

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

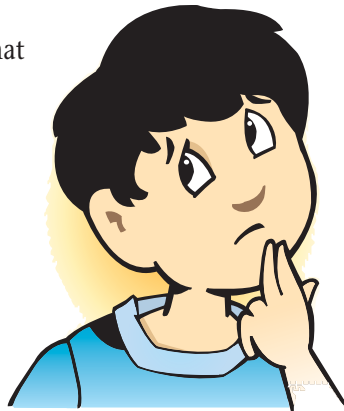
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## BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

### Help your child build confidence

When children enter preschool, they become more aware of friendships. They notice who plays with whom and who gets left out. "Nobody likes me" is a common complaint—although it may not be true. React calmly and positively. Be a role model for your child. Make a point to:

- **Ask simple questions.** For example, "What makes you think that?" Talk with the teacher about what he sees.
- **Mention your child's friends.** "Karen and Michael are your pals. They like to play with you."
- **Practice social skills at home.** Talk about how to be a good friend, such as by sharing. Discuss ways to solve problems.
- **Empathize with your child.** Explain that you understand his feelings. Share encouraging stories about your childhood.
- **Don't overreact.** Show confidence that the problem is temporary. Sometimes there are friends around to play with, sometimes there aren't.
- **Be reassuring.** Tell your child you know he will make friends. Remind him of his strengths (sense of humor, kindness, etc.).
- **Help your child socialize.** Invite kids over to play. Visit parks and other areas with plenty of potential friends.



## WHEN YOU NEED HELP

### Make discipline plans in advance

When children misbehave, it's hard to think straight. But if you stick to the same approach most times, it will become second nature. Take these steps to prepare yourself and your child:

- **Choose basic rules** and consequences. Decide what's most important to you. For example, "No hitting" "Do what Mom and Dad ask you to do." "Hold hands when we cross the street."
- **Enforce rules** and consequences every time. Don't let your child beg her way out of situations. She needs the consistency of knowing what to expect. Remember, you are the parent and you are in charge.
- **Discuss changes** in routine. "Your class is going on a field trip tomorrow. I know you'll be excited. But remember to listen to Mrs. Smith and do what she says."

## BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

### Stay positive about school

Kids learn from everything parents say. It's important to set a good example. Say things like, "I loved preschool when I was little" or "Kindergarten is going to be so much fun!" When kids know that parents value education, they're likely to feel the same way.

Source: "Questions Parents Ask About Schools," U.S. Department of Education, [www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/questions/part\\_pg3.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/questions/part_pg3.html).

## READING READINESS

### Read with your child daily

Speaking comes naturally to children, but reading does not. It has to be taught. When you discuss letters and sounds with your child, you're helping with this. Read with her every day. Expose her to new words. Prepare her for learning to read at school.



Source: Susan Friedman, "Reading's Not Just Second Nature," FamilyEducation.com, [www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,2-328,00.html](http://www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,2-328,00.html).

## BUILDING MOTOR SKILLS

### Have fun with rhythm

When children move to a beat, they become aware of their bodies and rhythm. They also build muscle skills. To encourage this:



- **March.** This movement has a rhythm all its own (left, right, left!) and connects easily to music. Gather some instruments and parade around your home. Your child can be the leader.
- **Play "stop and go."** Have your child move to a song. When the beat changes, shout, "Freeze!" Next time let your child be the one to say "Freeze!"

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

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Teach your child all about texture

**Q: My child loves to use her sense of touch. We fingerprint and make collages, but what else can we do?**

**A:** It's wonderful that your child enjoys learning through her sense of touch. To encourage this:

- **Gently brush textured items** against your child's skin. You might try a toothbrush, a wool sock or a spoon. How does each feel?
- **Go for a nature walk** and describe the texture of leaves, twigs and rocks. Ask "How are they different?"
- **Make a texture "petting zoo."** Collect items that feel fuzzy, furry, silky, feathery, soft or prickly. Glue them onto paper. Touch and name the objects on each page.
- **Ask your child to close her eyes.** Hand her an object to identify, such as a pen or a familiar toy. Let her give you one, too.
- **Talk about opposites**—*hard* and *soft*, *smooth* and *rough*, *cold* and *warm*. Can your child think of examples?
- **Add textures to art materials.** Put rice in play dough, for example. Or sprinkle cornmeal in fingerprint.



Source: Susan K. Perry, *Playing Smart*, ISBN: 1-57542-095-3 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you motivating your child to want to learn in preschool?

It's not good to force preschoolers to sit still and learn. But there are ways you should encourage learning. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're using some of them.

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you let** your child choose from a variety of activities?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you allow** unstructured playtime so your child can explore his interests?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you offer** tasks that are challenging but not overwhelming?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you give** your child freedom to run, touch, get messy and learn by doing?

\_\_\_ 5. **Do you play** with your child every day?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer shows you're making learning fun. For each *no* answer, use that idea from the quiz to change your answer to *yes*.

"For a small child there is no division between playing and learning."

— Penelope Leach,  
*Your Baby & Child:  
From Birth to Age Five*

## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Teach your child to solve problems independently

Even as a preschooler, your child is old enough to solve some of her own problems. This builds thinking skills and self-esteem. To support her:

- **Be sympathetic.** "That's a tough problem!"
- **Ask about solutions.** "What are you going to do?"
- **Offer solutions** if necessary.
- **Talk about results.** What did she expect? What happened? What would she do next time?

Source: Jim Fay & Charles Fay, Ph.D., *Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood: Practical Parenting from Birth to Six Years*, ISBN: 1-930429-00-2 (The Love and Logic Press, Inc., 1-800-338-4065).

## MAKING TIME COUNT

### Notice, embrace your child's different learning styles

When your child gets to kindergarten, teachers will be interested in how he learns best. Through hearing? Seeing? Touching? Pay attention to his favorite activities. You may notice a trend. When the time comes, let the teacher know.

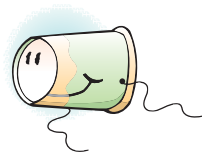
Source: Rani M. Arbo and Susan Scully Petroni, "How Do You Make Learning Fun?" *FamilyFun*, September 2002 (Disney Publishing, 1-800-289-4849, www.FamilyFun.com).

## LEARNING THROUGH ART

### Farm themes can add excitement to art projects

If your child loves farms and animals, try these creative activities:

- **Make pig noses** out of small paper cups. Decorate the bottoms. Add string so you can wear the noses.
- **Paint with toy tractors.** What tracks do they make?



## Helping Children Learn®

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