

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

January 2012



KID BITS

Homemade stationery

Writing thank-you notes is extra fun when your little one makes his own stationery. Let him decorate paper by putting stickers or stamps around the edges. He can write, "Thank you," draw a picture of himself enjoying the gift, and print his name.

Guess the job

What do grown-ups do at work? Get your child thinking about jobs with this game. Name a worker that she has seen, such as a crossing guard, and ask her to tell you the tools that person uses (whistle, yellow vest). Then, think of another job, name tools for it (ladder, paint), and have her guess what the job is (painter).

Thinking of others

When you ask your youngster to tell you about his day, try taking it a step further: ask him to tell you something good that happened to another child. Perhaps a classmate celebrated a birthday or got a nice compliment from the teacher. This will teach him to think about things from others' points of view.

Worth quoting

"A problem is a chance for you to do your best." *Duke Ellington*

Just for fun

Q: What goes up and down but does not move?

A: Stairs.



I can do it!

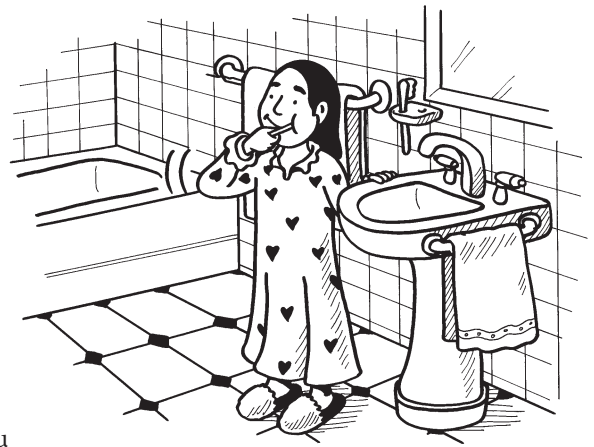
If your youngster is like most children, she wants to be treated like a big kid one minute and a baby the next. In her growth toward independence, both are normal. Here are gentle ways to help her take on challenges every day at home and school.

Set expectations

Let your child know what you expect her to do by herself, such as washing her hands and clearing her plate. When she asks for help, smile and say something like, "I know you can do it! Show me when you're all done." *Tip:* If you're not sure what she should be able to do, ask the advice of her teacher or another person who works with children. Her dentist can tell you whether she's old enough to brush without supervision, for instance.

Use teamwork

Provide backup while letting your youngster do as much for herself as possible. If she's making her bed, for example, suggest that she pull up the sheet



and blanket, and then you tuck in the sides. Also, try to set aside extra time while she's learning. When that's not possible, you might meet her halfway. ("I'll pull the seat belt across your booster, and you fasten it. On the way home, you can do the whole thing, and I'll just check it.")

Talk it through

Your youngster learns by watching you. So when you do things that she isn't ready to help with (drying her hair, peeling potatoes), explain the reason for each step. *Example:* "I'm putting part of your hair up so I can dry the bottom layer faster." Later, when you expect her to do it, she'll know how. ♥

Move, do, and understand

Teachers know that most youngsters learn best when they're moving around and exploring with their hands and bodies. You can encourage "active" learning at home, too, with these ideas:

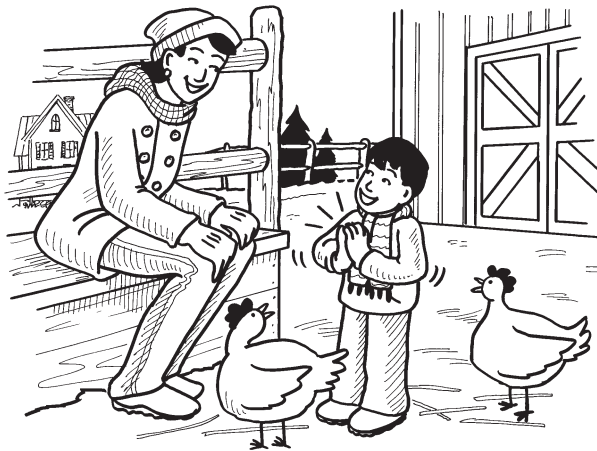
- Let your child play with a ball while he recites numbers or other things he has learned in math. He might count with each bounce or say a day of the week or a month of the year with each toss of the ball.
- Encourage him to act out vocabulary. If he's learning position words, for example, ask him to sit "under" a table, jump "over" his teddy bear, and walk "around" a chair.
- Make science happen. Explain that he can create shadows by blocking light with his hand. Together, form animal-shaped "shadow puppets" on a wall. For example, he can create a duck by keeping his fingers straight while opening and closing his hand. ♥



What's in a word?

