

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2017

Mono County Office of Education - Dr. Stacey Adler
First 5 Mono County



KID BITS

What day is it?

This riddle activity can help your youngster learn the days of the week and understand *today*, *yesterday*, and *tomorrow*. Secretly pick a day (say, Friday), and give your child clues to guess it. *Example*: “If yesterday was Thursday, and tomorrow is Saturday, what day is today?” She could recite the days to figure it out.

Learning to give

Here’s a way for your little one to practice generosity. Together, check your youngster’s closet for outgrown pants and tops that are in good shape. Then, take him along to donate them to a shelter or a thrift shop. Participating in the whole process will help him understand what it means to give.

Serve yourself

Instead of dishing up food for your youngster, let her serve herself. She’ll learn to judge how much to take—an important skill for eating healthy portions. She will also practice scooping food from a dish and passing bowls and platters politely.

Worth quoting

“The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up.”

Mark Twain

Just for fun

Q: Why did the boy sprinkle sugar on his pillow?

A: So he’d have sweet dreams.



Rules that make sense

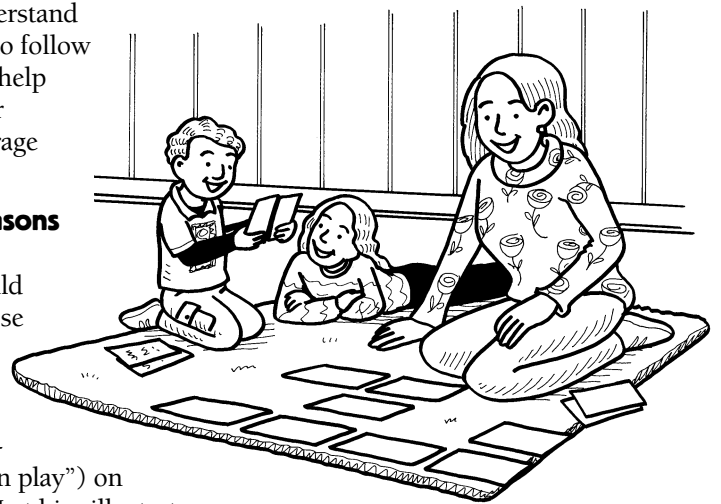
Children who understand rules are more likely to follow them. These tips will help you set limits for your youngster and encourage good behavior.

Match rules with reasons

Play this matching game to help your child understand the purpose of rules. Write each rule (“Share toys nicely”) and the reason (“So everyone gets along and can play”) on separate index cards. Let him illustrate them. Shuffle the cards, and place them facedown in rows. Take turns flipping over two cards—if the rule and reason match, keep them. When all the cards are claimed, the player with the most pairs wins.

Offer choices

When possible, give your youngster some control over his choices. He’ll feel more motivated to obey rules. Say he is allowed no more than 45 minutes of screen time each day. You could let him decide when and how to use it, perhaps



watching a 30-minute video after school and spending 15 minutes playing a computer game after dinner.

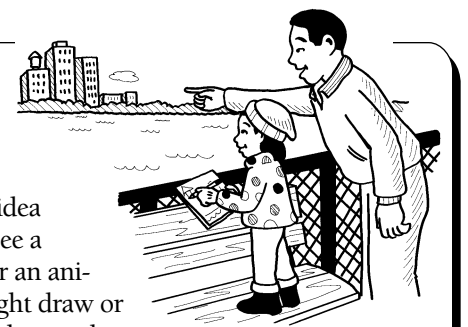
Be consistent

Your child will take rules more seriously if you always stick to them. Choose a handful of rules that really matter to you like “Speak nicely to each other” and “Help to keep our house clean.” If there are too many, it’s hard to enforce them all. Remind him of the rules if he breaks one, and follow through with a consequence—every time. ♥

What’s your idea?

Little ones are full of ideas. Encourage your child to express hers—and to try them out. She’ll stretch her thinking with these activities:

- Suggest that your youngster decorate an “idea notebook” to carry with her. Perhaps she’ll see a building she wants to recreate with blocks or an animal she’d like to write a story about. She might draw or write her idea in her notebook to use when she gets home.
- Let her be an inventor. Designing a pond for her rubber duck or making a parachute for an action figure involves coming up with—and testing—lots of ideas. ♥



Winter investigations

Your backyard is the perfect science lab for your youngster. Here's how to explore science while enjoying outdoor winter fun.

Mystery object. Encourage your child to pay close attention to the *attributes* of natural items—their sizes, shapes, textures, and weights. First, secretly slip an object (say, an acorn) into a paper bag. Let her reach in and describe it without looking. “It’s *small* and *round*. Part of it is *bumpy*, and part is *smooth*.” Can she guess what it is? Let her pull it out to check. Now, have her put something in the bag for you to investigate.



child draw and label a picture of what she sees. Then, fill the jar with fresh water and pick a new *specimen* to examine.♥

Magnified observations.

Fill a clear jar with water, and take it outside. Next, have your youngster drop in an object from the ground (evergreen needle, holly sprig). Replace the lid, and look through the side of the jar together. The combination of the water and the jar will magnify what’s inside. Suggest that your



Q & A The backup plan

Q: My daughter becomes frustrated when things don’t go as planned. Last week, she had a meltdown when her playdate was canceled. What will help her to take changes in stride?

A: “Flexible thinking” lets kids adapt when the world doesn’t behave the way they’d like. You can help your daughter develop this skill.



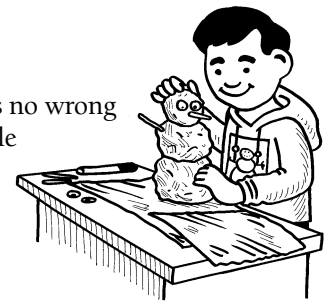
When things don’t work out, invite her to come up with a backup plan. For a playdate that falls through, you might have her think of two or three activities to do instead.

Let her hear you talk through your own disappointing situations, too. “I wanted to go to the gym today, but Dad needed the car. So I’m going to do this workout video instead.” Over time, your daughter will automatically think of alternatives rather than being “stuck” on whatever didn’t go according to plan.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Art explorer

When it comes to art, there’s no wrong way to do it. Allowing your little Picasso to squish, splatter, cut, and paste without a plan fosters creativity. It strengthens hand muscles, too. Consider this advice.



Provide different materials. Think beyond crayons, markers, and construction paper. You could offer your child cotton balls, aluminum foil, macaroni noodles, and toothpicks, to name a few.

Offer tips. It’s okay to give your youngster a creative nudge. For example, it might not occur to him to crumple aluminum foil into a ball to make a sculpture. Show him how, then step back and allow him to do his own thing.

Ask about his project. Instead of telling him what to make, or trying to guess what he’s doing, invite him to tell you about his creation. For instance, ask open-ended questions like, “If you gave your picture a title, what would it be?” or “How did you get the idea for your sculpture?”♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Holidays on a budget

Money is especially tight during the holidays, so I’m always looking for ways to save. This year, I decided to get my children involved so they would learn you don’t have to spend a lot to celebrate.

Instead of buying greeting cards, the kids designed a homemade one for each person on our list. Henry, who’s 4, drew pictures and added stickers.



Jess, who’s 6, wrote greetings inside, and then they both signed their names.

We also worked together to make gifts. The children and I enjoyed baking bread and framing family photographs for relatives. And we made gift bags by decorating brown paper sacks.

With everyone’s help, we’ll be able to stick to our holiday budget. And I think it will be more meaningful for the kids to give gifts and cards knowing they played a big part in making them.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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