

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Krys Croxall, Superintendent of Program
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

January 2010

DISCIPLINE

Self-control starts at home

Once your child starts school, he will be expected to show appropriate self-control. This is true even in kindergarten.

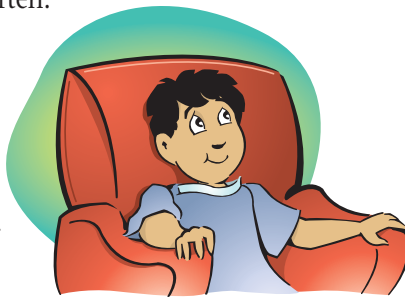
Your child will have more success if he learns to recognize when he is getting upset or overwhelmed and takes steps to control his behavior. You can help by teaching him to “take a break.” A break is different from a forced “time out.” It is a change to a more calming activity, or to a short rest period.

To implement break time:

- **Watch for signs** that your child may be about to lose self-control.
- **Take him aside** and tell him, “You are getting your angry look. That means it is time for a break.”
- **Take him to a comfortable place**, such as a nearby sofa or comfy chair. Stay with him or provide a calming toy, like a stuffed animal.
- **Praise him** for getting himself together when he is calm.
- **Suggest that next time** he gives himself the break.

With practice, your child will learn to monitor his behavior. Eventually he will learn that feeling angry means he needs a break.

Source: Carol Baicker-McKee, *FussBusters at Home: Around-the-Clock Strategies and Games for Smoothing the Rough Spots in Your Preschooler's Day*, ISBN: 1-56145-262-9 (Peachtree Publishers, www.peachtree-online.com).



USING OUR SENSES

Senses support pre-writing activities

You don't need a writing instrument for your child to practice beginning writing. The best “pre-writing” activities use your child's senses to learn.

To do this:

- **Take** your child's hand and make large movements in the air to form letters. Talk through your strokes. For a C, for example—“Start at the top. Make a large curve like a sideways smile.”
- **Sprinkle** salt, glitter or sand on glue to form letters on index cards. Have your child run her finger along each letter, making strokes in the correct sequence.
- **“Write”** a letter or number on your child's back with your finger. Let her guess what it is.
- **Take** turns writing letters in sand or shaving cream you've spread on a tray.

Source: Sandra Rief, *Ready-Start-School! Nurturing and Guiding Your Child Through Preschool and Kindergarten*, ISBN: 0-7352-0299-0 (Pearson Prentice Hall, www.prenticehall.com).

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

Questions teach proper times, places for behaviors

Help your child learn appropriate times and places for certain behaviors by asking—and answering—questions. For example, ask:

- **Is it okay to run** in a small shop? *No.*
- **Is it okay to run** at the park, as long as an adult can see you? *Yes.*

BUILDING CHARACTER

Kids learn from hero play

Preschoolers enjoy pretending to be superheroes. As superheroes, they learn about overcoming obstacles and being brave. They also learn to develop empathy. For super hero experiences:

- **Put safety first.** Set rules about kicking, hitting and other inappropriate behavior. Talk about actions that aren't safe—like “flying” indoors or jumping off a fence.
- **Stress the positive qualities** of superheroes—like kindness and helping others.
- **Support creativity.** Supply capes, maps and other props.

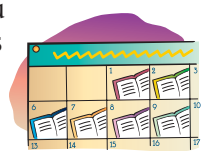


Source: Jolene Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, *A Leader's Guide to What Young Children Need to Succeed*, ISBN: 1-57542-071-6 (Free Spirit, www.freespirit.com).

READING READINESS

In 2010, read together daily

Research continues to show that reading to your child every day is one of the single most important things you can do to contribute to his school success. Set aside one part of every day for reading. (In many families this is bedtime.) Introduce new books or reread old favorites. You *and* your child will come to look forward to this time.

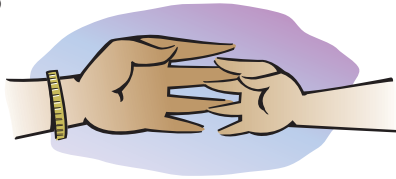


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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents handle preschool separation anxiety?

Q: My daughter has just gone back to preschool after a two-week winter break. She does well at school, but the moment she comes home, she will not let me out of her sight. She will not go to play at the homes of school friends anymore. She has a fit if I go anywhere without her. Why is this happening?



A: Going from a daily school routine, to a long winter break that may have included holiday festivities, back to a daily school routine, is a lot of change. Some children take longer to readjust than others do. Your daughter's clinginess is her way of letting you know she *needs* her routine.

It is not surprising that your daughter does well at school but shows her feelings at home. Children often "keep it together" outside the family. Your daughter reserves her clingy behavior for you—not just because she wants to be with you, but also because she knows you'll help her through this.

Be patient and take "baby steps." Begin with short separations when you are just in the next room. Then move to being in a different room for slightly longer periods. After a few weeks, your daughter will probably have bounced back.

PARENT QUIZ

Are you developing your child's creativity?

Children are naturally imaginative. But you can boost your child's creativity by encouraging him to try new things. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're doing the kinds of things that develop creative ability:

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| <p>___ 1. Do you give your child tools he can use to make or draw something?</p> <p>___ 2. Do you let your child make messes while working on creative projects?</p> <p>___ 3. Do you give honest and positive feedback to encourage future creativity when your child makes something?</p> <p>___ 4. Do you point out different types of art to your child? (Interesting pictures and sculpture. Architecture. Poetry. Songs on the radio.)</p> | <p>___ 5. Do you make up stories with your child?</p> <p>How did you do? Each yes answer means you're enhancing your child's creativity. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.</p> |
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"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep."
—Scott Adams

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Show how to make amends

Responsible people make mistakes. But responsible people also own up to their mistakes, apologize and try to fix them. To make amends, teach your child to:

- **Calm** down first.
- **Tell** you what happened.
- **Suggest** how to fix things.
- **Apologize**.
- **Carry** out the plan to make amends as best he can.

Source: Michele Borba, *Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids to Do the Right Thing*, ISBN: 0-7879-6226-0 (Jossey-Bass, a Wiley imprint, www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA).

BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN

Ability to stay on task is important in kindergarten

In kindergarten, children can't jump from one activity to another when they're frustrated or bored. To help your child:

- **Don't** let her give up on a difficult task. Encourage her to try again.
- **Don't** jump in immediately if she is struggling with a task.
- **Insist** she sit at the table for the duration of the meal.

EXPANDING YOUR CHILD'S WORLD

Inexpensive toys promote learning, exercise at home

Toys can be so expensive. But costly toys simply aren't necessary for fun or learning. Try enjoying these simple playthings with your child:

- **Blocks** and stuffed animals. They help children pretend.
- **Balls**. They encourage social play and exercise.
- **Puzzles**. They improve thinking skills.



Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares. Writer: Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005