

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Readiness Program
Intermediate Unit 1

October 2004

LEARNING THROUGH ART

Help your preschooler keep a journal

There are benefits to having your preschooler keep a diary. Young children have many emotional ups and downs. Describing them through words and pictures can help. It also helps kids notice the world around them and communicate with parents.

Start with an empty journal that you make or buy. Each day, have your child tell you what to write, such as "I feel happy because it's sunny." Or let her draw something. If she isn't sure what to include, questions like these can help:

- **What did you do** that was fun today?
- **What did you do** with your friend?
- **What did you learn** or see?
- **Did anything make you** angry or sad?

Don't pressure your child to share her feelings—just have fun. Reread entries and make positive comments.

Source: Susan Perry, *Playing Smart: The Family Guide to Enriching, Offbeat Learning Activities for Ages 4-14*, ISBN: 1-57542-095-3 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).



BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Nurture your preschooler's confidence

Independence is critical to your child's success in school and in life. To nurture your child's self-reliance, build his confidence. Here's how:

- **Welcome his suggestions** about which activities to do.
- **Encourage him** to take on responsibilities when he's ready, such as getting dressed and brushing teeth.
- **Ask him to help out.** He might enjoy putting away dishes or sweeping, for example.
- **Allow him to get frustrated** sometimes as he learns. Don't fix problems before he has a chance to solve them himself.
- **Give choices.** Ask, "Which shirt would you like to wear? Red or blue?"
- **Relax** when he tries something new and fails. Say, "That's okay! I'm proud of you for trying."
- **Compliment** him when he does things by himself.

Source: Bobbi Conner, *The Parent's Journal Guide to Raising Great Kids*, ISBN: 0-553-37873-2 (Bantam Dell Publishing Group, 1-800-726-0600, www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell).

DISCIPLINE

Use a gentle touch to get your preschooler's attention

To discipline children, you must get their attention. But this shouldn't be done harshly. **Sheila Deutsch** of **Moon Trip, Pennsylvania**, found that these steps work:

- Kneel on your child's level.
- Look into her eyes.
- Ask her in a soft voice to hold your cheeks with her hands.
- Discuss the situation calmly.

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

Begin teaching about time

Kids can't fully understand "time" concepts as preschoolers. But you can help by:

- **Explaining.** "Tomorrow is after you go to sleep and wake up."
- **Showing.** "When the minute hand touches five, it's time to go."

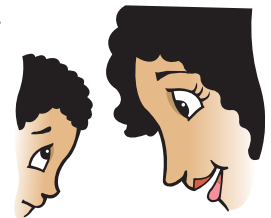


BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Let your child know you notice positive behavior

As a parent, it's natural to correct your child's poor behavior. But it's important to notice good behavior too. This encourages him to keep it up!

- Be sure to:
- **Thank your child.** "You took your plate to the sink without being asked. Thanks!"
 - **Compliment efforts.** If your child makes his bed, don't worry if it's not perfect. Praise him for trying his best.



Source: Cathi Cohen, *Raise Your Child's Social IQ*, ISBN: 0-9660366-8-9 (Advantage Books, 1-888-238-8588, www.advantagebooks.com).

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

When should library visits start?

Q: My child is only three. Is it really important to introduce him to the library now?

A: It's never too early to start visiting the library. If you have one close to home, try to go weekly. You'll probably be impressed by what it has to offer.

Free programs and services often include:

- **Parent-child storytimes** for all ages.
- **Performances for kids**, including puppet shows, musical acts and films.
- **Contests** that involve reading books.
- **Audio recordings** of stories and songs.
- **Educational videos**, cassette tapes, CDs and DVDs.
- **Kids' magazines** (and parenting publications for you).
- **Computer games** that build school skills.

While libraries encourage a love of books, they can also build skills, such as paying attention, sitting in a group and treating others' belongings well. Parent groups may meet at the library, too. For example, some branches host parenting support groups and expert speakers.

Source: Kathryn Perkinson, "Helping Your Child Use the Library," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Library/index.html.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching your child to think?

Thinking skills develop through practice. Here's a quiz to see if you're boosting your child's thinking skills.

Give yourself five points for something you do often, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- ___ **1. I ask my child** questions about stories. "What do you think will happen next?"
- ___ **2. I talk with my child** throughout the day. "Can you see the red bird in the tree?"
- ___ **3. I sort things** with my child. "Let's separate the black socks from the white socks."
- ___ **4. I give my child** simple choices. "Would you like broccoli or corn?"

___ **5. I ask** for my child's ideas. "What kind of face should we draw on the pumpkin?"

How did you score? Twenty or above is good. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Use the ideas in this quiz to boost your child's thinking abilities.

"We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own."
— Ben Sweetland

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

A kitchen timer helps children with taking turns

It's not easy for children to share. If your child has trouble with this, try using a timer. One child gets a toy for two minutes and then the other gets a turn. It's amazing how this can put both kids at ease.

Source: *The Riverside Mothers Group, Don't Forget the Rubber Ducky*, ISBN: 0-671-51125-4 (Pocket Books, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

BUILDING MOTOR SKILLS

Build muscles to get your child ready for writing

Building your child's finger muscles will help him with writing later.

Try these activities with him to help build fine motor skills:

- **Draw** with chalk on a sidewalk.
- **Paint** with brushes or fingers.
- **Build** with connecting blocks.

Source: Thomas Armstrong, *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Multiple Intelligences*, ISBN: 0-87477-466-7 (Putnam/Penguin Group, 1-800-526-0275, www.penguinroup.com).

YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Make time for your child

Children need time to play independently. But they also need attention from you. Consider doing these fun things together:

- **Color pictures.** Then have family members use them as placemats.
- **Sing** wake-up or bedtime songs.
- **Bake a treat.** Allow your child to help as much as possible.
- **Play store.** Take turns being the customer and the shop keeper.
- **Read a favorite story** as many times as she'd like.



Source: "Kids Just Want to Have Fun," *Working Mother*, June/July 2002, Working Mother Media, 1-800-627-0690, www.workingmother.com.

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