

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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READING READINESS

Literacy grows in many ways

You are your child's "first teacher" when it comes to reading—and every other subject! Keep in mind that reading is a complex process that takes most people years to learn. You can be a wonderful influence in the early stages and beyond. To help your child:



- **Mention letters and the sounds they make.** For example, "That's S. It says ssssss." Knowing letters is important, but connecting letters and sounds is reading.
- **Have your child dictate captions** for his drawings. For example, if he says, "That's a pig on a farm," respond, "Pig begins with *p*. Ppppppig." Then write "Pig on a farm." Help him write the *p* if he's ready.
- **Rhyme with your child.** When he says a word such as *hat*, say, "That rhymes with *cat*. What else rhymes with *hat* and *cat*?" Do this several times a day.
- **Make sound buckets.** As your child learns a sound, write its letter on the bottom of a plastic container. Help him fill the "bucket" with things that begin with that letter. For example, put cups and cookies in the C bucket.

Source: Melissa Fay Greene, "The Alphabet Mysteries," *Parenting*, October 2002 (The Parenting Group, 1-800-234-0847, www.parenting.com).

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Silliness can simplify learning

Laughter and humor exercise the brain. They can boost thinking, creativity and social skills. They can even strengthen relationships with family and friends. To encourage silliness:

- **Practice tongue twisters.** For example, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."
- **Share jokes and riddles.** Children love corny jokes. Be sure to laugh at your child's jokes, too.
- **Do something different.** Walk backwards with your child. Instead of turning the pages of a book, have her blow them.
- **Imagine that objects could talk.** What would the spoon say? Your child's favorite toy? The dining room table?
- **Change familiar songs.** "Twinkle, twinkle, little" Replace "star" with something else that twinkles, such as a lightning bug.

Source: Jackie Silberg, "Serious Learning Can Happen in Playful Moments," *Preschoolers Today*, <http://preschoolerstoday.com/resources/articles/seriouslearning.htm>.

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

Help your child share friends

Sharing friends is difficult for preschoolers. They become jealous when a friend plays with other children. Explain that it's okay to have more than one friend. Encourage her to look for someone who is playing alone and ask her to play.

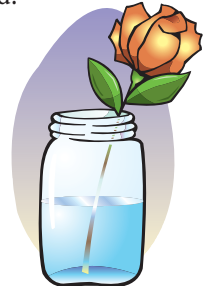
Source: Meri Wallace, *Keys to Parenting Your Four-Year-Old*, ISBN: 0-8120-9745-9 (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1-800-645-3476, www.barronseduc.com).

MAKING TIME COUNT

Celebrate nature together

On Earth Day (April 22), have some fun learning about nature with your child. To get started, have your child:

- **Plant something.** This teaches that plants need food, water and air to live—just like people do.
- **Use nature in art.** Make a collage with leaves, feathers or flower petals.
- **Find new uses for old things.** This teaches about recycling. Decorate paper bags or use an old jar as a vase.



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

YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Practice outdoor safety

Warmer weather means enjoying the outdoors! Keep your child safe when playing outside by:

- **Never** leaving him alone near a body of water—not even a puddle.
- **Making** sure he always wears a helmet when riding a bike.
- **Helping** him apply sunblock—even on cloudy days.



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents address talking troubles?

Q: Many of my three-year-old's preschool classmates are talking up a storm. But my child doesn't say much. What should I do?

A: Some kids are slow to start talking. Others use single words instead of sentences. Sometimes, a child is hard to understand. If you suspect your child has a speech delay, talk with the preschool teacher and a pediatrician or speech pathologist. Meanwhile, to boost your child's language skills:

- **Stretch out your conversations.** Ask what and why questions. For example, "What do you want to do today?" "Why do you think that bird built a nest here?" "What should we do with Grandma tomorrow?"
- **Encourage talking during pretend play.** You could make a puppet say, "I'm cold!" Your child might respond, "Want a coat?" Then keep the conversation going. Try other make-believe activities such as playing "store."
- **Read books about talking.** Some suggestions include Giles Andreae's *Commotion in the Ocean*, Steve Seskin's *Don't Laugh at Me* and Kevin Henkes' *Jessica*. Ask your librarian for other ideas.
- **Play sound games together.** Make a sound. Let your child mimic it. Incorporate this into Simon Says. "Simon says, 'Say brrrrrr.'" "Simon says, 'Make the sound of the letter m. Mmmmmmm.'"

Source: Stanley I. Greenspan, "Helping Kids With Speech Delays," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, February/March 2004 (Scholastic, Inc., 1-866-436-2464, www.scholastic.com/parentandchild).



PARENT QUIZ

Are you encouraging responsibility?

Housework teaches your child responsibility and builds his self-esteem. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're teaching your child how to do chores:

1. **Do you include** your child in small, fun tasks that he can complete?
2. **Do you help** your child perform tasks before letting him do them alone?
3. **Do you try** to be patient and not rush your child?
4. **Do you show** your appreciation for his help?

5. **Do you make** sure not to redo your child's tasks?
How did you do? Each yes answer means you are giving your child the opportunity to complete tasks. 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

EXPANDING YOUR CHILD'S WORLD

Help your child learn to embrace cultural differences

In school your child is likely to meet children who are different from him. If possible, introduce your child to people from other countries now. You can also teach him about other cultures by:

- **Decorating** with photos of people and things from other countries.
- **Helping** your child build famous structures such as a pyramid.

Source: Thomas Moore, "Give Your Child a Global View," Scholastic Families, www.scholastic.com/earlylearner/age3/social/globalview.htm.

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

Curb bossy tendencies

There is a fine line between confidence and bossiness. Help your child by encouraging manners ("May I please ...?"). If your child demands (rather than asks politely) for things, don't give in. And stick to your rules—no matter what your child says. "I know you'd like some candy. But the rule is no candy before dinner."

Source: Robert Needlman, M.D., "Dealing with a Bossy 4 Year Old," DrSpock.com, www.drspock.com/faq/0,1511,632,00.html.

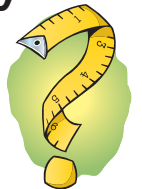
BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Teach math every day

It's easy to expose your child to math concepts. Here's how:

- **Measure your child.** Tell her how tall she is and show her on the wall.
- **Test weights.** Hold two items of different weights. Ask, "Which one is heavier?" "Lighter?"
- **Use comparative words.** "That noodle is longer." "This recipe uses less salt."
- **Count things.** "One cookie, two cookies." This clarifies what numbers mean.

Source: Meri Wallace, *Keys to Parenting Your Four-Year-Old*, ISBN: 0-8120-9745-9 (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1-800-645-3476, www.barronseduc.com).



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