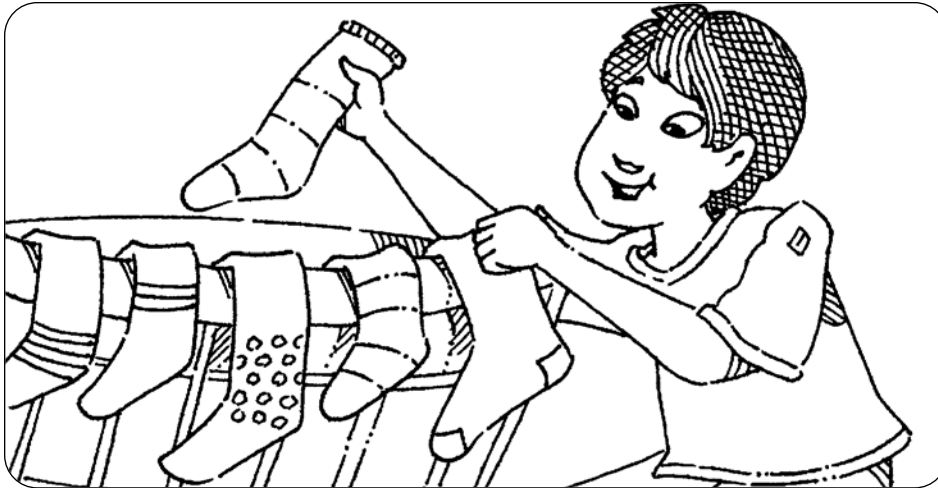


# Early Childhood Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Education Service Center Region 15

## make the difference!



## Boost your child's intelligence with enriching experiences

**M**ore and more research is showing that a child's intelligence—once thought to be a fixed number and determined by genetics—actually grows and changes through childhood and into adulthood. And parents play a critical role—not just in the genes they pass onto their child, but in the experiences they give their child.

Keep these points in mind:

- **Learning by doing is a key.** To you, sorting socks may just be laundry. But when your child does it, he is learning to compare and classify. Setting the table helps your child recognize patterns. Measuring ingredients helps him practice a key math skill. Even mixing a salad builds motor skills and a feeling of self-satisfaction in accomplishing a task.

- **There is huge brain growth** in the preschool years. This is the time to lay a foundation—not to dump academic knowledge into your child's head. Instead, talk to your child often. Take him places with you. Encourage play. Read together daily.
- **Relationships matter.** A child who feels connected to other people is also likely to be a child who feels connected to learning. Show your child your love with words, actions and facial expressions. Listen closely when he talks. Make eye contact. Give undivided attention when you can. This helps to create a secure child who takes on learning challenges with confidence.

Source: Anne Stuart, "Can You Boost Your Child's IQ? What makes kids smart may surprise you," WebMD, <http://children.webmd.com/features/can-you-boost-your-childs-iq>.

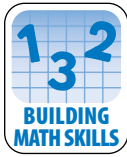
## Create summer rituals with your preschooler



Many families have rituals during winter holidays. But kids thrive on having family rituals at any time. This summer, create at least one summer family ritual. You can:

- **Look for a swimming pool** near you. Try local parks, community centers, recreation centers and affordable fitness centers such as a YMCA or YWCA (no particular religious affiliation is required). Go swimming at least one day each month.
- **Check the newspaper** or the Internet for local carnivals, fairs, festivals or fireworks displays. Choose one that you and your child would both enjoy. If your child has fun, tell her you'll come next year as well.
- **Plant flowers.** You can do this in a garden or in a windowsill flower pot.
- **Have a picnic** to celebrate the first day of summer. This is usually around June 20. Explain to your child that this is also the day of the year when we enjoy the most minutes of daylight.

# Help your child learn key math skills by playing with shadows



Making shadows will probably amuse and delight your child. Little will he know that he is also learning about

measurement, time and space. All you will need is a sunny day, a piece of chalk and a sidewalk or driveway. However, having a few objects such as a ball, a block and a pencil or crayon will add more to the experience. Some ideas:

- **Draw an X on the sidewalk** or driveway. Have your child come back several times throughout the day and stand on the X. Each time, draw an outline of his shadow. What is happening? What can he tell you about what he observes?
- **Take each of your objects** and move them in several different ways. Ask your child to tell you

about the shadow shapes he sees as you turn the objects.

