

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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## KID BITS



### Attending school events

When your youngster brings home a notice about a program at school (play, open house, spirit night), have her post it on the refrigerator. Try to attend as many events as possible. You'll get to know her teachers and friends, and you'll show her how important her school is to you.

### Drive through the maze

A masking-tape maze is a fun place for your child to drive his toy cars—and to develop his spatial skills. Help him make the maze by arranging strips of tape on a kitchen or basement floor. He can label an entrance and an exit and add a few wrong turns.

### What do animals need?

Pets can teach your child that all living things have needs. Ask her to tell you what her pet (or a relative's pet) requires, such as food, water, shelter, and exercise. She could draw a picture of the animal along with everything it needs.

### Worth quoting

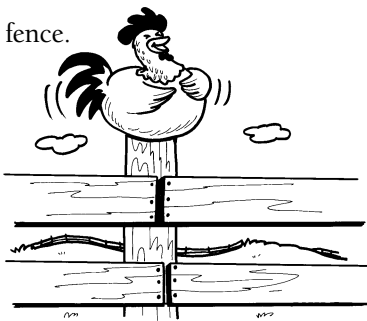
"There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it's going to be a butterfly."

*Richard Buckminster Fuller*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What runs around a farm but doesn't move?

**A:** A fence.



## Tips for better behavior

Every parent knows that whining, tantrums, and bossiness can be part of life with little ones. The good news is that as children get older and learn to control themselves, they usually outgrow these habits. In the meantime, here are tips from other parents to help you handle common—but challenging—behaviors.

### Whining

"I stumbled on this idea by accident. One day, my son was talking in a whiny voice, and I couldn't understand him. After I asked him to repeat himself three or four times, he finally spoke in his normal voice. Now when he whines, I say, 'I can't understand you unless you talk like a big boy.' It usually works like a charm!"

### Tantrums

"Casey's tantrums were exhausting for both of us until I learned to watch for 'triggers.' Now if I notice she's getting tired or hungry, we take a break or eat a snack. That way, I can usually head off a meltdown. When she does throw a tantrum, yelling or threatening a punishment



won't stop it—and giving in doesn't teach her not to do it in the future. The tantrums seem to end faster if I calmly move her to a quiet spot."

### Bossiness

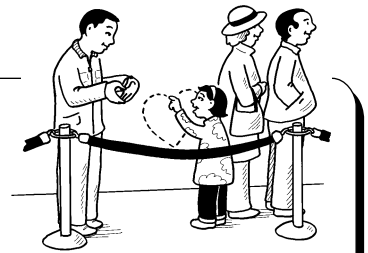
"Alex had a habit of bossing his little brother around. Evan was getting tired of it, so we came up with the 'question' rule. When Alex wants his brother to do something, he has to turn it into a question. Instead of, 'You sit in this chair,' he should say, 'Can you sit in that chair, and I'll sit in this one?' Of course, sometimes Evan says no, but at least Alex is learning to ask nicely for what he wants."♥

### Imagine and learn

You and your youngster need only your imaginations to play these learning games. Try one the next time you're in a waiting room or standing in line.

● **What's in my "bag"?** Pretend to take an object out of an imaginary bag and use it. You might act like you're putting on a pair of boots or cracking an egg, for example. Let your child guess the item, and then ask her to pick something from an imaginary bag for you to guess.

● **What am I drawing?** Secretly think of a simple object (say, a heart). Give your youngster step-by-step instructions for drawing it in the air with her finger ("Start at the bottom, slant up and left, then stop..."). How quickly can she figure out what it is? Next, let her give you something to "draw."♥



## We love music!

Did you know that music can help your child learn a variety of skills? Add a little singing, wiggling, and giggling to her day with these musical activities.

**Act out songs.** Let your youngster pick a song and make up motions to go with it. She could pretend to row a boat while singing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” Or she might sing “The Bear Went Over the Mountain” and climb an invisible mountain. She’ll practice listening to lyrics and thinking about their meanings.



**Dance with streamers.** Make streamers by tying lengths of ribbon to a key ring. Then, turn on the radio, and encourage your child to dance with the streamers. She could wave them quickly for a fast song or make long, sweeping motions for a slow one—she’ll learn to pay attention to tempo.

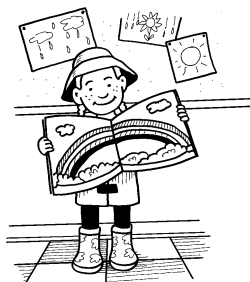
**Put on a parade.** Play upbeat music on the radio or your MP3 player, and take turns leading a parade around the house. With each new verse, the leader chooses a different way for everyone to move (march, skip, tiptoe). Your youngster will get exercise and build large motor skills.♥



## Q & A Show-and-tell: No toys allowed

**Q:** My daughter isn’t allowed to bring toys for show-and-tell. How can I help her think of other things to take?

**A:** The no-toys rule still leaves plenty of things for your daughter to share. Ask her what she has that is special or unique, like a family photograph or a pair of her baby shoes.



Another idea is to share something that’s related to a lesson at school. If she’s learning about weather, she might take a book on rainbows. Or when she studies dinosaurs, she could share a brochure that she got at a natural history museum.

After she picks her object, help her practice what she’ll say so she feels confident in front of the class. For example, she could explain what was happening in her photo or describe her favorite page in her book.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

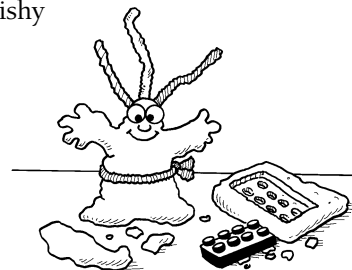
### Homemade play dough

Encourage smooshy and squishy fun by making your own play dough at home.

To whip up a batch, help your youngster measure and stir together 2 cups flour, 1 tbsp. cream of tartar, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup salt. Add 1 cup hot water and 2 tbsp. vegetable oil. Have him mix it with his hands until a dough forms. (If it’s sticky, he can add more flour, 1 tbsp. at a time.)

Then, suggest these ways to use it:

- Your child could mix in food coloring, glitter, or cinnamon. He’ll experiment with colors, textures, and scents.
- Encourage him to notice different textures. Have him walk around the house with a handful of dough and make impressions of objects. He might press a Lego or a button into the dough, for example.
- Let your youngster get creative. He can make silly creatures by adding pipe cleaners, wiggly eyes, and other craft items to the dough.♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Three’s company

My son David recently had his two best friends over. After a short time, I saw that two was company but three was complicated. Someone was always left out.

I asked their teacher for advice. She said that odd numbers of kids often need extra adult help to get along. If I stay nearby while they play, I can step in if one of them gets left out. She also said that planning activities ahead of time is a good idea.

The next time David’s friends came over, we were ready. It was a Sunday afternoon, when I wasn’t busy and could easily keep an eye on them. David set up a line of chairs to make a “school bus,” and when the children arrived, I suggested that they take turns being the driver.

They all got along for a while, and then I suggested they switch to a board game. The afternoon went much more smoothly this time—we discovered that three can be good company!♥



## OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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