

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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December 2006

## BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

### Develop your child's sense of personal accomplishment

Your child loves to hear you say he's wonderful. But that is *your* opinion of him. He also needs to develop a good opinion of himself. To help your child feel accomplished:

- **Give him responsibilities.** Even young preschoolers can pick up toys, straighten pillows, or set out the dog's bowl, for example. Older kids can do much more than that. Your child doesn't have to do a perfect job. Compliment his hard work.
- **Teach him new skills.** Think of age-appropriate jobs your child might enjoy. For example, would your four-year-old like to help you sort laundry? Show him how and then let him have the excitement of teaching someone else.
- **Encourage his interests.** Your child's pinecone collection may not be particularly thrilling to you. But it's important to him. Let him know that it matters. "Wow, that's a big pinecone! Where did you find that one?"
- **Praise him for solving problems.** "I didn't have to come in the room when you and Jordan both wanted to play with the blue truck. You found a way to take turns. Way to go!"



Source: Ann Pleshette Murphy and the editors of *Parents* magazine, *The Parents Answer Book*, ISBN: 0-307-44060-5 (Roundtable Press, 212/691-0500, [www.roundtablepressinc.com](http://www.roundtablepressinc.com)).

## LEARNING THROUGH ART

### 'Draw & tell' stories to preschoolers

Since many preschoolers do not write words, drawing pictures is a wonderful way for them to express themselves on paper. Ask your child to draw a picture of your family. As she does this, you can talk about:

- **Features people have**, such as noses and eyelashes. Encourage her to add more detail as she draws.
- **Your family.** How many members are there? Who is the oldest?

Preschoolers also like drawing places, especially houses. Ask your child to draw a house. Then discuss:

- **Who lives there.** Are there children? Pets?
- **The location.** What does the street look like?
- **Shapes.** Name the ones that make up the house.
- **Colors.** Does she see different colors on the roof or shutters?

Source: Becky Daniel, *The Playful Preschooler*, ISBN: 1-56822-955-0 (Instructional Fair—TS Denison, 1-800-417-3261, [www.teacherspecialty.com](http://www.teacherspecialty.com)).

## YOUR CHILD AND YOU

### Dedicate time to your child

Spending time with your child tells her, "You are important to me." This boosts her self-image and gives her confidence to try new things. To increase time with your child:

- **Wake up** in time to eat breakfast together without rushing.
- **Take** after-dinner walks.
- **Schedule** a time to do one-on-one activities your child enjoys.

Source: "Nine Steps to More Effective Parenting," KidsHealth for Parents, Nemours Foundation, [http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/nine\\_steps.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/nine_steps.html).

## BUILDING MATH SKILLS

### Teach what numbers mean

It's important for children to count aloud. But they also need to know that numbers represent things. So count objects with your child—anything from blocks to steps to toy cars. You can even try simple math together. "Here are five crackers. Let's take away one. How many are left?"



## WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

### Remember to check your child's school bag for news

Teachers usually communicate by sending notes home with all the children. It's important to check your child's bag after school each day. It may contain:

- **News** of an upcoming field trip.
- **A list** of supplies your child should have.
- **Notification** about an illness in the class.
- **Forms** that need to be signed.



Source: Eva and Moncrieff Cochran, *Child Care That Works*, ISBN: 0-395-82287-4 (Robins Lane Press, 1-800-638-0928, [www.gryphonhouse.com/subjects.cfm?code=ROBIN](http://www.gryphonhouse.com/subjects.cfm?code=ROBIN)).

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How can parents help children make friends?

**Q: Socializing doesn't come naturally to my child. How can I help her with this?**

**A:** Preschool children vary widely in their development, including social development. Some can play well with anyone, anywhere. Others need more help and practice. To support your child:

- **Know how much she can handle.** For many kids, a morning of preschool is plenty. They need the afternoon to wind down. Playing with another child at this time could be too stressful.
- **Schedule playtime with peers.** Choose non-school days or times when your child feels rested. Make sure you're rested, too. You may have to supervise the visit closely.
- **Keep playtimes short.** Also arrange playtimes with children who don't live too far away. A long car ride may tire out your child before she even arrives.
- **Discuss what to expect.** "When Kevin gets here, you can build a fort. Then we'll have a snack, and I'll read you two stories. You can each pick one. Then it will be time for him to go."
- **Prepare other parents.** If you'll be visiting another home, provide helpful tips about your child. For example, "She'll be scared of the dog. Would it be possible to put him outside?"



Source: Perri Klass, M.D., and Eileen Costello, M.D., *Quirky Kids*, ISBN: 0-345-45142-2 (Ballantine Books, 1-800-726-0600, [www.ballantinebooks.com](http://www.ballantinebooks.com)).

## PARENT QUIZ

### Is your child learning language skills?

Language skills help children succeed in school and in life. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child develop them.

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you talk** with your child about what you're doing?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you explain** things your child sees and does?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you read** books with your child daily?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you take** your child on outings that introduce new concepts and words?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you mention** spatial concepts, such as *over* and *under*?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer shows you're promoting language development. For each *no* answer, try using that idea from the quiz to change your answer to *yes*.

"Life is a succession of lessons, which must be lived to be understood."  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## DISCIPLINE

### Walks can calm tantrums

Young children often throw tantrums. That's because kids this age are still learning how to express themselves properly. Instead of punishing your child for each meltdown, distract him with a walk. It will probably make him feel better—and it's good exercise, too.

Source: Jean Feldman, *Transition Time: Let's Do Something Different*, ISBN: 0-87659-173-X (Gryphon House, Inc., 1-800-638-0928, [www.gryphonhouse.com](http://www.gryphonhouse.com)).

## DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

### Toys can help children learn

Toys don't have to be from the toy store. Some of the best ones are homemade. But make sure toys support:

- **Physical or muscular abilities.** Good examples are swings, tricycles, balls, puzzles and brooms.
- **Sensory development.** Help your child learn through touch, sight, sound, taste and smell. Try instruments, bubbles and play dough.
- **Creative thought.** Provide crayons, paint, construction paper, markers, clay and various other supplies.

Source: "Good Times with Toys," National Network for Child Care, [www.nncc.org/Series/good.time.toy.html](http://www.nncc.org/Series/good.time.toy.html).

## BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

### Games promote teamwork

Playing organized games helps your child practice getting along with others. This is true of outdoor games, such as tag, or simple preschool board games.

Playing games helps your child learn to:

- **Follow** rules.
- **Take** turns.
- **Enjoy** cooperation.



Source: Thomas Lickona, *Raising Good Children*, ISBN: 0-553-37429-X (Bantam Books, 1-800-726-0600, [www.randomhouse.com/doubleday](http://www.randomhouse.com/doubleday)).

## Helping Children Learn®

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Managing Editor: Patricia Hodgdon.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Amanda Blyth & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Susan O'Brien. Editorial Assistant: Pat Carter.

Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1527-1005