

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

March 2010

## READING READINESS

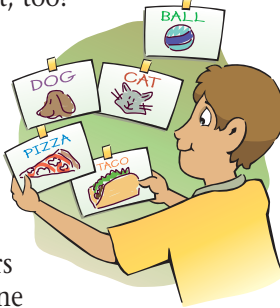
### Make learning to read exciting

Your child has most likely seen “big kids” and grown-ups deciphering words in books and newspapers. And now he wants to do it, too!

To make learning to read fun for your child:

- **Collect words.** Think of things your child likes—*dog, ball, pizza*—and write each word on a card. Draw a picture of the word on the card. After you have a stack of words, ask your child to sort them into categories—animals, food, etc. Or sort by beginning sounds.
- **Create “26 Friends.”** Put all the upper case letters of the alphabet on index cards. Give your child one letter—for example “D.” Say, “I’d like you to meet *dee*.” Add a new letter when your child is ready to “meet” a new letter.
- **Be dramatic when you read** with your child. Make noises. Adopt different voices. Act out scenes.
- **Point out words on signs.** The “stop” and “walk” signs. “Library.” “Tires.” See if your child can find the letters of his name in signs.
- **Attend story hours** at the library.
- **Encourage your child** to “read” to you by retelling a favorite story.

Source: Jill Frankel Hauser, *Wow! I’m Reading: Fun Activities to Make Reading Happen—Ages 3 to 7*, ISBN: 1-885593-41-4 (Williamson Publishing Company).



## HEALTHY HABITS

### Impact your preschooler’s future now

Many parents worry that their children will abuse drugs and alcohol as they get older. Worrying won’t keep these substances at bay, but there are things you can do now to help her say *no* to drugs later. Make sure your child:

- **Feels secure.** Tell her how happy she makes you feel.
- **Develops a healthy body.** Encourage her to wash her hands, brush her teeth and hair, eat healthy foods, etc.
- **Is self-confident.** Give her tasks she can do successfully. Tell her what a big help she is.
- **Understands the need** for rules. Explain why she shouldn’t handle medicines in your home.
- **Learns the difference** between fantasy and reality. Talk about characters in books and cartoons.
- **Learns responsibility.** Have her do small chores to “help the family out.”

Source: “Building Blocks Guide for Parents: Helping Preschoolers Grow Up Alcohol and Drug Free,” ED#459964 (American Council for Drug Education, U.S. Department of Education, [www.ed.gov/about/pubs.jsp](http://www.ed.gov/about/pubs.jsp)).

## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Preschoolers can learn to be considerate of others

It is natural for young children to think only of themselves. But you can:

- **Talk** about the needs of others. “This lady needs extra time to get through the door. Let’s stop and wait. Then we’ll go.”
- **Listen** to your child when she is talking. Remind her to look at you and listen when you speak.
- **Notice** when your child is considerate.

Source: Barbara A. Lewis, *Being Your Best*, ISBN: 1575-42063-5 (Free Spirit Publishing, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)).

## DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

### Promote educated guesses

Encourage your preschooler to make simple predictions. Here’s how:

1. **Ask questions.** Ask, “What will we see in the grocery store?”
2. **Discuss results.** “You said we would see apples and grapes in the store. You’re right! There they are.”

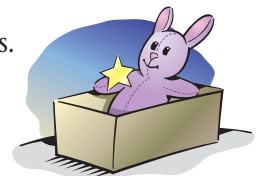


Source: Lilliann Alice Noda, June Mori-Shida & Nancy Chisato Adachi, *Off to A Great Start!* ISBN: 0-7802-4207-6 (The Wright Group, [www.wrightgroup.com](http://www.wrightgroup.com)).

## YOUR CHILD AND YOU

### Time together is ‘golden’

Spend St. Patrick’s Day (March 17) with your child enjoying a scavenger hunt for “gold.” Place a gold star or sticker on five of your child’s toys and other familiar items. Hide them (in fairly easy to find places) and encourage your child to find them. When he comes back with all his gold, celebrate together with a “green” treat—such as vanilla yogurt or pudding with a few drops of green food coloring.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

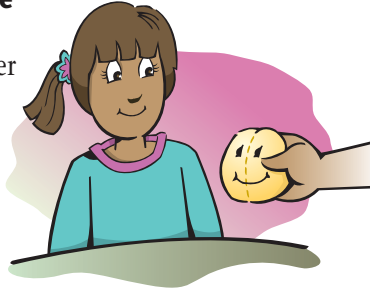
### How can parents teach children to share the teacher's attention?

**Q: My daughter's teacher says she gets upset when other children receive attention. How can I ease this before kindergarten, when she will have to share attention with even more children?**

**A:** Sharing attention is difficult. Your daughter may fear that her teacher only likes those children her teacher is paying attention to at that moment. Of course this is not true, but it's a hard concept for a young child to understand—especially if she's used to being the center of attention at home.

To help your child:

- **Practice sharing and taking turns at home.** Bring a small toy to the dinner table and take turns holding it. Whoever has the toy may speak. When it is not your child's turn, say, "I know it's hard to wait, but your sister's words are important to me. It will be your turn soon, and I will pay attention to you because your words are also important."
- **Attend story hour at the library.** Point out that the librarian is reading to all the children. Later, everyone will get a chance to ask a question. In the same way, her teacher wants all children to learn and enjoy school—and will take turns spending time with *each* child.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Are you raising a curious child?

Children are born with a desire to explore their world. They are curious, and they must remain so if they are to learn and grow. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging your child's natural curiosity:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you model** being curious? Do you wonder about things out loud?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you encourage** your child to ask questions? Do you say, "That's a good question!"?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you give** your child items he can explore, take apart and put back together?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you help** your child use a small magnifying glass to examine things?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you take** "adventure walks" around your neighborhood with your child?

**How did you do?** *Each yes answer means you're keeping your child's spirit of investigation and wonder active. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

"Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton asked why."  
—Bernard Baruch

## LEARNING THROUGH MUSIC

### Music key in development

Music is important for preschoolers. Singing and playing instruments increase reasoning and motor skills. Encourage your child to learn by imitation and fantasy. Don't ask your child to practice until he "does it perfectly."

To promote learning through music:

- **Make** up songs to activities around the house—cooking, picking up toys, etc.
- **Sing** phrases from story books. "Mirror, mirror on the wall ..."
- **Use** movement. Do finger plays like "Where is Thumbkin?" Play circle games like "Ring around the roses."
- **Keep** melodies and rhythms simple.

Source: Rahima Baldwin Dancy, *You Are Your Child's First Teacher*, ISBN: 0-89087-967-2 (CelestialArts, www.tenspeed.com).

## WELLNESS

### Parents need free time

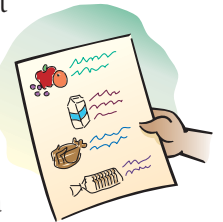
Parents often feel guilty if they do anything for themselves. But almost every parent can do a better job if she gets a break once in awhile. So exercise. Spend time with a friend. Pursue a hobby. And come back to your child refreshed and recharged.

## BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

### Show writing's purpose

To help your child see the purpose of writing, even before she learns to form letters:

- **Ask** her to "write" about a picture she drew. Don't worry about spelling or forming words.
- **Give** her a piece of paper. Ask her to write a shopping list with you.
- **Have** your child pretend she is a restaurant server writing down your order.



## Helping Students Learn®

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