

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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## BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

### Learning to share takes time

Preschoolers can be awfully stingy about their toys and other possessions. At the same time, they are learning that sharing with friends and family is fun. Be patient as your child develops this skill. To encourage it:

- **Set an example.** Show your child how to play and work in a cooperative way. Take turns putting pieces of a puzzle in place, for example. Wash the car together.
- **Give and take.** Share things with your child, such as tasty snacks. ("Would you like one of my cookies? Here you go!") Be appreciative when he shares with you.
- **Explain sharing.** Assure your child that sharing doesn't mean giving something away forever. Use a timer to set limits on turns among children. Talk about respecting people's belongings, too.
- **Be realistic.** Don't expect your child to share everything. It's okay to put away some favorite toys before a friend comes over. Also set out toys that are easy to share, such as blocks.
- **Give compliments.** Notice when your child shares. Help him focus on how good it feels. "You made Sarah happy when you shared your ball. It's so much fun to play together!"



Source: Karen Miles, "How To Teach Your Preschooler To Share," Parent Center, <http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/refcap/preschooler/pbehavior/65514.html>.

## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### When should children start chores?

Doing chores is a good way to build children's responsibility and sense of pride. But what chores can preschoolers do? Consider that:

- **Three-year-olds** may be able to put away toys, place dirty clothes in the hamper, fill pet bowls with dry food and get dressed in pull-on clothes (clothes with no snaps, buckles or ties).
- **Four-year-olds** might help with table chores, such as setting and clearing. With supervision, they may choose outfits for the next day, brush teeth and wash up.
- **Five-year-olds** can often make their beds or put their clean clothes in their drawers. They may help younger siblings with tasks, too. Kids this age can also do simple food preparation, such as helping to make a sandwich.

Source: Ruth A. Peters, "What chores at what age? A guide for parents," MSNBC, [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6980924/page/3/print/1/displaymode/1098/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6980924/page/3/print/1/displaymode/1098/).

## DISCIPLINE

### Cope with power struggles

Avoid getting into a fight when your child wants to take control of a situation. Here's how:

- **Decide on "must do's."** Your child must wear a seat belt.
- **Give choices,** like which shirt to wear.
- **Don't sweat** the small stuff.

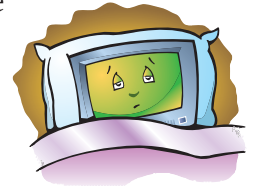
Source: Jan Faull, "Unplugging Power Struggles," FamilyFun.com, [http://familyfun.go.com/parenting/child/skills/feature/dony0201fa\\_power/dony0201fa\\_power.html](http://familyfun.go.com/parenting/child/skills/feature/dony0201fa_power/dony0201fa_power.html).

## WELLNESS

### Make sure your preschooler gets a good night's sleep

Sleep is crucial to your child's development. To make your bedtime routine easier:

- **Avoid** watching television or eating large meals right before bedtime.
- **Read** a familiar book to her.
- **Walk** her back to her bed if she wakes and gets out of it.



Source: Kristen Neufeld, "10 Steps to Peaceful Slumber," *Child* (Meredith Corp., 1-888-616-7679, [www.child.com](http://www.child.com)).

## MAKING TIME COUNT

### Use trees as learning tools

This time of year, trees become great learning tools. Take your child to a park and have him:

- **Collect** leaves and twigs.
- **Examine** the tree with a magnifying glass.
- **Point out** the colors of the leaves.



Source: Susan LaBella, "Activity Ideas: Trees Are Terrific," *Early Childhood Education Newsletter*, Education World, [www.educationworld.com/a\\_earlychildhood/newsletters/newsletter/V03N11.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_earlychildhood/newsletters/newsletter/V03N11.shtml).

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How can parents help a fearful child?

**Q: My formerly fearless toddler has had a turnaround in the last year. She has gone from being afraid of nothing to having a list of fears. Now she's afraid of the dark, "monsters" and dogs, just to name a few. What happened?**

**A:** It sounds as though your daughter has had a burst of maturity. Mature may be the last word you would use to describe her, but her fears do indeed show that she's growing up.

As a toddler, she probably didn't have the thinking skills to worry about all these things. Now, though, she may be capable of wondering, "What if?" "What if there is something scary in the dark?" "What if that dog bites me?" She may "dream up" scary things with her imagination, too. To help, you can:

- **Be reassuring.** "Let's get you a nightlight." "I'll be right here in the next room." "I don't mind picking you up when we see a dog." (In fact, it's wise not to let your child pet strange dogs.)
- **Show understanding.** Do not make light of her fears. They are real to her. Instead, show that you're there to help.
- **Have patience.** It may take time for your child to overcome a fear, such as petting dogs. With your support and kindness, she's likely to make progress. If you become concerned about her fear, though, consult a professional.



## PARENT QUIZ

### How grateful is your young child?

A grateful child shows appreciation for people and things. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your child is developing a sense of gratitude:

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you encourage** your child to think about what he has?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you model** grateful behavior by saying "thank you" often?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you avoid** demanding thanks from your child?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you gently remind** your child to thank other people?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Do you often let** your child know you're grateful for him?

**How did you do?** Each yes answer means you're helping your child become more grateful. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million."  
—Walt Streighttiff

## BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN

### Teach your preschooler how to focus on activities

Your child needs to be able to sit still once he gets to school. To help him practice:

- **Choose an activity** he enjoys, like a puzzle or building blocks.
- **Stick around** for a little while, but then let him play independently.
- **Limit television.** Too much screen time can delay his ability to entertain himself.

Source: Meg Zweiback, "Ask the Experts—How can I help my child increase his attention span?" Parentcenter, <http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/expert/preschooler/psspecial/69861.html>.

## TALKING & LISTENING

### Listen closely to soothe your preschooler's anger

It's hard to get preschoolers to talk about why they're angry. Try active listening. Here's how:

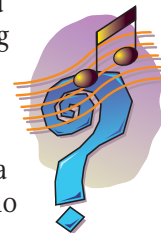
- **Encourage** your child to explain how she feels.
- **Watch** and listen to her feelings.
- **Repeat** what she's said.
- **Tell** her you understand.

Source: "Your Preschooler: What Are Some Solutions to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)?" How Kids Develop, [www.howkidsdevelop.com/behaviorPrek.html](http://www.howkidsdevelop.com/behaviorPrek.html).

## THE MAGIC OF MUSIC

### Music encourages listening

Next time you and your child are with a group, try a singing game. Have a few people go to the front of a room and turn their backs to the group. Then have one of them sing a song. Let your child guess who is singing.



Source: Jackie Silberg, *500 Five Minute Games*, ISBN: 0-8765-9172-7 (Gryphon House, 301-595-9500, [www.ghbooks.com](http://www.ghbooks.com)).

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