

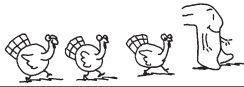
# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

November 2011

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## KID BITS



### Let's take a walk!

Encourage your child to enjoy daily exercise by making walks fun. Suggest that he move in different ways as you walk. He might swing his arms or clap his hands in time to his pace. Or he could march, skip, or gallop his way around the block.

### Be an inventor

Many famous inventions were inspired by everyday problems. For instance, umbrellas keep people dry, and erasers help us correct mistakes. Have your youngster think of a challenge she faces and imagine a product that would solve it. She can draw and color her creation and then share it with your family.

### Giving to others

Does your child know why people celebrate Thanksgiving? Explain that long ago, Native Americans and Pilgrims shared a feast—and your family can share food, too! Help him learn about generosity by picking out canned or boxed goods from your pantry or the grocery store to donate to a food bank.

### Worth quoting

"A good laugh is sunshine in the house."

*William Makepeace Thackeray*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why was the little girl happy that everyone called her Sally?

**A:** Because that was her name.



## Make time for family

Maria's grandparents come over for dinner on Sundays. Jack and his mother like to sing songs together in the evenings. And Kate's family tries to take a day trip at least once a month.

Sharing good times with loved ones gives your child a sense of belonging. Try these ideas for making family time a priority.

**Include everyone.** When relatives visit, find activities that children and adults can do together. Try an icebreaker such as "Who Am I?" Take turns stating a fact about a relative ("This person was in the navy"). The first player to guess who it is gets to describe another family member. Or ask relatives to share interests (knitting, coin collecting, yoga). Then, let your child tell her relatives about something she likes to do.

**Plan outings.** Look in the newspaper or online for free or low-cost family activities in your community. You might play bingo



at the fire station or attend a holiday parade. Whatever you choose, put it on your calendar to remind everyone that family time is an important commitment.

**Stay in.** Your family can enjoy each other's company without going anywhere at all. Have a sing-along. You might teach your youngster songs from your childhood and ask her to sing some that she learned in school. Or get a book or magazine and try something new together (origami, magic tricks, cupcake decorating).♥

## Raising a listener

Listening involves more than hearing—your youngster must also think about what's being said. Here's how he can practice listening at home:

- Show your child what a good listener looks like. Have him tell you about his day. Then, ask him how he could tell that you were *really* listening (you sat quietly, you looked at him, you smiled and nodded).
- When you give your youngster directions, ask him to repeat them in his own words. For instance, he might say, "Okay. I'm supposed to fill the dog's water bowl and give her a treat."
- Try making silly "mistakes" to encourage your child to listen carefully. *Example:* "Please put on your banana peels" (instead of "your shoes"). After a few times, he'll probably pay close attention so he can correct you!♥



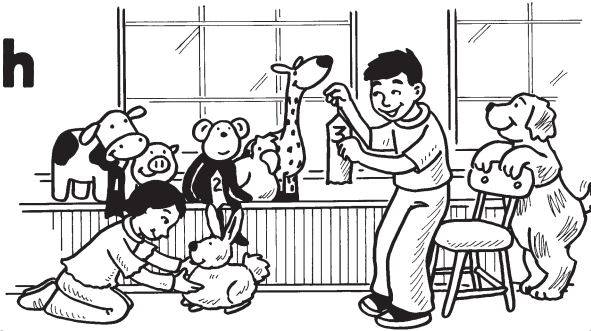
## Playing with math

These playtime projects can build early math skills and make learning about numbers fun.

### Pet show

Have your child display his stuffed animals in a pretend pet show. Encourage him to think carefully about how to arrange them—this will help him practice sorting and comparing. He might put them in categories such as farm animals (cow, pig) and rain-forest animals (monkey, snake). Or he could line them up from shortest to tallest.

Then, he can discover *ordinal* numbers (numbers that show order) by giving them 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-place awards



in various categories (softest, most colorful). He can pin the awards on the animals and display the winners in order.

### Carnival games

Homemade carnival-style games give your youngster practice recognizing numbers and counting. For one game, help him

write 1–10 on small objects (Ping-Pong balls, bottle caps) and put them in a bucket. Ask him to try to pick one up using kitchen tongs, say the number, and hold up that many fingers.

For a second game, use a clean, empty egg carton. Have your child write a number, 1–12, in each section. Let him try to toss 12 marbles into the cups, one at a time, in numerical order.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT



### Conference tips

Last week, my daughter's school sent home reminders about parent-teacher conferences. The note suggested involving children by discussing the meeting ahead of time.

I liked the idea of getting Alyssa's input. I told her that I was going to see her teacher to talk about how she was doing in school. Then, I asked if there was anything she wanted her teacher to know. I wrote down what she said: she wished her desk was near her best friend's, and she wondered when the class would take a field trip. I also jotted down a few questions of my own.

It felt good knowing what to talk about during the meeting. The teacher answered all our questions, and when I got home, I shared what she said with my daughter.♥



## Q & A

### Take a break

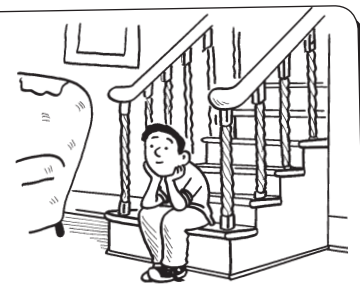
**Q:** Time-outs don't seem to work anymore for my son. How can I make them more effective?

**A:** A time-out gives your son a chance to calm down and start fresh. It works best if he understands why he is in a time-out and what he should do while he's there.

First, be specific—but brief—about why what he did was wrong. *Example:* "You can get hurt if you jump on the sofa." Next, explain that he needs to settle down before he can play again. You might suggest that he count to 10 or take three deep breaths.

When the time-out is over (experts suggest one minute for each year of age), change the subject by talking about what you're doing or what he could play with next. Then, try to catch him doing something well, and compliment him. He'll learn that he gets attention for good behavior—not for being in time-out.

*Tip:* Be sure to choose a time-out spot away from toys and the TV. Try a bottom step or a kitchen chair.♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Food placemats

Let your child add her creative touch to meals with a homemade placemat that features her favorite foods. As a bonus, she'll strengthen hand muscles she needs for writing, using scissors, and fastening buttons. Try these steps:

1. Ask your youngster to pick two colors of construction paper. Help her cut one piece lengthwise into 1-inch-wide strips. Then, have her fold the second sheet in half horizontally and hold it with the folded edge toward her. Starting at the fold, help her make vertical cuts that are 1 inch apart—and stop about 1 inch before she reaches the open edge of the paper.

2. Unfold the paper, and show your child how to weave the strips over and under through the slits. She should alternate so that every other strip begins above or below the first slit, to create a checkerboard-patterned placemat.

3. Let her decorate the placement. She can cut pictures of favorite foods from grocery circulars or old magazines. Then, have her glue them on.

4. Cover your youngster's placemat with plastic wrap, strips of clear packing tape, or clear laminate.

*Idea:* Suggest that she make one for each family member.♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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