

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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KID BITS



Family resolutions

Help your little one practice setting and meeting goals by choosing a New Year's resolution as a family. Pick something you can do together, like playing outside every day or making beds every morning. Your youngster gets to put an X on the calendar for each day that everyone sticks to your resolution.

Story star

The next time you read your child's favorite book, make him the star of the story. Replace the name of the main character with your youngster's name. After you read, ask him to draw a picture of himself doing something mentioned in the book. You'll encourage him to connect personally with the story, which can boost his comprehension.

Clean-up hint

Labeled containers make clean-up time easier. Cover empty oatmeal canisters or plastic jars with plain white paper. Then, help your child label each one to tell what goes inside (doll clothes, marbles). She could illustrate the labels, too. *Idea:* Tape labeled index cards to bigger containers (say, for pretend food or musical instruments).

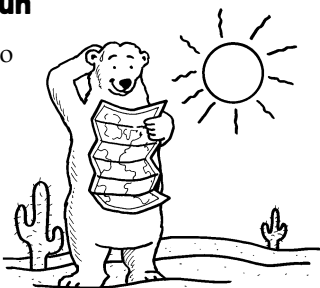
Worth quoting

"Laughter is an instant vacation."
Milton Berle

Just for fun

Q: What do you call a polar bear in the desert?

A: Lost.



Colorful learning

Let your child use a box of crayons to learn color names and observe colors in her world. Try these activities.

Take a walk

Have your youngster carry crayons along on a walk. Encourage her to look for something in nature that matches each crayon, and help her read the color name on the crayon. She might see a brown squirrel, green pine needles, and a blue sky. At home, she could use the crayons to draw a picture showing all the things she spotted.

Guess my crayon

Put a crayon behind your back, and give your child clues to guess the color you're holding. If it's orange, you might say, "The inside of a cantaloupe is this color." Or for purple, your hint could be, "Lavender and violet are shades of



this color." When she figures it out, it's her turn to pick a crayon and give you clues about its color.

Make new colors

Help your youngster make muffin-shaped crayons to see how colors mix. Put cupcake liners in a muffin tin, and have her fill each cup with broken crayons. She could place blue and yellow pieces in one cup and red and blue in another. Then, bake at 275° for about 15 minutes. Cool completely, and remove from the pan. What color crayons did your child create?♥

Be confident!

If your youngster has healthy self-esteem, he's more likely to try new things and bounce back from challenges. Here are ways to boost his confidence:

- Help your child focus on his own accomplishments rather than comparing himself to siblings or friends. For example, he might look at how he wrote his name on the first day of school and compare it to how well he writes it now.
- Allow your youngster to lead. When you spend time together, ask him what he'd like to do (play a game, build a fort). Or have him decide what kind of pasta (spaghetti, macaroni) your family will eat for dinner. You'll send the message that his opinion matters.♥



Great expectations

What do you expect your youngster to be able to do? Having appropriate expectations—and letting your child know what they are—will help him reach his potential. These tips can help.

Be realistic. Set expectations that your youngster is capable of meeting. For example, it's reasonable to expect a preschooler or kindergartner to use an "inside" voice in the house and to carry his backpack to school. But he might forget sometimes and need to be reminded.



Be clear. Let your child hear you talk about your expectations. You could say, "Everyone in our house helps out." Or let him overhear an expectation stated as a compliment: "Jesse always listens to my instructions."

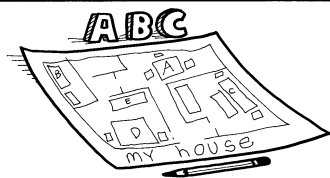
Be flexible. Your expectations should grow as your youngster grows. This year, you might expect him to go to school every day, and next year, perhaps you'll expect him to complete homework each evening. *Tip:* As he gets older, you can say things like "When you graduate from high school..." or "When you're in college..." ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

ABC hunt

Use this game to combine map-making with a fun alphabet hunt.

Materials: paper, pencil, magnetic letters



1. Help your youngster draw a map of your home. She can draw lines to show where each wall is and add shapes for other items, such as rectangles for beds and circles for tables.
2. Place magnetic letters, A to Z, throughout the house, marking the map to show where you put each one. For example, if you place an A under the kitchen table, write "A" on the table on her map. *Variation:* Think of a word, and hide just those letters.
3. Let your child follow the map to gather the letters.
4. Have your youngster put letters around the house and write them on a map—now it's your turn to find them. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

All kinds of jobs

After my daughter Allie learned about careers in school, she started talking about what she might be when she grows up.

Now when we go out, we look for workers and talk about what they're doing. At home, Allie pretends she's working, too. One time she played librarian, putting her books on a shelf and holding story time with her dolls. Another time she acted like a mail carrier, sorting our mail into stacks and delivering a pile to each family member.

We have also talked to relatives and neighbors about their jobs. My cousin teaches ballet, so she told Allie about her training and demonstrated some dance moves. And our next-door neighbor builds furniture—he let us see his workshop and showed us pictures of his favorite projects.

Of course, Allie doesn't know yet what she'll be, but she likes learning about people's jobs and thinking about what she might do one day. ♥



Q & A Getting enough sleep

Q: My son has a hard time falling asleep at night. How can I make it easier for him?

A: Getting enough sleep—10–12 hours a night—will help your son grow, stay healthy, and do well in school.

First, have him stick to a nightly bedtime routine. Your son might take a bath, brush his teeth, and listen to a story, for instance. Repeating the routine each night helps him recognize it's time for sleep. Also, research shows that

watching TV or playing video games close to bedtime can get kids wound up and keep them from sleeping. If he uses electronics, have him turn them off at least an hour before bedtime.

Finally, encourage the rest of the family to read or do other quiet activities after he says good night. Your son may have an easier time going to bed—and staying there—if he doesn't feel like he's missing out on the fun. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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