

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2016



KID BITS

Too big for a booster?

Your little copilot may think booster seats are for babies. But while laws vary by state, an adult seat-belt won't fit her properly without a booster until she's at least 57 inches tall. Make sure your child knows that riding in her booster is an all-the-time thing—she must use it whether she's with you, with Grandma, or in a car pool with friends.

Label belongings

Finding your youngster's belongings in the school lost-and-found is easier if they are labeled. Use a laundry marker to print his name inside clothing and backpacks. For other items, help him write his name on self-stick labels. He can place them on water bottles, folders, or other things he takes to school.

Playtime character lessons

While pretending with your child, weave discussions about good character into your play. *Example:* "Uh-oh, Tammy Tiger broke the teapot. What do you think she should do?" (Admit her mistake and apologize.) This kind of role-playing makes big concepts like honesty and responsibility easier for your youngster to grasp.

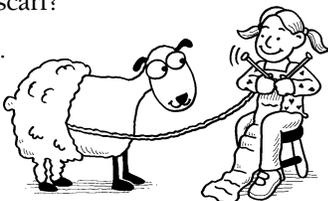
Worth quoting

"The expert at anything was once a beginner." *Helen Hayes*

Just for fun

Q: How many sheep does it take to make a scarf?

A: None. Sheep can't knit!



Watch me learn!

"I can say my ABCs!"
"Listen to me count to 10!"
Children this age are eager to show you what they know. Keep the learning—and the excitement—going with these suggestions.

Read along with me

Encourage a love of reading by making your child an active participant. If a story has repeated phrases, put him in charge of reading them. Pause before the last word of each line in a nursery rhyme, and have him supply it. Turn the tables at bedtime: Give him a book he knows by heart, and ask him to read it to you.

Make writing an everyday thing

Offer your youngster meaningful opportunities to write letters and words. If he pretends to be a rock star, request his autograph. Or if he draws a birthday card for a relative, ask him to dictate what he wants to say, and use a high-lighter to print his words. Then, he



could trace over the letters with a crayon or marker.

Just add math—to everything

Playing with math concepts will develop your child's number sense. Have him sort and count beads to make bracelets. In the grocery store, challenge him to spot every number, 1–10, on signs and labels. At snack time, he might explore shapes by connecting pineapple chunks or strawberries with toothpicks to form flat shapes (squares, triangles, rectangles) or 3-D ones (cubes, pyramids).♥

Keep in touch with the teacher

Support your youngster's education by building a good relationship with her teacher. Here are tips:

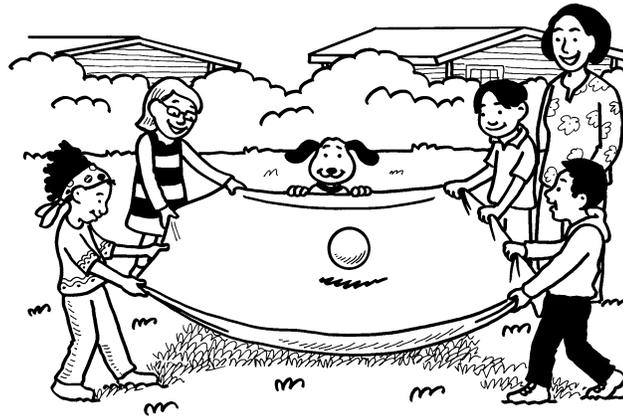
- Find out whether the teacher prefers to be contacted by note, email, or phone. Also, tell her the best way and time to reach you.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and meetings. But also reach out to your child's teacher at other times. Send a note thanking her for helping your youngster conquer a challenging skill (holding a pencil correctly, memorizing her address and phone number), and let her know about big changes in your family's life (new sibling, divorce).
- Visit or volunteer in the classroom or help out from home if you can. You'll get to know the teacher, and she'll appreciate the help.♥



Strategies for getting along

Use these hands-on ideas to help your child practice sharing, taking turns, and cooperating with others—skills she will need to use every day in class.

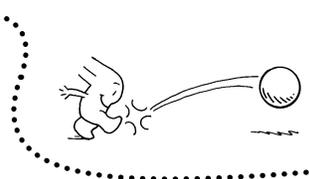
Sharing. Prepare your youngster to share classroom materials. You might dump out a pile of blocks and share them as you build side-by-side towers. Set an example by saying something like, “There’s only one purple block left. Do you need it?”



playing board games, roll a die, and let the person with the highest roll (or the lowest one) take the first turn.

