They consider all sorts of possibilities—some of them scary. If you're worried, talk with your child's doctor. Meanwhile, these ideas can help at bedtime:

- **Say reassuring things** like, "I take care of you, even when you're asleep."
- **Consider actions** that might relax your child. Read a happy story. Sing a soothing song. Check under the bed. Every child's needs are different.
- **Monitor TV viewing.** Avoid anything that might upset your child, especially before bedtime.
- **Be understanding.** Even though you are certain that there is nothing to be afraid of, your child isn't. If your child asks, "inspect" the closets and under the bed before turning out the light.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Do you choose good books to read aloud to your child?

Reading aloud is an important way to build your child's love of books. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're choosing appealing stories:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you choose** books you'll read with enthusiasm?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you find** books related to your child's interests?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you pick** books with eye-catching illustrations?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you look** for books with repetition and rhymes?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you use** books with interactive features, such as the "I Spy" series?

**How did you do?** Each yes answer means your child is enjoying books with you. For each no answer, consider using ideas from the quiz to change your response to yes.

*"Curiosity in children is but an appetite after knowledge."  
— John Locke,  
Some Thoughts Concerning Education*

## DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

### Make learning to measure fun for your preschooler

Size measurements can be intimidating to teach. Use familiar household items to introduce your child to measurements. Here are some simple ways to get started:

- **Start** by getting out a ruler or yardstick.
- **Point out** inches and feet.
- **Measure** familiar things.
- **Use** other things to measure, too, such as blocks. ("That chair is five blocks high.")

Source: Sally L. Kennedy, *Play and Learn*, ISBN: 1-58238-005-8 (St. Martin's Press, 1-800-221-7945, www.stmartins.com).

## TALKING AND LISTENING

### Frequent conversations build vocabulary skills

Talking with your child is the best way to increase his vocabulary. Simply start conversations as you go about your day. Throw in new words here and there. "Mmmmm. Look at those pies. Don't they look delicious?" Or "It's freezing today! Let's wear boots and scarves to keep warm."

Source: Sarah McCraw Crow, "Small Talk," *Parents*, July 2002 (Gruner + Jahr USA Publishing, 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).

## WHEN YOU NEED HELP

### Contact your child's school with kindergarten questions

If your child just makes the age cutoff to attend kindergarten in the fall, you may be confused about whether to send him. Try contacting the school. Ask questions like, "What do you expect of kindergartners?"

"What if I send him and it's not going well?"



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