

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

Solve preschool problems

It's normal for children to have complaints about preschool. For example, "I don't like the snacks" or "Molly won't play with me." It's also normal for parents to worry. But when dealing with problems, keep these tips in mind:

- **Understand** your child's perspective. Preschoolers have strong likes and dislikes—and these can change rapidly. Listen to your child's concerns without overreacting.
- **Discuss** solutions with your child. How could she improve things? She might try new foods, for example, or choose another playmate.
- **Prepare** your child well. Being tired or hungry can affect her feelings. Regular sleeping and eating routines help.
- **Give** minor problems a little time. Small issues may resolve themselves. Perhaps tomorrow's snack will be better.
- **Contact** the teacher when necessary. Write a note, call or schedule a meeting. Address serious issues immediately. Work as a team (you, your child and the teacher) to fix things.
- **Follow up** with everyone. Ask your child and the teacher for updates. Chances are everything will work out fine.



Source: "Talking to Your Child's Preschool Teacher," KidsHealth, www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive/learning/talk_to_preschool_teacher.html.

MAKING TIME COUNT

Make a 'new experience' scrapbook

Going to new places and meeting new people is a key part of your child's development. To make experiences more meaningful, reminisce and discuss how events relate to one another. A scrapbook will help with this.

When your child has a new experience, make a page. He can draw a picture or include photos. Add information about what happened.

Where did he go? What did he see? What was his favorite part?

Each time your child has a new adventure, add a page to the "book." Staple pages together or keep them in a binder. Every so often, pull out the book and look through it together.

This activity builds language and creative skills. Being able to describe things is an important school skill.

Source: Jackie Silberg, *500 Five Minute Games*, ISBN: 0-87659-172-1 (Gryphon House, 1-800-638-0928, www.gryphonhouse.com).

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Praise your child often

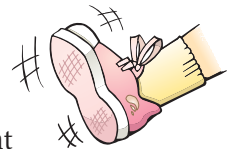
Sometimes children amaze parents with kindness. "Mommy, put on your seat belt for safety." Or, "Daddy, I found your glasses for you." These provide opportunities to thank kids. Say things like, "You are so helpful!" Remember that children believe what parents say about them.

BUILDING MOTOR SKILLS

'Shake' game teaches your child about bodies

When children move, they learn about their bodies. Here's a movement game to play: Give your child different shaking instructions. For example, "Shake your hands quickly. Shake your foot slowly. Shake your belly with laughter." Then let her give *you* directions.

Source: "Movement Activity for Toddlers and Preschoolers," Preschool POWer!, www.preschoolpower.com/Pages/PrintableMove.htm.



BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Learn while pretending

Preschoolers love to be silly. They also love pretending. Combine these things to have fun with language. You can:

- **Ask** your child "what if" questions. For example, "What if dogs could talk? What would they tell us?"
- **Make up** theme songs. Say, "What would you sing if you were angry?" "What if you were excited?"
- **Discuss** books together. Ask, "What might happen next in the book?" "If we could make up our own ending, what would it be?"



Source: Louise Bates Ames & Frances L. Ilg, *Your Five-Year-Old, Sunny and Serene*, ISBN: 0-440-50673-5 (Dell Publishing, 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com).

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How much can your child learn about math?

Q: My child is crazy about numbers. He counts everywhere we go. How can I encourage his love of math?

A: Since math is part of everyday life, you can use almost any activity to foster math skills. Here are some suggestions:

- **Show your child how to make a pattern** with the silverware when setting the table (fork, spoon, fork, spoon). As he progresses, make it more complicated (fork, spoon, cup, etc.).
- **Compare things with your child.** For example, "You have three cookies. I have two. You have more cookies than I do."
- **Measure things together.** Preschoolers love to measure ingredients, lengths and weights. Discuss inches, pounds, teaspoons and other units.
- **Help your child become aware of time.** Preschoolers don't need to tell time. But it's good to mention hours, minutes, days and more.
- **Visit the grocery store with your child** (when he's in a good mood). Find things like a gallon of milk, a 16-ounce can or a pound of grapes.
- **Use fractions when preparing food.** You might say, "Let's cut these sandwiches into quarters." Or "Half an apple for you, and half for me."



PARENT QUIZ

How well do you respond to your preschooler's angry outbursts?

When it's hard for young children to explain emotions, they may throw tantrums. How parents react makes all the difference. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how you're doing.

- ___ **1. Do you wait out** tantrums calmly without giving in?
- ___ **2. Do you understand** what contributes to tantrums, such as sadness and fatigue?
- ___ **3. Do you help** your child by distracting her sometimes?
- ___ **4. Do you teach** your child alternatives ahead of time, such as saying, "I'm angry"?

- ___ **5. Do you set** a good example by controlling your own emotions during tantrums?
How did you do? Each *yes* answer shows you're handling tantrums well. For each *no* answer, consider using that idea from the quiz to change your answer to *yes*.

"If you want your children to turn out well, spend twice as much time with them and half as much money."
— Abigail Van Buren

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Give your child chances to quietly concentrate

Thinking requires concentration. To help your child focus:

- **Don't interrupt** when she's absorbed in an activity, such as building with blocks.
- **Give your child time** to examine things, such as flowers while you're on a walk.
- **Do quiet activities together**, such as listening to music.
- **Read books to your child** and give her books to browse.

Source: Marie Barrett, "How To Help Your Child To Concentrate," www.rollercoaster.ie/education/concentration_intro.asp.

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

Let your child imitate older siblings' school activities

If your preschooler has an older sibling in school, this is an opportunity for learning. Let the younger child mimic school activities. For example, you might pack his lunch. Or you might take him to the library the same day your child borrows books at school.

Source: Meagan Francis, "When Big Sis Goes to School," Parenting.com, www.parenting.com/parenting/article/0,19840,1090128,00.html.

TALKING AND LISTENING

Basic toys can promote your child's imagination

Does your child tell stories? Many children do. Simple toys (such as blocks, trains and dress-up clothes) promote creativity. They help kids make up exciting tales and adventures.

Encourage your child to play with them!

Source: Rory Halperin, "The Ultimate Guide to Learning Through Play," Child.com, www.child.com/kids/child_development/guide_play.jsp.



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