Cooperating. Hold opposite sides of a sheet, place a ball on top, and lift the sheet up and down so the ball bounces. You’ll need to work as a team to keep the ball from falling off. Or play this silly version of musical chairs: Whenever you remove a chair, players share the remaining chairs. When you’re down to the last chair, everyone must pile on it together to win!♥

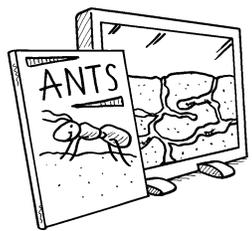
PARENT TO PARENT



Show-and-tell: Home edition

When my son Cooper started kindergarten, he loved show-and-tell day. So at home, we found a great way to get him talking about school—we played show-and-tell as he unpacked his backpack.

Cooper would show us a drawing he made and tell the story behind it. Or he might share a photo the teacher took of his play dough creation and describe it to us.



Sometimes, his show-and-tell led to even more learning at home. For example, after Cooper did an ant farm project last spring, we read library books about ants and looked for anthills at the park.

This year, Cooper’s little sister is in preschool, and now she gets to participate in show-and-tell at home. Both kids love the attention, and they are always eager to tell us how they spent their days.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

A rhyming stroll

What’s red and contains a word that rhymes with pop? A stop sign! Try this fun indoor-outdoor activity to help your child hear sounds in words.

First, have your youngster draw a big tic-tac-toe grid on a piece of paper. In each box, help her write a short word that rhymes with a few other words (examples: cat, hug, see, man, pop, wall).



Then, take a walk together through your neighborhood, and look for things that rhyme with each word on the paper. You might say, “There’s a trash can. Can rhymes with man!” And your child could notice children playing ball, and say, “Ball rhymes with wall.” For each item you spot, think of more words that rhyme with it, too.♥

Q & A Overcome separation anxiety

Q: My child cries when I drop him off at school and says he misses me during the day. What should I do?

A: Separation anxiety can last several weeks for some youngsters. Just remember that it is a normal stage, and try not to worry.

First, remind your child of other new places that he has learned to enjoy. Maybe he was unsure about daycare but now loves to go there after school. Or perhaps he didn’t want to leave your side at tumbling class but quickly found out how much fun it was.



Also, start a special good-bye ritual that you do whenever you drop him off. For instance, you could share an extra-long hug to last him (and you) all day. Then, make the separation easier by steering him toward an activity that you know he enjoys, like playing at the sand table.

One last tip: Be sure to ask the teacher for assistance. Chances are she knows a few strategies to suggest.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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KID BITS

The attendance habit

Students who have good attendance in preschool and kindergarten are likely to continue the habit throughout their school careers. Talk to your little one about why it's important to go to school—so he can learn about letters and numbers, finish his art projects, and play with his friends.

Family-night leader

Consider holding a weekly family night, and take turns picking activities to do. When it's your youngster's chance, she might decide where to go for a walk and what snack to bring. She'll practice making decisions, and you'll add variety to your evenings.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your child's brain is like a construction site. Every time he has a new experience, his brain creates new connections. The more experiences he has—like romping in the woods, visiting a craft store, or watching a school marching band—the more "building" is going on at the "construction site."

Worth quoting

"Some old-fashioned things like fresh air and sunshine are hard to beat."
Laura Ingalls Wilder

Just for fun

Q: How do you stop a dog from barking in your backyard?

A: Put it in your front yard!



Discipline with love

To encourage better behavior from your little one, you may find that gentle, loving strategies get the best results. Keep these tips in mind.

Remain calm

Take a deep breath before you correct your child. Then, try whispering instead of shouting. ("Close the door *gently* instead of slamming it.") To hear what you're saying, your youngster will need to slow down and listen carefully. *Bonus:* You'll set an example of how to stay calm even when you're frustrated or angry.

Be respectful

Giving your undivided attention when you talk to your child about her behavior shows respect. Kneel to her level rather than disciplining her from across the room. Acknowledge her feelings, but remain firm as you explain what she did wrong. ("I know you're upset that your brother won't give you his toy, but we don't pinch.")



Find the good

Your youngster naturally wants to please you, so when she behaves well, let her know that you noticed. ("You put your clothes in the hamper without my reminding you. That helps keep our house neat.") Positive reinforcement will motivate her to repeat her good behavior.

Tip: Use consistent consequences to get your child to follow rules. For example, if you take away a ball every time she throws it in the house, she'll learn not to throw it.♥

That's a-maze-ing!