- **Have your child hold** the crayon and then crouch down. What does the crayon's shadow look like? Now have him stand as tall as he can and hold the crayon as high over his head as he can. What does the shadow look like now? Ask your child to tell you about at least one way the shadow has changed.

Source: Grace Davila Coates, Jean Kerr Stenmark, *Family Math for Young Children*, ISBN: 0-912511-27-3 (Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California at Berkeley, 1-800-897-5036, www.lhs.berkeley.edu).

**“Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.”**

—Maria Montessori

# Use simple discipline methods to prevent big problems



Your child does something wrong, and you tell her to “cut it out.” She ignores you and keeps it up. You raise

your voice and say something you regret. What started as a small problem has become much bigger. To prevent this common pitfall:

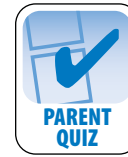
- **Enforce reasonable rules.** Make a few key rules and stick to them. Consistency makes it easier for kids to cooperate.
- **Allow give and take.** Your child has opinions, and it's helpful to compromise sometimes. But stand your ground when it really counts.
- **State things positively.** When possible, tell your child what to do

(“Put your hands in your lap”) instead of what not to do (“Stop grabbing!”).

- **Set a good example.** Discipline works best when parents are calm. Show your child how to stay cool when angry.
- **Criticize carefully.** Talk about your child's behavior, not your child. Say, “That comment was rude” instead of “You are rude.”
- **Focus on success.** Notice what your child does well. Give specific compliments. “You put your art supplies away. You're taking good care of your things!”

Source: Armin Brott, “Discipline Ideas That Really Work: How to Teach Your Kids Without a Power Struggle,” iParenting, www.momstoday.com/articles/discipline/discipline-ideas-that-really-work-1784.

# Are you building your preschooler's independence?



Parents are naturally protective. But it's also important to let children explore the world.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the

questions below to see if you're balancing your child's safety and freedom:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you supervise** your child's playtime with friends without hovering over them?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you let** your child make simple choices, such as “Would you like to wear shorts or pants?”

\_\_\_ **3. Do you give** your child a chance to solve minor problems before you step in to help?

\_\_\_ **4. Do you show** interest in your child's opinions and respect them, even if you disagree?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you play** with your child and encourage independent play?

\_\_\_ **6. Do you allow** your child to make small mistakes and learn from them?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* answer means you are encouraging independence. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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# Give your child opportunities to solve problems every day



Your child has the ability to think. But how far he takes this ability will depend on how much practice he gets.

In these early years, no one is in a better position to stimulate your child's thinking than you are. Keep these pointers in mind as you provide your child with practice thinking and solving problems:

- **Help him anticipate.** "Put your toys away right now!" may in fact result in your child doing what you commanded. But it doesn't do much to engage his brain. Instead, try, "I am going to set the timer for three minutes. I want you to get as many toys put away as you can before the timer rings." Now your child has time to think: "It's time to put the toys away. What should I put away first? Where should I put my toys?"

- **Question, question, question.** Few activities make your child think more than having to answer questions—with more than one word. Make a habit of asking your child "why?" Hint: This is easily done—just turn his own "why" questions back on him. If he asks, "why are you getting your umbrella," ask him, "why do you think I am getting my umbrella?" Just be careful not to do this with other adults!
- **Do not immediately run to the rescue.** If your child says, "I can't get my shoe on," give a suggestion instead of rushing to do it for him. Example: "What would happen if you pulled on the shoelaces to make them looser?"

Source: Michael H. Popkin and others, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, ISBN: 1-880283-15-8 (Active Parenting Publishers, 1-800-825-0060, www.activeparenting.com).

# Recognize the signs of possible learning problems in your child



Learning disorders in young children can be hard to spot. Many learning disorders, such as disabilities in reading, may not be diagnosed

until a child is in third grade. At that age it starts to become clear that a child has a real problem and is not just showing immaturity.

Still, parents should be aware of some signs that point to possible problems, even in young children. Observe your child. Then speak to her teacher about your concerns.

Your child may have a problem if she:

- **Has trouble paying attention**, when compared to others her own age.
- **Is four or five** and most people outside the family cannot understand her speech.
- **Is four or five** and cannot draw a stick figure or use scissors at all.
- **Can't remember** things she should know well, like her teacher's name.
- **Is four or five** and cannot count more than one or two objects.
- **Is not interested** in other children.

