

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2017



KID BITS

Spring check-in

Help your child end the school year on a great note by checking in with his teacher. Call or email to find out whether there's anything he should work on before summer, such as writing his name or sharing toys. The teacher might explain how she's supporting him in school or suggest ways to practice at home.

Safety at play

With the arrival of warmer weather, your youngster may be zipping around more on her bike or scooter. Keep her safe by making sure she always wears a helmet. Each time she puts it on, do a quick check to make sure it fits, the strap is tightened properly, and it isn't cracked or damaged.

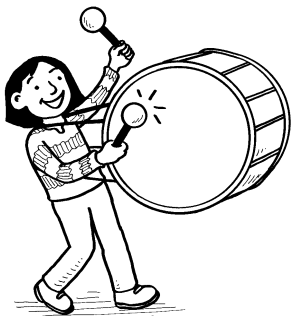
Taming screen time

A few small changes can help trim screen time from your child's routine. Start by turning off the TV when no one is watching. If it's on in the background all day, your child will probably want to watch. Then, if he asks to play with your phone or tablet, suggest an active game like tag or hide-and-seek instead.

Worth quoting

"The important thing is not to stop questioning." *Albert Einstein*

Just for fun



Q: You can make it but never see it. What is it?

A: Noise!

Math + nature = fun

"Let's go out and play—with math!" Sticks, rocks, seeds, and leaves are a few of the "please touch" materials your youngster can use to practice counting, measuring, and making patterns. Together, gather some objects from the ground, and enjoy these math activities.



Counting

Help your little one draw 10 circles on a sidewalk with chalk and number them 1–10. Then she can fill each circle with the correct number of natural objects. She might put a single feather in the "1" circle, two leaves in the circle labeled "2," three sticks in the "3" circle, and so on. She'll practice matching each number with the amount it represents.

Measuring

Have your child choose a stick and use it to measure bigger objects. Point to a low-hanging branch and ask "how many sticks long" it is. She could measure the length by moving the stick down

the branch end to end. Also, she might find little pebbles, all the same size, and measure how many pebbles long her stick is (say, "14 pebbles long").

Pattern making

Arrange items into a pattern (twig, acorn, dandelion, twig, acorn, dandelion). Your youngster continues the pattern by adding the next three items (twig, acorn, dandelion). Next, let her start a pattern for you to continue. Another idea is to leave an item out of the middle of the pattern—the other person's job is to add the missing piece.♥

Throw a dance party

The family that wiggles together giggles together—and gets active together! Try these dance ideas.

Change the tempo. As a song plays, have one person randomly shout, "go," "slow," or "freeze." For "go," dance at top speed. For "slow," show off your moves in s-l-o-w motion. If the leader says "freeze," everyone stops in place. Let a different dancer call out tempos for the next song.

Add a move. Stand in a circle. Your youngster does one dance move (a jump, a spin, a wiggle). The next person copies that move and adds a new one. Keep going around the circle, copying all the previous dance steps. (Help out if anyone forgets a move.) When you've all had three turns, perform the whole dance together.♥



Relying on myself

What should your child do when he makes a mistake? How can he find something to play with when he's bored? These strategies will teach your youngster to rely on himself more.

Solve problems. Oops, your youngster accidentally knocked over his sister's block tower or made crayon marks on the table. How could he fix the problem all by himself? Suggest that he pretend he's in a time machine so he can go back and "erase" what happened. He might



decide to rebuild the tower or wipe off the marks on the table. Then, it's time to put his plan into action!

Head off boredom. Does your child ask you for help because he doesn't know what to play? Together, brainstorm activities for when he's bored. *Examples:* Drape blankets over chairs to

make a cave, design "cakes" with play dough. He can illustrate a poster with the ideas and hang it on his bedroom door. If he's looking for something to do, he could pick one.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

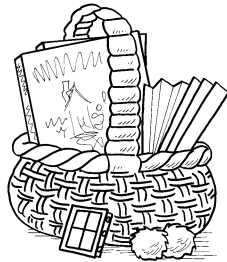
A basket full of poetry

A-tisket, a-tasket, create a poetry basket! When your youngster puts together her own poetry baskets, she will visualize what's happening in a poem and build reading comprehension skills.

Materials: children's poetry books, basket, household items

Select a poem to read aloud. Then, encourage your child to use a basket to collect objects related to the poem. If you read, "Cottony clouds seen out a window," she might get cotton balls from the bathroom and a miniature window from a block set. Or if the poem is about wind, she could fold a paper fan and wave it around to create wind.

Reread the poem, and let her use the items in her basket to act it out. She'll build reading comprehension as she follows along. Next, help your youngster read a new poem. This time, you can gather objects and act it out for her.♥



Q & A

Talk about bullying

Q: My daughter says that another girl is always mean to her at school. It sounds like bullying. What should I do?

A: First, try getting a little more information from your daughter. You might ask, "What does your classmate do that's mean?" Then, contact the teacher to share your child's concerns. The teacher can keep an eye on the situation and help you figure out what's going on.

This could be bullying, where a youngster with more "power" — perhaps she's a little older or more popular — hurts, teases, or excludes another child. Or it's possible the girls just aren't getting along.

Regardless, talk to your daughter about bullying. Let her practice being assertive. For instance, she can look her classmate in the eye and say, "I don't like it when you call me names. Stop." And tell her she should always go to an adult if she's scared or upset. If the problem continues, follow up with the teacher to discuss next steps.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Backseat learning games

Whether my sons and I are going to the store or heading out of town to visit relatives, we make the most of our car time by playing games along the way.

My three-year-old, Lance, is learning his colors so we invented a game called "Rainbow." We race to see who can find something to match each

stripe in the rainbow—in order. The first to get to violet wins.

Mason, who's five, is learning letters. We keep a bag of magnetic letters in the car, and the boys take turns choosing one. Then we see how many words we can spot on signs or buildings that start with that letter.

The games give us something to do together, and I'm glad the boys are practicing what they're learning in school.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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