

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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KID BITS



Library habit

Make library visits a regular part of your child's schedule. You might go on Mondays after school or every other Saturday morning. Read a book together while you're there, and then let your youngster check out books to bring home. Help her choose different kinds each time, such as fiction, poetry, biographies, nonfiction, or audiobooks.

Tower of manners

This block tower gets taller each time your child uses good manners. Put Legos or other building blocks in a bowl on the counter. When you hear him saying "Please" or "Excuse me," give him a block. Once he stacks 10, he can start a new tower. How many towers can he build?

Family puzzle time

Turn a jigsaw puzzle into an ongoing project. Get a puzzle at a dollar store or yard sale and encourage family members to work on it a little each day. Your youngster will learn to concentrate on a task, and he'll share in a sense of accomplishment when your family finishes the puzzle.

Worth quoting

"Children learn to smile from their parents."

Shinichi Suzuki

Just for fun

Teacher: Matt, why do you always get so dirty?

Matt: Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground than you are.



I wonder...

Children are full of questions. When your youngster asks you how the wind blows or why people have to sleep, she's showing you that she is eager to learn. Spark her curiosity and support her enthusiasm with these tips.

Show interest. Let your child hear you wonder aloud as you go about everyday activities. You'll show your own curiosity and give her new ideas to consider. When you ride in the car together, you might say, "I wonder what is in the back of that big truck." Together, talk about the possibilities (groceries, furniture).

Ask questions. Be on the lookout for things that will make your youngster think. For example, point out worms on the sidewalk after it rains. Ask, "Why do you think there are so many worms out now?" She'll probably have some interesting ideas.



Search for answers. When your child asks a question that you can't answer, say, "I'm not sure. Let's find out together." She'll see that you're still learning, just like she is. Explain that you can answer the question by reading a book, looking it up online (try www.askkids.com), or asking someone who might know.

Idea: If you don't have time to answer a question right away, help your youngster write it on a slip of paper. Put it into a "question jar" to take out later. ♥

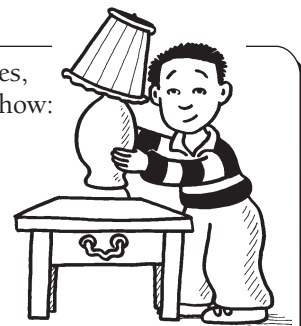
Telling the truth

"I didn't do it!" If your child stretches the truth at times, take the opportunity to teach him about honesty. Here's how:

- Make sure he understands the difference between what's true and what's not. "When you admit that you wrote on the wall, you're telling the truth. But if you say you put your toys away and you didn't, you're not being honest." It may help to read him a book about honesty, such as *The Berenstain Bears and the Truth* by Stan and Jan Berenstain.

- Notice when your youngster is honest. "I know it was hard for you to tell me that you lost your jacket. I'm proud of you. Now let's try to find it together." Your praise will motivate him to tell the truth next time.

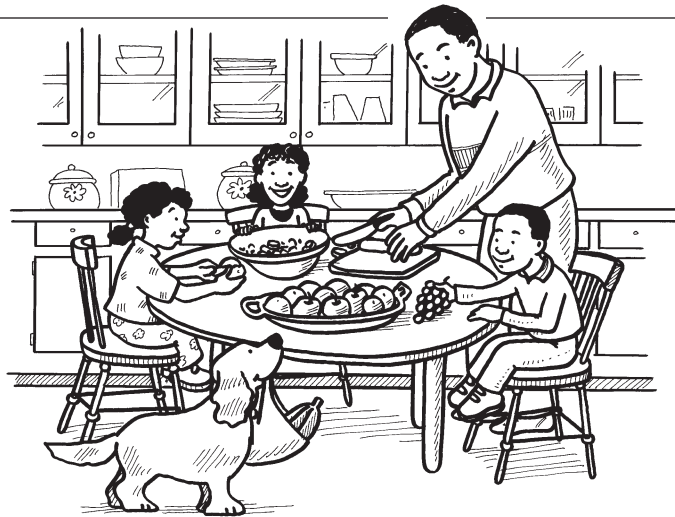
Tip: Let your child see you being honest. For example, make sure he hears when you tell a cashier that she forgot to charge you for an item. ♥



Siblings and friends

Sharing good times helps siblings get along. Your children can learn to enjoy each other's company with these ideas:

- Suggest that they work together to accomplish a task. For instance, they might make a fruit salad or stack newspapers for recycling. Having a common goal will strengthen their bond.



- Ask them to help each other with schoolwork. They'll learn to appreciate one another's talents. For example, an older child can teach a younger one to write the alphabet. And a younger child can be the audience when the older one is practicing an oral book report.

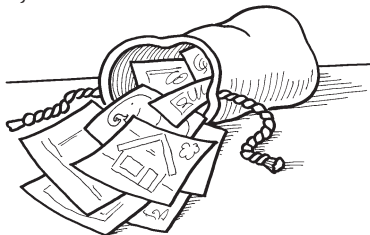
- Plan outings that all ages can enjoy. Have a picnic in the park, or go on a hike. Take pictures of your children having fun together, and post them on the refrigerator to remind them that it feels good to get along. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Story bag

Storytelling is easy and fun with this bag of pictures. You'll build your child's language skills and imagination.

Materials: old magazines or catalogs, scissors, bag

Ask your youngster to cut out at least 10 magazine pictures that she likes. Have her put them in the bag and pull out three pictures that she can use to tell a story.



Suggest that she start by saying, "Once upon a time..." and then tell what is happening in each picture. As she talks, encourage her to imagine details. For instance, if she says, "The girls live in the house," have her tell you what's inside and who else lives there.

Tip: Keep the bag handy so she can pull out a new combination of pictures whenever she feels like telling a story. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q & A

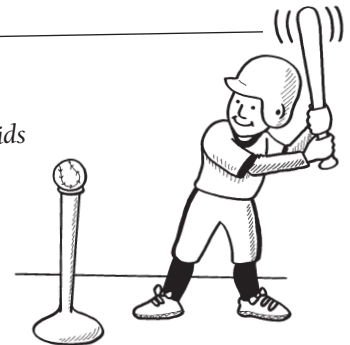
Organized sports

Q: Several of my neighbors are signing their kids up for soccer and T-ball this spring. Should I have my son try a team sport?

A: Joining a team is a great way for young children to get regular exercise and learn good sportsmanship. Since children mature at different rates, start by asking yourself several questions. Can your child take turns? Follow rules? Cooperate with other children?

If you think he's ready, talk with him to see if he *wants* to play. If he seems interested, you might look for a soccer or T-ball league through your local parks and recreation department or start with a class at a community center.

Keep in mind that sports for young children should focus on having fun and learning skills rather than on competing and winning. Also, find out how often games, practices, or classes are held—you'll want to be sure your youngster's schedule still allows for free play and time with family. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

From here to there

My daughter Maria loves to play with toy vehicles. So she was excited to take her favorite, a school bus, for show-and-tell when her class studied transportation. She told me the class had sorted their vehicles by whether they travel on land, in the water, or in the sky—and she wanted to try this at home.

We gathered up her toy vehicles, and she drew a picture on a poster board. She colored the land green, drew blue

waves for water, and added a yellow sun in the sky. Then, she put each vehicle where it belonged. A tractor went on land, a canoe on the water, and a toy helicopter in the sky.

We talked about other ways people travel, and she had some great ideas. She drew a camel on the land, a sailboat in the water, and a hot-air balloon in the sky.

Maria had fun, and she has learned that there are many ways to get from one place to another. ♥