Source: Edward L. Schor, *The American Academy of Pediatrics: Caring for Your School-Age Child Ages 5 to 12*, ISBN: 0-553-37345-5 (Bantam Books, 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell).

**Q:** My child will switch this summer from a school-based child care to a home day care near my work. She will be commuting with me, and it will be much more travel than she is used to. Can you please give me some ideas on how to make this manageable, and maybe (if I am very lucky), even productive?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Changing routines is challenging for young children. But change is often good—especially when you and your child can spend more time together. Consider these tips to make the time enjoyable and enriching:

- **Start with a well-rested, well-fed child.** Even in the summer, your child should stick to a reasonable bedtime if she is going to be getting up to commute with you. Get her in bed early enough to ensure at least 11 hours of sleep. Wake her in time to eat breakfast. Pack a mid-morning snack, too.
- **Remember safety is first.** If you are commuting by car, your first priority is to pay attention to your driving. Your child should be in the back seat and buckled into an appropriate child safety seat. If your child needs immediate attention, you should pull over to a safe place. Do not try to drive and attend to her at the same time.
- **Keep a list of activities** for travel time. Vary them throughout the summer. Try audio books for the car. If you are on a bus or train, use this time to read to your child. Have your child count blue cars or red trucks. Sing (if it won't disturb others).

—Maria Koklanaris,  
The Parent Institute

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Help your child finish school year with confidence



When a child finishes kindergarten, there's a mix of emotions. And entering first grade is exciting—and sometimes a little scary—for

families. Parents may wonder, "Is my child really ready?"

Talk with your child's teacher. Review what he has accomplished. Discuss ways you can help. Ask questions such as:

- **Does my child seem comfortable** separating from me for the school day?
- **Is my child's attention span** long enough for class activities?
- **Can my child cut, glue, write and do other age-appropriate, small-muscle tasks?**
- **Is my child communicating well** about important topics, including his needs?
- **Can my child identify and use** letters, shapes and numbers?
- **Can my child recite** his birthday, age and address?
- **Does my child follow directions** that include several steps?
- **Does my child get along well** with peers and staff?
- **What can I do to encourage** my child's progress?

Also remember that kids' abilities vary a great deal at this age. Focus on helping your child have fun and do his best. If your concerns about first grade remain, share them with the school. The sooner they're addressed, the better.

Source: "Parenting Pipeline," North Dakota State University Extension Service, [www.ext.nodak.edu/extnews/pipeline/k-apr-w.htm](http://www.ext.nodak.edu/extnews/pipeline/k-apr-w.htm).

## Keep learning alive for your child over the summer months

Your kindergartner has worked hard all year, and you want her to retain what she's learned. But you also want summer to be relaxing. To combine learning and fun:

- **Have a family spelling bee.** Give your child words that match her skills. Older players should have words that are right for them.
- **Read together** and discuss what you read. Choose books, poems and magazines your child will enjoy.
- **Make math part of your day.** Count how many steps you climb, measure ingredients, and look for numbers everywhere.
- **Answer questions** about science and nature. ("What if we mixed red and yellow paint?" "Why



does that toy float in the bath?" "What kind of bug is that?")

- **Make connections to history.** Tell family stories about the past. Visit a museum. Talk about how the world has changed.

Source: Dana Sullivan, "How to prepare your child for 1st grade," parentcenter, [http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0\\_how-to-prepare-your-child-for-1st-grade\\_67236.pc](http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0_how-to-prepare-your-child-for-1st-grade_67236.pc).

## Make reading enjoyable for your child during the summer



The lazy days of summer are perfect for reading, whether it's by a pool, at the beach or at home after a tiring

day. If you're planning a vacation or day trip, you can also read about your destination. To make reading appealing to your child:

- **Visit the library regularly.** Beforehand, consider what topics appeal to your child. Then ask the librarian to help you find books about them. Check out audio books for long drives. And pick up a schedule, since many libraries offer special events for children.
- **Bring books everywhere.** See how many silly places you can find to read. Read on a walk, at bath time, during dinner and with relatives you visit. Keep books handy so you can surprise your child with "DEAR" (Drop Everything and Read) time.
- **Make your own book.** Keep track of summer fun in a homemade scrapbook. Have your child draw pictures of his favorite activities. Let him write or dictate captions. Add photos, stories, mementos and other special features, such as a list of books you've enjoyed. Keep everything in a binder—and read it together!