

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



November 2014

Early Intervention Program
Intermediate Unit 1

Help your child get ready to read: Demonstrate how reading works

Few things enable children to succeed in school like strong reading skills. Reading is important to nearly every subject your child will study. Though it may be some years before your preschooler is reading, research says there are things you can do now to improve his reading readiness. Make it a habit to:

- **Read aloud to your child.** For best results, read together every day. Reading aloud can improve your child's vocabulary and other literacy skills. What's more, it encourages his love of reading as he looks forward to spending this daily special time with you.
- **Show him how print works.** Point out that you start on the left side of the page and read to the right side, then begin again on the left. Making your child aware of the way printed pages are structured can improve his reading ability later.
- **Show him how words work.** Explain that they are made up of letters. Point out familiar letters, such as the first initial of your child's name. Help him see the connection: "Apple starts with the letter A. That's the same letter that starts your name, Andrew." As he learns the letters, move on to familiar words. Learning how letters and words work now can help him read, spell and understand books later on.



Source: J. Rasicot, "Study: Tweaking Reading Aloud Could Boost Reading Skills Later," Education Week, niswc.com/print-works.



Copying shapes is good writing practice

In preschool, your child may be using paper and pencil for tracing or other writing tasks. Practice will help her develop the small motor skills she needs.

To develop your child's writing skills at home:

- **Keep paper and pencils, markers and crayons handy.**
- **Start with circles.** Show your child how to copy a circle. This is a good skill for children ages three and four to practice.
- **Move on to crosses.** Once your child has mastered circles, she can try to copy a vertical line crossed by a horizontal line.
- **Copy squares or stick figures.** Children between ages four and five might work on these shapes.
- **Advance to letters.** Copying letters is usually a late preschool skill.
- **Keep it fun.** Preschoolers need to enjoy learning activities. They don't need to be drilled.

Source: T. L. Liddle, *Why Motor Skills Matter: Improve Your Child's Physical Development to Enhance Learning and Self-Esteem*, McGraw-Hill.

Engage your child's senses

Children learn naturally by using their senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. So offer your child plenty of opportunities to try out all five:

- **Wonder aloud.** "What do you think that cooking smell is?"
- **Shop together.** Notice how foods look, feel and smell. Talk about how they taste.
- **Play I Spy.** Ask your child to guess things you see, hear, smell and feel.



Source: "Activities: Exploring Our Senses," PBS Parents, niswc.com/smell.

Preschool + you = good start

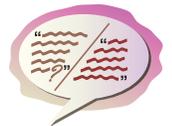
Research shows that children from all backgrounds benefit from preschool. To help your child get the most from this early learning:

- **Communicate regularly** with the teachers. Ask what you can do at home to reinforce what your child is learning.
- **Promote good attendance.** Be sure your child arrives on time and well-rested.
- **Make preschool a priority.** Talk to your child about things he is learning.

'Private speech' can help your child learn

Have you noticed your child talking to herself? Researchers call this "private speech" and it is probably doing your child good. Private speech helps some children:

- **Stay on task.**
- **Improve behavior.**
- **Work out frustrations** verbally, not violently.
- **Practice communicating.**



Source: "Preschool kids do better when they talk to themselves, research shows," ScienceDaily, niswc.com/private.



How do I help my shy child develop more social skills?

Q: We recently attended our first preschool parent-teacher conference. Overall, our daughter is doing well. But the teacher had some concerns about her social skills. Our daughter has always been outgoing, but it seems she has turned shy this year. How can we help?

A: It's great that your child is doing well in preschool. The shyness may have to do with her adjustment to a new environment. It takes some children longer than others.

There are several ways you can help your child build social skills:

- **Arrange a playdate** with a classmate outside of school. Ask your child if there is someone who smiles and seems friendly. If you're not sure how to contact the other parent, ask the teacher to pass a note along.
- **Play with her yourself** so she can practice being social in a safe environment. Model greetings, sharing and other skills for her. "That looks like fun. May I play, too?" "You have the blue dinosaur. I'll take the red one." "What should we cook in the play kitchen today?"
- **Consider a new activity.** Does your local community center have classes for young children? Your child might meet other kids with common interests. Children are sometimes more at ease in these environments. This can boost confidence, which often carries over to school.



Put peer pressure in its place

Even preschoolers face peer pressure. In one study, a majority of four-year-olds were influenced by one another's actions—even when they didn't agree with them. To boost your child's ability to stand up for herself:

- **Discuss problems.** Talk about classroom struggles. Role-play solutions using dolls or stuffed animals.
- **Encourage her to get help.** Say, "If you're not sure what to do, ask the teacher."
- **Set an example.** If others are doing wrong, do the right thing, and mention it.

Source: "Peer pressure in preschool children," Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, niswc.com/stand-up.

Allow for independence

Now that your child is in preschool, he may want to do more "all by himself." It may try your patience, but giving him a little more independence can motivate him. When your child tries out new skills:

- **Tell him you believe in him.**
- **Praise and encourage efforts,** not just results. He needs to know it is good to try, even if things don't work out.

Open up and sing, sing, sing

Singing is a wonderful way to expand the communication between you and your child—and most children love to sing. To have fun together while building language skills:



- **Sing nursery rhymes.** Look for them in books or online. Teach them to your child and sing them together daily.
- **Sing rounds.** In a round, each person begins singing a few beats after the person before. Try *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.
- **Sing along to your favorite music.** Make sure lyrics are age-appropriate.

Source: B. Daniel, *The Playful Preschooler: 130+ Quick Brain-Boosting Activities for 3- and 4-Year-Olds*, Carson Dellosa.



Are you keeping discipline positive?

There is more to effective discipline than establishing consequences for bad behavior. Most of the discipline you do should involve encouraging *good* behavior. Answer *yes* or *no* to see if you are providing positive discipline:

1. **Do you make rules** that are fair and age-appropriate, so your child can remember and follow them easily?
2. **Do you enforce the rules** consistently, so your child knows that begging won't change your mind?
3. **Do you tell your child** what to do, instead of what not to do? "Use your words" is better than "Don't hit."
4. **Are your corrections** respectful? "You left the toy on the floor. Please put it away."
5. **Do you model behaviors** you want your child to learn?

How well are you doing?

Each yes answer means you're using discipline in a constructive way. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them."

—Lady Bird Johnson

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