

# Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Teach your child to show appreciation

If your child is used to getting everything he wants, when he wants it, he is headed for trouble in school and in life. A respectful child appreciates what others do for him, and treats others well in return.

To foster an appreciative, respectful child:

- **Be a role-model.** Your child will do what he observes you doing. So let him know when he's being helpful. And let him hear you acknowledge others for making an effort or doing a job well.
- **Make *please* and *thank you* second nature.** Do not respond to requests until you hear the word *please*: "May I have a snack, *please*?" Insist that your child say *thank you* for anything he gets in person. Have him send a note (he can tell you what to say and you can write it for him) when he gets a gift.
- **Take it easy on material goods.** Does your child really need more toys? Is he "entitled" to a treat every time you go through the grocery store checkout? If you want to reward your child, spend time with him. This teaches him to appreciate people for themselves, not for what they can do for him.

Source: Peg Rosen, "Thanks, mommy!" *Parents* (Meredith Corp., 1-888-616-7679, www.parents.com).



## BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN

### Increase attention with several senses

Young children have naturally short attention spans. As they go through school, however, they are expected to pay attention for longer periods. To help your child with this, engage her senses. Encourage her to:

- **Look.** Instead of calling out directions from across a room, go to your child. Kneel down and gently tilt up her chin so your eyes meet. Then give instructions in a calm voice.
- **Listen.** A typical kindergarten rule is to listen quietly while the teacher is talking. This prevents distractions. Avoid distractions at home, too, (such as the TV) when you need your child's attention.
- **Touch.** Many kids concentrate best when they are doing hands-on work. For example, let your child turn the pages while you read. You might have her point to pictures, also.

Source: C. Drew Edwards, *How to Handle a Hard-to-Handle Kid*, ISBN: 1-57542-046-5 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

## BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

### Introduce written messages

Even before your child can write, she can understand that written words are a form of communication. Here are some ways to teach this lesson:

- **Write down stories** your child tells. Then read them back to her. She can even add pictures.
- **Make labels** for things your child uses often. For example, "bed" or "dolls."
- **Let your child** add to lists and notes. It doesn't matter if she scribbles. The point is to have fun.

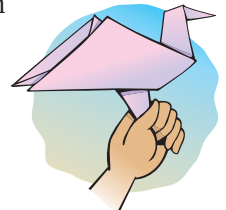
## MAKING TIME COUNT

### Indoor learning activities cure the winter blahs

"I'm bored!" Take advantage of winter days when your child is stuck indoors to plan fun activities—and watch the boredom disappear!

Get colored construction paper. Then:

- **Make** snowflakes, paper dolls or boats.
- **Cut** out geometric shapes—squares, circles, rectangles and triangles.



## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Encourage imagination

Ask your child silly, outlandish or logical questions to promote higher-level thinking. As your child verbalizes his thoughts, he becomes a better thinker.

Ask questions like:

- **What would happen** if the sun shone at night?
- **What would you do** if you found a dollar in the refrigerator?
- **Why do you think** trains are noisy?



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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Should preschoolers play organized sports?

**Q:** Whenever I am with other moms, the following questions come up: "Are you signing your daughter up for soccer? How about T-ball?" She's not even five yet! Are organized sports necessary at this age?

**A:** Of course not. Organized sports are not necessary at any age, although parents do seem to be starting kids younger and younger! Like nearly every part of parenting, this decision is best made according to what works for your daughter and for the whole family. If your child enjoys playing active games as part of a group, and you don't mind taking her to games, you may want to consider a team sport. But no more than once a week at this age! Just keep in mind:

- **If it's not fun, forget it.** Any sport at this age should emphasize playing for its own sake.
- **Safety first—always.** Equipment should match the preschooler's age and body: proper shoes, shinguards for soccer, helmets for T-ball.
- **While sports are optional, fitness isn't!** Children should be actively moving for about an hour every day. Encourage your child to walk, run, skip, ride a bike or tricycle, swim or do any active play she enjoys. And get out there with her!



## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you teaching your child to love?

This Valentine's Day, show your child love and teach him how to love. If there's a loving bond between you and your child, he'll be more confident—especially when it comes to learning. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're promoting a loving relationship with your child:

1. **Do you say** "I love you," every day?
2. **Do you explain** that you work hard because you love your child and want to take care of him?
3. **Do you tell** your child you discipline him because you want the best for and from him?
4. **Do you encourage** your child to show love for others?
5. **Do you teach** your child to care about animals?

**How did you do?** Each yes answer means your child is developing a sense of how to love and be loved. For each no answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"The hand that rocks the cradle may not rule the world, but it certainly makes it a better place."

—Margery Hurst

## DISCIPLINE

### Manage preschool tantrums

In the preschool years, increased verbal skills reduce the need for meltdowns. But tantrums can still happen. Try the three P's to deal with them:

- **Prevention.** Use those improved verbal skills and encourage your child to talk. "I'm very angry!" Teach your child to say words that convey his feelings. Then work together to solve the problem.
- **Parenting.** You're the adult, so watch your child when he's losing it. Wrap your child in a tight hug until he can stop flailing.
- **Praise.** When your child calms down, let him know you're proud that he did.

Source: Carol Baicker-McKee, *Fussbusters at Home*, ISBN: 1-56145-262-9 (Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 1-800-241-0113, [www.peachtree-online.com](http://www.peachtree-online.com)).

## READING READINESS

### Increase reading pleasure

When a beginning reader gets pleasure from reading, she's more likely to want to read. To make reading enjoyable, turn your child into the star. Use her name instead of the one in the book. She'll be tickled to be the main character.



## YOUR CHILD AND YOU

### Celebrate Valentine's Day

Spending time with your child is a great way to say *I love you* on Valentine's Day. Consider these fun activities:

- **Bake some** heart-shaped treats. Let your child help with measuring and mixing.
- **Make cards** for family and friends. Help him make an X and an O.
- **Help your child** think of rhyming words for *Valentine* and *day*.



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