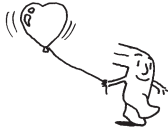


Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2012



KID BITS

Glove trick

It's easier for your child to swing from monkey bars or catch a ball when he wears gloves instead of mittens. But gloves can be a challenge for little ones to put on. Try turning a pair halfway inside out so he can see the finger holes. Help him place each finger in the correct hole and pull on the glove with his opposite hand.

Making good decisions

Teach your youngster to consider her options before she makes a choice. When she's faced with a decision, such as whether to pack or buy lunch, have her make a list of options. Help her write down different possibilities (turkey sandwich, macaroni and cheese) and then decide which is most appealing.

Clean language

Uh-oh. Did your child say what you think he said? Young children often experiment with "bathroom" words to get attention or seem more grown-up. Instead of making a big deal about it, calmly explain why he shouldn't use that language ("Some words are not nice and make people uncomfortable").

Worth quoting

"Children are our most valuable resource."

Herbert Hoover

Just for fun

Q: What has four wheels and flies?

A: A garbage truck.

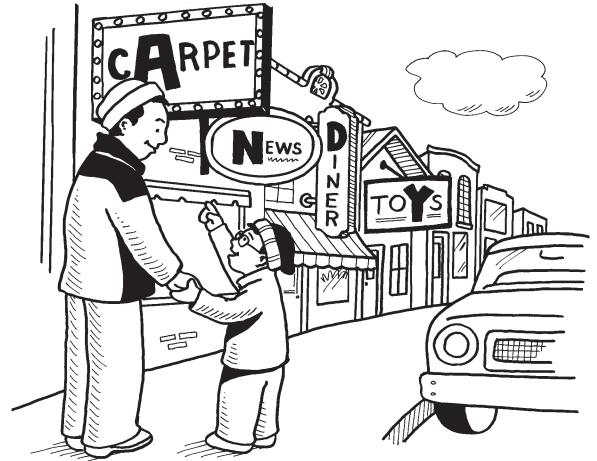


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I love to learn!

Learning can happen anytime, anywhere: during play, at dinner, and even in the grocery store! Try these ideas to make learning a natural part of your child's day:

- Use the weather to help your youngster make science observations. Watch or read the forecast together each night and have him draw a picture of what tomorrow's weather will be like (sunny, rainy). The next day, let him compare his picture to the weather. Was the forecast correct?
- When walking or driving together, your child can work on letter recognition and spelling. Ask him to find the letters of his name, in order, on signs that you pass. Once he finds all of them, call out words that he's learning (*bird, play*), and have him spell them and find their letters in order.
- Point out addresses on postcards, letters, and junk mail. Then, get a map and help your youngster locate the places.



For instance, look at the pizza parlor's address on a delivery menu and show him the street name on a map of your town. Or give him a postcard from his grandparents and search for their vacation spot on a map or globe.

- The next time you make a small purchase at the store, use the opportunity to work on recognizing and counting money. Tell your youngster how much you owe ("We need two dollar bills, three quarters, one nickel, and three pennies"), and let him pay the clerk.♥

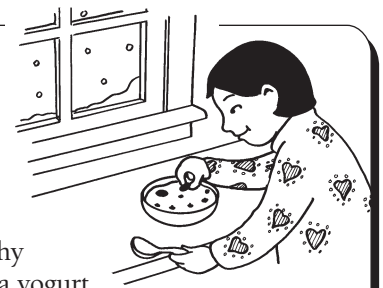
Family traditions

Traditions do more than build strong family ties. They also give your youngster a sense of security. That's because children are comforted by events that happen regularly. Here are a couple of suggestions.

Eat a special breakfast on snow days. Together, use cereal pieces, berries, granola, and other healthy goodies to make snowman faces in bowls of vanilla yogurt.

Celebrate birthdays by decorating your home. The birthday person will enjoy waking up to homemade signs, balloons, or streamers. *Idea:* Decorate her chair or place at the kitchen table.

