

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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READING READINESS

Raise a reader with the 'Big Five'

Research shows that parents have more influence than anyone else on the literacy of their children. The early years are critical, so don't let your child miss out. Offer plenty of the "Big Five"—the top five things researchers say parents can do to raise good readers. They are:

- **Let your child see you reading**, but don't stop there. Talk about how you learn from reading. Say, "Would you like to read, too?" Then give her a favorite picture book.
- **Expect your child to be a reader.** "Someday you'll be in kindergarten and you'll be learning to read! That will be so exciting!"
- **Keep reading and writing tools nearby.** Visit the library at least once a week and let your child choose several books at a time. Have paper and crayons handy, too.
- **Read to your child every day**—for as long as it's enjoyable. Choose books you know she'll enjoy.
- **Talk to your child** about all kinds of things—your day, her toys, the weather. This builds vocabulary skills. It also builds a strong, close parent-child relationship!



Source: "Raising Readers: The Tremendous Potential of Families," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/pubs/startearly/ch_1.html.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Keep in touch with preschool teachers

When teachers and parents work together, kids have the greatest chance of succeeding in preschool. Even if you talked with the teacher early in the year, get in touch again. Ask how your child is doing. You can also:

- **Exchange contact information.** Let the teacher know when and how you can be reached. Ask about the best time and way to talk with her.
- **Write notes.** When you have a concern or question, don't hesitate to jot it down and send it to the teacher.
- **Volunteer to help in class.** This is an easy way to keep up with your child, his peers, the teacher and to find out what the class is doing.

Source: Maile Carpenter, "Ten Ways to Stay in Touch with Your Child's Teacher," ParentCenter.Com, <http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/refcap/preschooler/ppreschool/64657.html>.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Help your child transition

Being able to transition (move smoothly from one activity to another) is a necessary skill for preschoolers. It isn't easy, though.

Help your child by:

- **Giving a warning.** "You can finish your race. Then it will be time to put the cars away." Or "I'll set a timer for two minutes. When it beeps, it's time to go."
- **Making it fun.** Give challenges such as, "It's bedtime. I'll race you to your room!"

Source: Carol Baicker-McKee, *Fussbusters at Home: Around-the-Clock Strategies and Games for Smoothing the Rough Spots in Your Preschooler's Day*, ISBN: 1-56145-262-9 (Peachtree Publishers, 1-800-241-0113, www.peachtree-online.com).

BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Make a 'thank-you' card

Who is your child thankful for? Why? Let your child decorate a card for that person. You can write down what he dictates. ("Dear Grandma, Thank you for playing with me. Love, Brian.")



MAKING TIME COUNT

Have fun at harvest time

Help your preschooler develop motor, thinking and other skills with these timely activities. Have fun making a:

- **Harvest collage.** Help your child cut out pictures of fruits and vegetables from magazines. Glue them onto paper and add labels.
- **Native American necklace.** String beads or pasta in a creative pattern. Let your child work while you supervise.



Source: "Thanksgiving," The Chalkboard, http://members.tripod.com/~Patricia_F/thanksgiving.html.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Give alternatives to tattling

Q: My son tattles on other kids constantly. How can I get him to stop?

A: "Joey called me a name!" "Katie took my book!" "Lizzie put her foot on the table!" Preschoolers love to tattle on each other. Many parents, however, do not love to hear it. Teachers, who may have 20 or more little tattlers, need it to stop. Here are some ways to break the tattling habit:

- **Tell your child** you will listen to "telling," not "tattling." Telling is when your child provides information that can keep another child safe. For example, he says his little sister is heading toward the street. Tattling is when your child simply tries to get another child into trouble. ("Lisa ate an extra cookie!")
- **Reinforce the difference** between telling and tattling by always asking the same questions when your child tattles. "Is somebody hurt?" "Is somebody going to get hurt?" If the answers are no, simply say, "No tattling," and turn your attention to something else. If tattling is still a problem, use consequences.
- **Offer empathy.** You can acknowledge your child's feelings about situations without allowing tattling. For example, "I see how angry you are that your brother teased you. I'd like you to tell him about it."



Source: Nancy Samalin, *Loving Without Spoiling: And 100 Other Timeless Tips for Raising Terrific Kids*, ISBN: 0-07-142492-X (McGraw-Hill, 1-800-262-4729, www.books.mcgraw-hill.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching about generosity?

Preschoolers naturally think of themselves first. They need to learn about sharing with others. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging this.

1. **Do you teach** by example—sharing often? ("You can have one of my crackers.")
2. **Do you consider** others' needs and wants? ("What would Daddy like?")
3. **Do you explain** sharing? ("She'll have a turn for two minutes. Then you'll get it back.")
4. **Do you prevent** sharing problems? ("Let's leave your favorite toy at home.")
5. **Do you praise** sharing? ("I'm so proud of you for sharing.")

How did you do? Each yes answer shows that you're teaching about sharing. For each no answer, try to change your answer to yes.

"The prime purpose of being four is to enjoy being four—of secondary importance is to prepare for being five."
—Jim Trelease

EXPANDING YOUR CHILD'S WORLD

Make family field trips fun

Children love to visit new places, and they learn from these trips. Make the most of outings by having a plan. Find the best attraction for your child. Bring a snack. Talk about what you see. Draw a picture about the trip. Then decide where to go next!

Source: Jo Ann Lohl Spears, "Field Trip Planning Made Easy," Parenting Information, www.parentinginformation.org/fieldtripplanning.htm.

DISCIPLINE

Look below the surface of your child's new behavior

If your child's behavior changes unexpectedly, think about other changes in her life. Could something be upsetting her at home? At school? Could she be ill? Instead of just addressing the behavior, try to find its cause. This may truly "fix" the problem.

USING OUR SENSES

It's exciting to explore autumn with your child

Help your child enjoy the sights, sounds, smells, feelings and tastes of autumn. You might:

- **Use** as many different-colored vegetables as you can to make simple vegetable soup. (Just combine veggies such as carrots, celery or onion, and broth).
- **Rake** leaves and make a big pile. Name the colors you see. Jump in together! Crunch the leaves with your feet.
- **Choose** a kind of apple that's different from what you usually buy. Ask your child what's different—the taste? The feel?



Source: Donna Erickson, *More Prime Time Activities With Kids*, ISBN: 0-8066-2606-2 (Augsburg Fortress, 1-800-328-4648, www.augsburgfortress.org).

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