

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

Good manners lead to success

Respect and manners go together. If your child respects others, his words and actions—his manners—show it. Your child wasn't born with good manners. You must teach him.

Studies show that everyone responds positively to polite people. With good manners, your child will attract more friends and do better in school.

So teach your child:

- **Manners matter.** People feel good when he treats them with respect. He'll earn their respect, too.
- **The golden rule.** Treat others as he'd like to be treated.
- **Magic words to use**—*Please. Thank you. You're welcome. Excuse me.* Continue to prompt him to use these until he does so on his own.
- **To wait for a pause in conversation** rather than interrupt. Develop a secret code to use when he needs to get your attention—touching your arm or tugging his ear, for example.

When your child is impolite, correct him privately. Tell him briefly what he did and what he might have done instead.

Compliment him when he's courteous. Let him know that Grandma beamed when he thanked her for a yummy dinner.

Above all, model good manners. Speak with respect about others—particularly your child's teacher or childcare provider.



WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Place a positive spin on school

It's only natural: When kids love an activity, they want to participate in it. So start building a positive view of school now to promote attendance in the future. For example:

- **Encourage your child's bond** with preschool teachers. Talk about them. Emphasize how much they care and want her to learn. During the holidays, consider having your child make a card or picture for them.
- **Ask your child what she likes** best about school. It's okay if she says, "Recess!" What's important is that she's enjoying school. You might say, "Oh, I loved recess, too. Playing outside was great!"
- **Help your child get to know** her classmates better. You might invite someone over to play or include a pal in a special activity. Getting along with others makes school a lot more fun.

Source: Jolene L. Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, *What Young Children Need to Succeed*, ISBN: 1-57542-070-8 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

BUILDING MOTOR SKILLS

Making puzzles is easy

Doing puzzles is fun and educational. But once a child finishes a puzzle a few times, she wants to do something new. Homemade puzzles are an inexpensive solution. Make as many as you'd like in two easy steps:

1. **Have your child draw a picture.** Use the thickest paper you can find.
2. **Cut it into pieces.** Four parts is a good start for toddlers. Use more when your child seems ready.

For extra fun, consider using photos or other familiar pictures, such as the front of a cereal box.

Source: Paula Spencer, *Parenting Guide to Your Toddler*, ISBN: 0-3454-1181-1 (Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, www.randomhouse.com/rhpg).

SCREEN TIME

Stay on top of TV-viewing when away from home

As you strive to manage your child's television viewing, don't forget visits to friends' or relatives' homes. Be sure to:

- **Tell friends and family** that you're monitoring how much time your child spends watching TV.
- **Send your child** to another's house with books or toys if none will be available.



BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Praise attempts at writing

You didn't understand your child's first words. Likewise, your child's first writings may be a mystery. What if your child brings you his writing and expects you to read it? Ask him to read it to you. "Look what you wrote! Would you please read that to me? Then I'll take a turn and read it to you."



Source: Lu Mei-Yu, "Writing Development," ERIC Digest D159, www.ericdigests.org/2001-3/development.htm.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Avoid giving routines a rest

Q: We finally have a good routine going. Now here come the holidays! I don't want my child to have to start all over again in January!

A: Winter break can sometimes wreck routines, and many children struggle to readjust when it's over. Here are some ideas for keeping things on track this month:

- **Do not completely let go of routines.** There will be times when your child eats or sleeps at unusual times, but these are usually times or events you can plan for. The rest of the time, feed your child at the same time you usually do. Keep her traditional bedtime.
- **Stick to your rules.** The holidays are not a time to forget discipline and respect. In fact, the many changes in routine that often take place this season are even more of a reason to keep discipline unchanged.
- **Remind your child about school.** Some children think school has come to an end. So say things like, "Won't it be fun to tell Miss Jane about your trip to Grandma's when you go back to school?" Or, "When your cousins go home, we'll have one more day and night with just our family. Then we'll wake up and get ready for school."



PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching all about books?

Knowing about books—where to find the name of the person who wrote the book, where to find the title—is an important part of reading development. Don't force your child to recite new terms to you, but do talk about them in your regular reading time. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're introducing these ideas to your child:

- ___ **1. Do you begin** reading sessions by examining the book's cover together?
- ___ **2. Do you point** to the title and say, "This book is called ..."?
- ___ **3. Have you taught** your child that the author is the person who wrote the book?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to use the book's pictures to help him understand what's happening in the story?
- ___ **5. Do you trace** the words with your finger as you read them to show your child that you read from left to right?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means your child is on his way to learning about books. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz to change your answer to *yes*.

"What you teach your own children is what you really believe in."

—Cathy Warner Weatherford

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Find opportunities to build kids' responsibility

The upcoming break from school is a time for fun, relaxation and family togetherness. But that doesn't mean your child stops learning. This is a perfect time to reinforce responsibility. Your child can:

- **Be helpful.** He can fetch things you need. He can help you put things away. He can go to the mailbox with you and drop in letters or cards. He can call family members to the table.
- **Show appreciation.** Your child should of course say *thank you* if he receives a gift. He can also tell you what to write on a thank-you note or he can draw a thank-you picture.

DISCIPLINE

Restore calm before disciplining your child

Your child has done something wrong. She is so upset about what happened that she is nearly hysterical. What do you do?

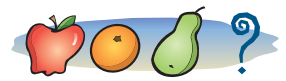
The answer is—wait. Be patient and help your child calm herself. Then focus on the original problem.

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

Sorting builds math skills

Sorting is an important math concept. There are many things your child can practice with at home

and on the go, such as laundry (socks, shirts, pants, etc.) and groceries (vegetables, fruits, dairy, etc.). Try sorting photos from magazines. Can your child separate pictures of people, animals and things? Use them to make a "sorting collage."



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