Hold weekly game nights. Pick a night of the week, and take turns choosing a game to play. For example, you might play charades, "name that tune," or hot potato.♥



Practicing patience

Learning to wait patiently can be a challenge for little ones. Consider the following strategies to boost your child's patience in different situations.

Long waits

If you know in advance that your youngster will need to be patient, give her a heads-up ("Lots of people are sick, so we'll have to wait awhile to see the doctor"). Then, help her prepare. For instance, she might take along a doll, toy cars, or a container filled with Play-Doh.



Short waits

Helping your child develop a sense of time can make short waits more bearable. Before you make a phone call, give her paper, a pencil, and a watch with a second hand. Have her draw a star each time the second hand completes a minute. When you hang up, count the stars together to find out how long the call lasted. ("You were patient for six minutes!")

Unexpected waits

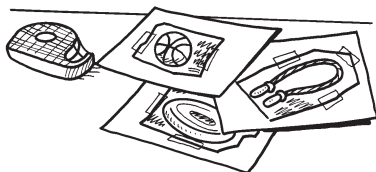
A long line at the supermarket, a traffic jam, or a playmate who's late can try your youngster's patience. Head off a meltdown by giving her something interesting to think about. For instance, you might make up a "What if?" story together. ("What if all these cars could fly?")♥

ACTIVITY CORNER What's my category?

This homemade card game will let your child practice sorting objects into categories.

Materials: magazines and catalogs, scissors, tape or glue, index cards

Together, cut out about two dozen magazine pictures of a variety of objects (bike, laptop, umbrella). Glue each one onto a separate index card.



Spread the cards out on the table and think of a category that several of the items could fit into. (A ball, a Frisbee, and a jump rope are toys.) Give your child two of those cards, and ask him to figure out how they're related. Can he find all the objects that could go with them?

When he has finished, switch roles. Have him select two cards, and then you guess his category and pick out items that belong. ♥



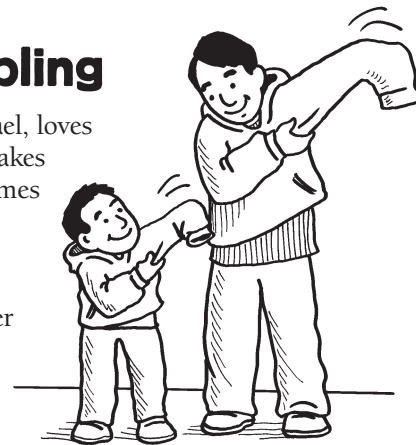
PARENT TO PARENT

"Copycat" sibling

My younger son, Michael, loves to imitate his big brother, Christopher. This makes Christopher mad. I can't tell you how many times he has yelled, "Stop copying me!" at his little brother.

One day when Christopher put on his jersey—one just like his favorite basketball player wears—I got an idea. I asked why he wanted to copy that player. He said, "Because he's cool." I pointed out that Michael feels the same way about his big brother. He likes to copy Christopher because he thinks he's cool and looks up to him.

Sometimes I still have to remind Christopher to be a "cool big brother," but his relationship with Michael seems to be improving. The other day when Michael tried to copy a Lego model he had built, Christopher suggested they make a city that included both models.♥



Pet lessons

Did you know that a pet can inspire your child to read, write, and do math? Here are activities your youngster can do with her pet or with a relative's pet:

- Read a pet-care book together. Your youngster will practice reading for information while she learns how to take care of animals.
- Suggest that she keep a journal from a pet's point of view. Help her write down what the

animal did ("I played fetch with my red ball and went for a walk around the block"). If she doesn't have a pet, she can write a new entry each time she visits a cousin's or neighbor's pet.

- Boost her math skills at feeding time. Have her count scoops of dog food or shakes of a can of fish flakes. She might also use a measuring cup to pour water into a cat bowl or hamster bottle.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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