

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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## WHEN YOU NEED HELP

### Ease first-day preschool jitters

Starting preschool is a major event for every child. Even children who handle change well may be nervous. Preschool is a new place, with new rules, new routines—and new people. Some children may take longer than others to get used to the change. To make the transition easier:



- **Visit the school before the first day.** Attend the school's open house so your child can meet her teacher and explore the classroom. If your school doesn't offer an open house, show your child the outside of the building and talk a little about what preschool will be like.
- **Show your child the basics.** Your child will feel more comfortable when she can think of preschool as being similar to home. Point out where the bathroom is, where the coat closet is, and where she will eat lunch or snack.
- **Take five minutes to help your child get settled.** Greet the teacher together. Then hug your child and remind her you will pick her up as soon as school is over. Starting this routine early will help your child get used to it more quickly.
- **Be patient.** Your child will eventually feel comfortable—and even start to enjoy school!

## TALKING AND LISTENING

### Encourage your child to listen well

Many parents complain that their children aren't good listeners. They find themselves saying things like, "Why is that toy still out? I've asked you three times to put it away." But sometimes the problem isn't with children. It's with how parents make requests. These tips can help:

- **Get your child's attention.** If he's watching TV, for example, turn it down before you talk.
- **Make eye contact.** Kneel down and look him in the eye.
- **Make short, clear statements.** Kids get confused by long instructions.
- **Have your child repeat** what you said. This helps him focus on what he should do.
- **Praise good behavior.** Give specific compliments, such as "Good job! You put away all of the puzzle pieces just like I asked you to."

Source: Javad H. Kashani, M.D., et al., *Raising Happy Children: A Parent's Guide*, ISBN: 0-6098-0209-7 (Three Rivers Press, 1-800-733-3000, [www.randomhouse.com/crown/trp.html](http://www.randomhouse.com/crown/trp.html)).

## YOU AND YOUR CHILD

### Make playtime a priority

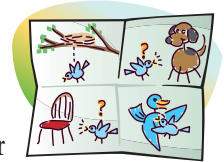
Even if you're not in the mood to play with your child, it's important to do it often—with enthusiasm. Among other things, it shows your child how important he is to you. You'll probably be surprised by how much fun you have!

## READING READINESS

### Consider drawing a story

Your child probably has a favorite story. Here's a new way to enjoy it. Fold a large piece of paper into fourths.

Let your child use the sections to illustrate the story. The first section for the beginning, two for the middle, and one for the end. Then have her tell you the story. If she'd like, you can add words to the pictures.



Source: Cheri Fuller, *365 Ways To Help Your Child Learn & Achieve*, ISBN: 0-8910-9854-6 (Piñon Press, 1-800-366-7788, [www.navypress.com](http://www.navypress.com)).

## BUILDING ROUTINES

### Routines teach self-care

Routines promote responsibility. Once a child is familiar with his routine, he can begin to perform it independently. For example:

- **Morning.** Your child can use the bathroom, wash hands, brush teeth and get dressed. Help choose an outfit the night before.
- **Bedtime.** After bath time, your child can put on pajamas, brush teeth and pick a book to read.

If your child needs frequent reminders, post a "list" made of pictures—perhaps of pajamas, a toothbrush and a book.

Source: Louise Bates Ames & Frances L. Ilg, *Your Five-Year-Old, Sunny and Serene*, ISBN: 0-440-50673-5 (The Bantam Dell Publishing Group, 1-800-726-0600, [www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell](http://www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell)).



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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How can parents support kindergartners at home?

**Q: My child is entering kindergarten this fall. How can I make sure he has a successful start to his school career?**

**A:** Young children constantly look to their parents—you—for cues about how to act. You can affect his attitude about school, his motivation to learn, his academic achievement—even his classroom behavior! You are supporting your child's learning at home when you:

- **Show your child** how exciting it is to start school. Tell him how important education is to your family. Share stories about your own school experience.
- **Talk with your child** about what he is learning at school. Show pride in his progress by posting his work and pictures on the refrigerator or in another place of honor in your home.
- **Support your child's teacher.** Try to use school rules at home when you can. Attend back-to-school night.
- **Keep reading with your child** at home. Read to your child at least 20 minutes a day. Let him see you reading as well.
- **Make sure your child** gets to school ready to learn. Have him pack his backpack the night before. Create a smooth morning routine—and don't forget a healthy breakfast!



## PARENT QUIZ

### Do you limit your child's screen time?

Too much screen time can interfere with your child's achievement in school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how you're managing your child's screen time:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you make sure** her screen time is less than two hours a day? (This includes TV, computer and video game time.)
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you avoid** violent programs?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you monitor** what your child sees on the news?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you talk** with your child about the lessons learned by characters?

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you choose** educational programs to watch together?  
**How did you do?** *Each yes answer means you're making good choices for your child's television viewing. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

"My heroes are and were my parents. I can't see having anyone else as my heroes."  
— Michael Jordan

## DISCIPLINE

### Prevent 'food fights'

Preschoolers can be picky about what they want to eat. You can make sure food isn't a source of fighting at your table if you:

- **Have** regular times for meals and snacks.
- **Serve** at least one food you know your child likes.
- **Make** pleasant conversation during the meal instead of drawing attention to how much your child is (or isn't) eating.

Source: T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. and Joshua D. Sparrow, M.D., *Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*, ISBN: 0-7382-0678-4 (Perseus Publishing, 1-800-345-5359, www.perseuspublishing.com).

## IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

### Attendance matters!

Attendance rates for kindergartners are lower than for students in any other grade. But attendance in kindergarten is very important! Start the habit of good attendance early—it will help your child throughout her school career.

Source: "Fingertip Facts," School Attendance Improvement Handbook, California Department of Education, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office, www.sdcoc.k12.ca.us/pdf/Atten\_formlatters.pdf.

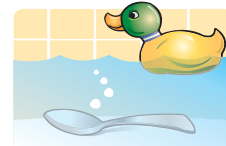
## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Make predictions at home

Children are curious about how things work, and parents need to explain a lot. But don't provide all the answers. Let your child experiment sometimes.

Here are some ideas:

- **At bath time**, see if he can guess which items will sink and which will float.
- **In the store**, suggest that he imagine how a toy will work. Will it pop open? Make a noise? Spin around?



Source: "Curiosity," PBSkids.com, <http://pbskids.org/rogers/parentsteachers/theme/1751.html>.

## Helping Children Learn®

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