Creating and playing with 3-D mazes gives your youngster's fingers a workout and strengthens muscles for writing. Here are suggestions.

● **Toy route.** Have your child arrange an obstacle course of small toys on a sheet of paper. He can use a crayon to create a path on the page by drawing around and between the objects.

● **Magnet magic.** Ask your youngster to make a maze on a cookie sheet with strips of masking tape. Place a paper clip at one end, and hold the cookie sheet while he steers the clip along the path by moving a magnet underneath the sheet.

● **Sweet or salty.** Give your child a toothpick and a plate of sugar or salt. He could use the toothpick to clear a path for you to follow with your finger. Then, trade roles.♥



Conversations that build vocabulary

Your youngster's vocabulary grows the fastest during his first six years—and a bigger vocabulary will help him do better in school. Expand his “word bank” by weaving new words into everyday conversations.

In the car... Use “fancy” words for familiar things. You could say, “The *florist* has a lot of daisies today” or “When the *pedestrians* get to the other side of the street, it will be our turn to go.”



At the grocery store... Name or discuss fruits and vegetables. You might point out *artichokes* and *nectarines* or explain that apples can be used to make *cobbler* or *cider*.

In the doctor's office... Use words that describe your child's experiences. During a checkup, for instance, introduce words like *stethoscope*, *vaccination*, and *reflexes*.

While doing chores... Be specific as you work together. Examples: “Please help me measure the *detergent*” or “Hold the candle while I dust the *sconce*.” ♥

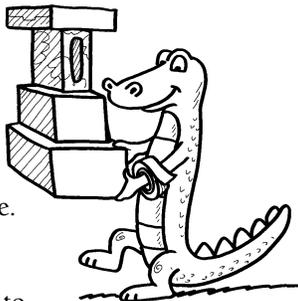
ACTIVITY CORNER

What's in a box?



Did you know that the cardboard box was inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame? Boost your youngster's creativity and imagination with these “ideas in a box”:

- Set out boxes of various shapes and sizes. Add a roll of duct tape. Your child can stack and tape boxes together to make all kinds of structures. Perhaps she'll build a cottage with a chimney, a castle with turrets, or a submarine with a periscope. *Idea:* Offer to cut flaps or windows if she needs help.



- Provide arts and crafts supplies like crayons, markers, glue, construction paper, tissue paper, and aluminum foil. Your youngster could color or cover a box to turn it into a striped circus tent, a shiny space station, or a brick apartment building. *Tip:* If a box is big enough, let her climb in and decorate the inside! ♥

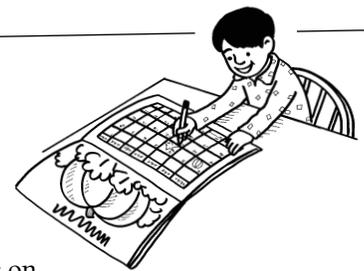
All ready with routines

Daily routines let your child know what to expect. Plus, they help him develop skills like time management, organization, and planning. Try these strategies.

Count down. Use a timer to keep your youngster on track when he's getting dressed or picking up toys. He may enjoy trying to beat a timer set for 5 minutes—and then trying to beat 4½ minutes tomorrow.

Clean up. Help your child come up with an organized way to store his toys. He might sort them by putting blocks into a basket, action figures into a shoebox, and books on a shelf.

Plan ahead. Let your youngster keep his own calendar and draw symbols on it to signify special days. For instance, on days he has music class, he could draw a drum. Together, check his calendar each night, and talk about his plans for the next day. (“You get to be the line leader tomorrow.”) ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

It's fun to be a good sport

My daughter Rosie had meltdowns when she lost games. When my other daughter Katie begged to play board games without her sister, I decided to ask the PE teacher for advice.

Mr. Jackson said that kids need to learn to lose—and win—gracefully, but what matters most at Rosie's age is having fun. So he focuses on players' efforts *and* their successes. For instance, if the class plays Duck, Duck, Goose, he cheers on students for trying hard as well as for catching other players.

Before our next board game, I encouraged Katie to congratulate Rosie on good moves. So she gave her sister a high-five when she captured one of my tokens. When Katie won and Rosie started whining, she said, “I know you're mad you lost, but wasn't it fun to capture Dad's tokens?”

It took a few games, but Rosie has started congratulating Katie on good moves, too. She's still not happy when she loses, but I think she's realizing that games are fun no matter who wins. ♥



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