

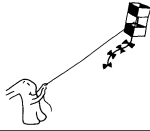
Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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KID BITS



Learning to wait

Try to be more specific than “just a minute” when your child must wait for you. *Example:* “I’ll watch your cartwheel after I put the laundry in the dryer.” He’ll know exactly what has to happen before you’ll be ready. Then, have him help you—it will make the wait seem shorter.

“I predict...”

Let your youngster practice making predictions. Ask her to complete a sentence like, “If I touch a soap bubble with a wet finger, it will _____” or “If I tickle myself _____.” After she tells you what she thinks, she can experiment with bubbles or tickles to check whether her prediction was right.

A trip to the dentist

Before your child’s next dental appointment, ease any fears by telling him what to expect. Explain that the dentist will count his teeth, look to see how well he’s taking care of them, and give him advice for keeping them healthy. Still nervous? Play dentist with his favorite stuffed animals.

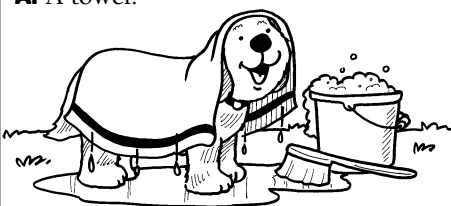
Worth quoting

“Imagination is the highest kite one can fly.” *Lauren Bacall*

Just for fun

Q: The more I dry, the wetter I get. What am I?

A: A towel.



A reader grows here

Your child starts the journey toward reading long before she can read on her own. Listening to you read will help her build early reading skills—and perhaps most important, develop a love of books. Snuggle up together, and try these suggestions to help her blossom into a reader.

Go for variety. Read a mix of stories, poems, nonfiction books, kids’ magazines, comic strips, and more. This will prepare your youngster for the different reading materials she’ll encounter in school and can turn her into a well-rounded reader.

Show the “direction” of reading. Pointing to words as you read—from left to right and from top to bottom—shows your child how books work. Plus, she’ll begin connecting the words you say with the print she sees on the page.

Talk about books. Pose questions to get your youngster thinking about what she’s reading. You could ask, “Who does the mommy duck remind you of?” or “What



did you learn about water that you didn’t know before?” These types of conversations will improve her comprehension of what you’re reading.

Experiment with rhymes. Read a rhyming book like *Time for Bed* by Mem Fox, and leave out words that rhyme. *Example:* “It’s time for bed little sheep, little sheep, / The whole wide world is going to _____.” Let your child fill in the blank (*sleep*). She’ll build *phonemic awareness*—the ability to hear sounds in words.♥

Family playtime

Has the grown-up world left you too tired to play? Consider these ideas that will help you connect with your youngster—and unwind after a long day:

- At bedtime, shine a flashlight on the walls, ceiling, and floor. Have your child “chase” your beam with his own flashlight. Then, trade roles.

- Show him what you liked to play when you were his age. You could teach him a card game, a jump rope rhyme, or a magic trick, for instance. Next, let him teach you a game or an activity he enjoys.

- Step into a role. You might each pretend to be someone else (a cashier and a customer, a bird and a squirrel) while carrying on a conversation. Encourage your youngster to think about what his character would sound like and what he would say.♥



Take your pick!

Grapes or carrot sticks? Park or backyard? Choices are part of daily life, but making them takes practice. Give your youngster opportunities to work on his decision-making skills with these tips.

Decide out loud

When you make a choice, let your child hear your reasoning. You might say, "If I wear a white shirt to the chili supper, it could get stained. I better wear a black top instead." He'll become familiar with the thought processes needed to make his own decisions.



Use "either/or" choices

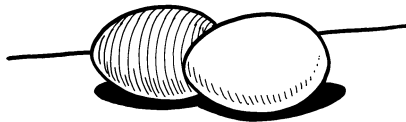
If you narrow down your youngster's options, you will keep him from becoming overwhelmed. Pick two choices you think he'd like. For example, ask if he wants to play catch or badminton or if he'd rather use watercolors or finger paints.

Let mistakes teach

As long as your child's decision won't hurt him, he can learn from a poor choice. Give a gentle reminder ("The last time you wore your boots to the store, you complained that they were uncomfortable"), but leave the final decision up to him. He may think more carefully the next time. ♥

Learn about differences

Children are naturally curious about differences. Use this pair of hands-on activities to help your youngster understand and appreciate others.



1. Show your child a brown egg and a white egg, and ask her what they have in common. She might say that we eat them, they come from chickens, and they have shells. Then, help her crack them into separate bowls. Now can she tell which egg had a brown shell and which had a white one? Point out that people, like the eggs, may look different but still share some traits.

2. Next, get two eggs of the same color, and hard-boil just one. When it cools, place the eggs side by side, and have your youngster try to guess which one is hard-boiled. Crack them to check. This will show her that eggs—or people—can appear to be similar but have qualities that set them apart. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Be a fort engineer

Building a fort—big or small—is a fun way for your child to learn about building and engineering. Try these projects.

Big fort. Let your youngster make a fort by draping a sheet or blanket over a card table or kitchen chairs. Then, encourage her to think of ways to improve her construction. She might add sheets or pillows to create more "rooms" or build a "porch." She'll practice problem-solving skills as she figures out how to keep the roof from caving in or the walls from falling down.

Little fort. Have your child create a miniature fort for her toy people. She could tape together sheets of construction paper and empty paper towel tubes. Suggest that she come up with ideas for making her fort bigger or stronger. For instance, if she adds a second story, she'll need to find ways to support the extra weight. ♥



Q & A Ready for kindergarten

Q: I just registered my preschooler for kindergarten, and we're both excited! What can I do to help him prepare?

A: Because your son is in preschool, he is already learning many skills he'll need in kindergarten, such as following directions and getting along with others.

Try asking his teacher whether he's on track for next year. She may suggest things you could do at home, like playing Simon Says

to work on listening or hopscotch to practice counting.

Also, plan to attend kindergarten orientation so your child can learn more about his new school. And as it gets closer to the start of school, visit a

nearby playground where he may meet children who will be in his class or grade. He will feel more comfortable on the first days of school if he recognizes a few familiar faces. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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