

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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## BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN

### Improve concentration with fun games

To lengthen your child's attention span, show her that sticking with tasks is rewarding and fun. Children learn best through play, so introduce activities she'll want to do again and again.

You might:

- **Teach your child to weave** with strips of construction paper. Cut slits in a piece of cardboard and have her thread the colorful paper in and out. She'll be proud of the finished product.
- **Recite a nursery rhyme** with your child, such as "Jack and Jill." Say it for her once—all the way through. Then say it again, but pause and let her fill in some rhyming words.
- **Tap a simple pattern** on a tabletop. Encourage your child to copy it. Make the patterns more complicated as she improves.
- **Have your child search** for things in books or magazines. For example, ask her to find letters, pets, plants, cars or other familiar objects.

Remember that learning activities should be fun for preschoolers. If your child wants to take a break, no problem! Simply return to the game when (and if) she's ready.

Source: Lee Hausner, Ph.D. and Jeremy Schlosberg, *Teaching Your Child Concentration*, ISBN: 0-89526-394-7 (Lifeline Press, 1-888-219-4747, [www.regnery.com/lifeline/lifeline.html](http://www.regnery.com/lifeline/lifeline.html)).



## BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

### Children take pride in helping

Children can contribute to their families early in life. Doing so makes them feel good about themselves! Be creative when thinking of ways for your child to pitch in. Help him:

- **Practice organizing.** He can draw a picture of socks to put on the sock drawer or a picture of trucks to paste on a box of toy trucks. Encourage him to use the pictures when it's time to clean.
- **Tap into talents.** He might decorate a greeting card, perform a special "happy birthday" song or turn a picture into a thank-you note.
- **Participate in events.** He could set out napkins, wipe chairs or ask what guests would like to drink. Children enjoy feeling like helpers, not annoyances, so provide plenty of opportunities for your child.

Source: Jolene L. Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, Ph.D., *What Young Children Need to Succeed*, ISBN: 1-57542-070-8 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-866-703-7322, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)).

## READING READINESS

### Try new books together

Your child may have that one favorite book that he wants to hear over and over again. That's fine! But remember to also try new books with him, such as:

- **Picture books.** These wordless books teach children that pictures tell stories.
- **Repeating books.** Books that use repetition help your child guess what will come next.

Source: Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, ISBN: 0-14-04-6971-0 (Penguin Putnam Inc., 1-800-788-6262, [www.penguinputnam.com](http://www.penguinputnam.com)).

## BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

### Encourage affection

When children show affection, they connect with family, friends, teachers and others. This doesn't come automatically for young kids. To help your child understand:

- **Care for animals.** Put out bread and water for birds, for example.
- **Discuss others' feelings.** Have your child imagine what they're thinking.

Source: Susan A. Miller, "Because I Like You," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, February/March 2004 (Scholastic, 1-800-724-6527, [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)).



## DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

### Teach about cause & effect

Learning about cause and effect increases your child's thinking skills. Start small by explaining the relationship between everyday things and their results. For example:

- **If we turn on the hose,** water will come out.
- **If we drop soap into water,** it will float.
- **If we put sugar into food,** it will taste sweet.



Source: Lilliann Alice Noda, June Mori-Shida & Nancy Chisato Adachi, *Off to a Great Start!* ISBN: 0-7802-4207-6 (The Wright Group/McGraw Hill, 1-800-648-2970, [www.wrightgroup.com](http://www.wrightgroup.com)).

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Should parents be positive about 'unidentifiable' art?

**Q: How should I react when my child draws something and I have no idea what it is? I don't want to hurt his feelings!**

**A:** Most preschoolers love art. But research suggests this positive feeling may fade as children grow. Children may have heard their pictures "aren't good" or "don't look like anything."

Ouch! To prevent this problem:

- **Choose words carefully.** Think of phrases that won't offend your child. Say, "Tell me all about your picture," not, "What is that?"
- **Have realistic expectations.** The cat your child draws may be missing some key parts, such as legs. Be patient. Over time, kids add more details.
- **Avoid giving advice.** Don't show your child the "right way" to draw things. If he needs help, you might say, "Remember that pretty flower we saw outside? What did it look like?"
- **Compliment your child's work.** Even if you secretly think he made a mess, find something genuine and kind to say, such as, "I love the colors you chose."
- **Hang art in a prominent spot.** Try a bulletin board or the good old refrigerator. Not only will you feel proud, but your child will, too!



Source: Betty Farber, M. Ed., *The Parents' & Teachers' Guide to Helping Young Children Learn: Creative Ideas from 35 Respected Experts*, ISBN: 1-881425-05-3 (Preschool Publications, Inc.).

## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you helping to build vocabulary?

Experts say children should know 5,000 to 7,000 words when they begin kindergarten. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're doing all you can to help build your child's vocabulary:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you read** books with your child every day?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you play** rhyming games with your child?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you "think aloud"** and talk to your child as you do everyday activities?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you take** your child to new places and talk about what you see?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you read** and point out signs and labels when you go grocery shopping?

**How did you do?** *Each yes answer means your child has an opportunity to learn and use more words. For each no answer, try using that idea from the quiz to change your answer to yes.*

*"To achieve success, all you need to do is truly believe you deserve it."*  
—Unknown

## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Boost your child's memory

Research shows that a child's memory is tied to language skills. You can help your child boost her memory by recalling special moments with her. Encourage your child to relive and remember fun family moments by:

- **Retelling** them.
- **Acting** them out.
- **Drawing** or painting them.
- **Singing** about them.

Source: "Do You Remember When?" Talaris Research Institute, [www.talaris.org/spotlight\\_rememberwhen.htm](http://www.talaris.org/spotlight_rememberwhen.htm).

## YOUR CHILD AND YOU

### Make sure your young child gets adequate rest

Many kids get cranky when they're tired, and that makes it harder to learn. Adjust bedtime and waking time to your child's needs. Each night, do the same quiet activities to relax your child (bath, reading, etc.). Find a schedule that works—and then stick with it!

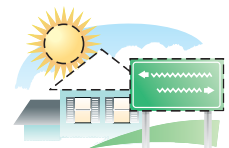
## BUILDING MATH SKILLS

### Games make math fun

Turn learning math into a game for your preschooler. Here are two games:

**1. Dot count.** Show your child how to shake dice. Help her count the number of dots on the top of the dice. Have her hold up that many fingers.

**2. Shape hunt.** Get your child familiar with circles, squares, triangles and rectangles. Take a walk and help her find shapes on buildings and street signs.



Source: "Activities for Preschoolers," Parenting Preschoolers, [www.new-agecomputers.com/preschoolers/activities.htm](http://www.new-agecomputers.com/preschoolers/activities.htm).

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