

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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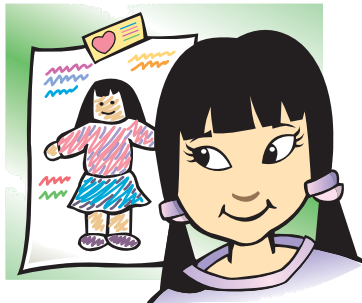
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BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Help your child take pride in herself

Children feel good about themselves when they know they're valued, and feeling good helps them to do better in school. To show appreciation for your child:

- **Display your pride.** For example, hang her drawings on the refrigerator. Speak highly of her to others. "Grandma, did you know Sarah was in a play at preschool?"
- **Attend school activities.** Tell your child how much you look forward to special events. It may help to ask the teacher for a schedule a few months in advance.
- **Have fun one-on-one.** Even if it's only for 10 minutes, let your child choose what the two of you will do. You could read, cuddle, talk or play with toys. Do this daily and mention how much you enjoy it.
- **Encourage interests.** If your child loves to build, for instance, have a supply of blocks on hand. Compliment her creations. (Hint: Yard sales are great places to find inexpensive, gently used toys.)
- **Give reminders.** Talk about your child's successes. "Remember that beautiful drawing you made?" "It was nice of you to share those cookies!"



Source: Jolene L. Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, *What Young Children Need to Succeed*, ISBN: 1-57542-070-8 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

Play games to teach opposites

Teaching children opposites stretches their vocabularies. To encourage this:

- **Cut out and match pictures** of opposites, such as *full/empty*, *wide/narrow*, *many/few*, *clean/dirty* and *tall/short*.
- **Make a book of opposites.** As your child learns opposites, write them down. He can add drawings.
- **Move in opposite ways.** Squat *low*, stretch *high*. Lift your *left* arm, lift your *right*. *Smile* and then *frown*.
- **Have an opposite day.** Eat dinner for breakfast. Walk backwards instead of forwards. Wear clothes to bed.
- **Act out opposites**, including *front/back*, *sit/stand*, *over/under* and *awake/asleep*.
- **Sort laundry** together into stacks of *big/small*, *heavy/light*, *long/short*, *kids/parents*, etc.
- **Read opposite books** like Dr. Seuss' *The Foot Book* and *Go Dog, Go!*

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

Help your child make friends

If your child hasn't made friends yet, help her out. Ask, "Is there anyone from preschool you'd like to invite over?" Let the kids have some free time, but plan activities too. They might do an art project, read a book and have a snack. As your child gets older, she won't need as much guidance during play time.

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

Preschoolers can learn more than one language

Children need strong language skills to succeed in school. But if your first language isn't English, don't worry. Exposing a child to two languages has benefits. And it doesn't cause long-term speech delays.

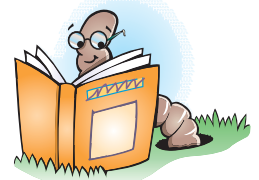
Source: "Tips, Facts & FAQs," First Words Preschool Speech and Language Program of Ottawa, www.pqhcs.com/firstwords/tip_facts.htm#Facts%20About%20Bilingualism.

MAKING TIME COUNT

Explore the world of worms

April 22nd is Earth Day. It's a great time to get "down to earth" and learn about earth-worms! Together you can:

- **Visit the library** and find children's books on worms. Read about what they do and where they live.
- **Go on a worm hunt.** Look under rocks. Gently dig through loose soil.
- **Examine the worms you find.** How do they feel? How do they move?
- **Do worm activities together.** Crawl like a worm. Make up worm songs. Glue yarn "worms" to paper.



Source: "Discovery Station: Wondrous Wiggle Worms," Preschool Express, www.preschoolexpress.com/discovery_station01/discovery_station_jun01.shtml.

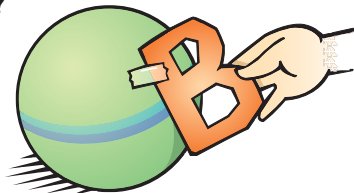
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can you go beyond teaching the alphabet to your child?

Q: My child recognizes all the letters. What else can I teach him about the alphabet?

A: Recognizing letters is an important step toward learning to read. But it's just as important to learn how letters sound. This concept—*phonemic awareness*—is simple to introduce. To make it fun, help your child:



- **Trace the first letter of his name** in sand or shaving cream. Or form the letter with clay or play dough. As you do, discuss the letter's sound. If your child is interested in this activity, try a few more letters.
- **Cut out large letters from construction paper.** Help your child match them with common household objects. For example, tape "B" on a ball and "T" on a toy truck. See how many connections he can make.
- **Change the sounds of words in silly ways,** and encourage your child to "catch you." Example: "It's almost time for lunch! Let's have some macaroni and *fleas!*" If your child doesn't notice, say, "Did I say *fleas?* I meant *cheese!*"

Source: Jo Fitzpatrick, *Phonemic Awareness*, ISBN: 1-57471-231-4 (Creative Teaching Press, 1-800-444-4287, www.creativeteaching.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching your preschooler to pay attention and listen well?

Paying attention is critical to success in school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging good listening skills.

- ___ **1. Do you model** helpful behavior, such as making eye contact and not interrupting?
- ___ **2. Do you play** listening games, such as *Simon Says* and *Operator*?
- ___ **3. Do you read aloud** to your child every day and discuss what you read?
- ___ **4. Do you give** simple, clear directions for your child to follow?

___ **5. Do you compliment** your child for listening well?
How did you do? Each *yes* answer shows you're teaching your child to pay attention. For each *no* answer, consider using ideas from the quiz to change your answer to *yes*.

"The quickest way for a parent to get a child's attention is to sit down and look comfortable."
—Lane Olinhouse

BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Encourage the use of writing

You can show your child that both talking and writing get messages across. Make lists with your child. Say things like, "We need milk. I'm going to write that down." While you write, give her paper and crayons so she can "write" too. She can also draw pictures of what you need.

Source: Annie Reeks, "Write from the Start," *Raise An Eager Learner*, a special issue of *Parenting* (The Parenting Group, 1-800-635-2665, www.parenting.com).

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Making puzzles with your child can build math skills

Children enjoy solving and making puzzles and they learn about shapes and problem-solving. To make a puzzle:

- **Glue a photo** from an old magazine or calendar to cardboard. Let it dry.
- **Cut the picture** into no more than six large parts.
- **Mix up the pieces** so your child can put them back together again.



Source: Grace Davila Coates and Jean Kerr Stenmark, *Family Math for Young Children*, ISBN: 0-912511-27-3 (EQUALS, 1-800-897-5036, <http://store.yahoo.com/lawrencehallofscience/fammatforyou.html>).

EXPANDING YOUR CHILD'S WORLD

Introduce your child to computers at an early age

If your child shows interest in the computer, it might be time to use it with him. Sit together and:

- **Use age-appropriate software** with creative images and sound effects.
- **Let your child set the pace.** If he's not having fun, it's time to stop.



Source: Dr. Kyle Pruett, "Easy Does It: Introducing Your Child to the Computer," *Family Education Network*, www.familyeducation.com/article/print/0,1303,45-2739,00.html?obj_gra.

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