Being able to pick out individual sounds in words can help your youngster become a better reader. Try these two games to work on rhymes and syllables:

- Let your child choose several three-letter words from a book and copy each one onto an index card. Together, come up with three words that rhyme with each of his choices and write each one on a separate index card. If he picks "red," you might write "bed," "fed," and "led." Mix up the cards, and lay them facedown in rows. Take turns flipping over two cards and helping your youngster



read the words aloud. If they rhyme, keep the pair. If not, flip them back over to end your turn. Play until every card is gone.

- Ask your youngster to think of a one-syllable word (phone) and to clap once as he says it. On your turn, clap twice while saying a

two-syllable word (chicken). Can your child think of a three-syllable word? If not, offer a suggestion, or let him begin the game again with a one-syllable word.♥

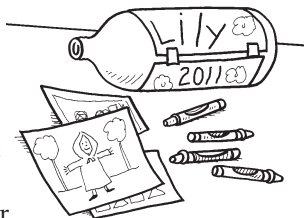
ACTIVITY CORNER Time in a bottle

Making a time capsule with your child is a good way to look back on her achievements in 2011 and get her thinking about what she'll accomplish in 2012.

Materials: clean 2-liter plastic bottle, crayons, construction paper, glue

Together, go through photographs and school-work from the past year. Ask your youngster to pick 5–10 favorites and tell you about them. She might include a photo from the first day of school, her drawing of a favorite book character, and a pattern she made in math.

Help her roll the items tightly together and slip them into the bottle. Let her make a label to glue on that includes her name and the year. Then, put the bottle in a safe spot (kitchen cabinet, garage shelf) to open one year from now. Encourage your child to think about what she might like to include in next year's capsule, such as a picture of herself riding a bike.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Getting started with homework

My daughter's teacher, Mrs. Hernandez, recently began sending home a monthly activity calendar. Layla has to choose 10 assignments from the calendar each month, such as writing her name in a rainbow of colors or searching for shapes in the refrigerator.

I was surprised because I didn't have homework at Layla's age, so I asked Mrs. Hernandez about it. She explained that homework helps little ones remember what they learn at school and encourages them to continue learning at home. She also pointed out that while Layla should do the activities on her own, it's okay for me to help and remind her.

We started by reading the calendar together, and Layla circled the things she wanted to do. I helped her find the supplies she needed and sat with her while she worked. This way, she knows that school is important, and I get to see what she's learning in class.♥



Q & A

Dealing with divorce

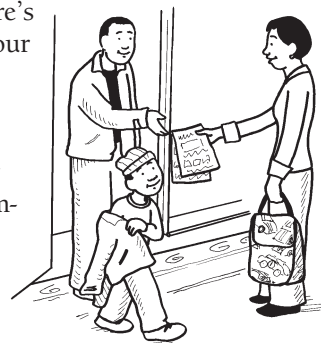
Q: My husband and I recently separated, and we're concerned about how the changes will affect our son. Should we bring this up with his teacher?

A: Family changes can be difficult for little ones, as they take comfort in predictable routines. Luckily, there's a lot you can do to help your youngster adjust.

First, it's important to share the news with his teacher so she can look for behavior changes. For example, your son might get frustrated or upset more easily. The teacher may recommend that he talk to

the school counselor about his feelings or join a "support group" for children whose parents are separated or divorced.

At home, try to continue a regular schedule. If possible, keep bedtime and rules the same at both houses. Also, communicate with each other about school. Pass along papers, and try to make sure you both attend school events (conferences, plays). Your son will be comforted knowing that even though you're apart, you're working together to make sure he's happy and successful.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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