

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Arroyo Grande United Methodist Children's Center
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KID BITS



Safe in the car

When your youngster outgrows her car seat, it's time for a booster seat. Remind her to sit up straight to keep the seatbelt in place across her shoulder. And keep in mind that most states require a booster seat until a child is 8 years old or 57 inches tall.

Color-of-the-week box

Fill shoeboxes with small objects to teach your child colors. First, help him cover a box with construction paper in a color he chooses. Throughout the week, let him add items of that color. A red box might include a maple leaf, a fire truck, and a red ribbon. Next week, he can make a different-colored box.

Cheer her on!

Help your youngster make up a cheer for motivation when she's faced with a challenge. For instance, if she's struggling to write her name, she might cheer each letter ("Give me a K!") as she prints it. When she's learning to hit a baseball, she could make up a chant like "Feet apart, face the plate, step, and swing!"

Worth quoting

"It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice."

Anonymous

Just for fun

Teacher: Can a kangaroo jump higher than the Empire State Building?

Student: Yes. A building can't jump at all!



Loving guidance

To encourage your child's best behavior, gentle words go a long way. It may help to think of discipline as guidance rather than punishment—let your youngster know that you're there to help him stay safe and make good choices. Try these tips for guiding him in the right direction.



Tell your child what he can do. He'll be more likely to listen if you give an alternative ("You can play with your new football in the basement so nothing in the living room gets broken"). Also, consider his attention span ("We have to stay in our seats during the recital, but you can play outside at intermission").

Explain rules to your youngster. It will be easier for him to accept limits that he understands. If he throws sand, for instance, you might take him aside and

say, "Sand stays in the sandbox. It hurts when it gets in our eyes." If he doesn't follow your rule, choose a consequence that will make sense to him (getting out of the sandbox).

Correct your child gently. Use a soft voice, or even a whisper. You'll help him stay calm, and he'll have to listen closely to hear what you are saying. Of course, you'll need to raise your voice in a dangerous situation. Later, you can explain ("You scared me when you got too close to the street"). ♥

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow

Your day is full of opportunities to help your youngster understand the passage of time. Here are three ideas:

● At breakfast, talk about what she might do that day. "You said you started a painting *yesterday*. Do you think you'll get to work on it *today*?"

● After dinner, look at the school lunch menu together. Show her how to find today's date, and then read tomorrow's menu. "Today is Thursday, so *tomorrow* must be Friday—pizza day!"

● Before bed, help her check the weather forecast. Ask her to tell you what it will be like tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. "Tomorrow will be sunny, but *the next day* it might rain." ♥



Musical kids

Carly sings along with the car radio. Denard plays toy instruments and pretends he's in a band. Michael listens to his favorite CD while he falls asleep. Music teaches youngsters a variety of skills—and it can be a lifelong source of enjoyment. Spark your child's interest in music with these suggestions:

- A song such as "Down by the Bay" can teach your youngster to recognize rhyming words, an important pre-reading skill. Encourage creativity and extra practice by working together to make up new lines that rhyme. (Example: "Did you ever see a *cat* wearing a *hat* down by the bay?")



- Make musical instruments, and pretend you're in a marching band. For example, put uncooked rice or beans in a coffee can or an oatmeal canister to make a maraca. Or wrap rubber bands of different thicknesses around a tissue box, and pluck them like a guitar. Take turns being the band leader. Your child will build listening skills as she copies your rhythms.

- Introduce your youngster to different kinds of music to help her learn her preferences. Try classical, country, rock, hip-hop, and salsa. Then, discuss how they are alike (all use instruments) and different (classical often doesn't have words).♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

My ABCs

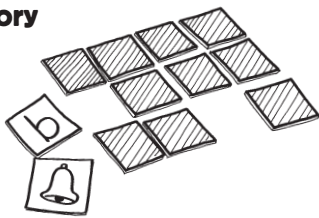
Learning the alphabet is fun! These activities can help your youngster recognize letters and remember the sounds they make.

Alphabet walk

Help your child write the alphabet on a piece of paper. Then, take a walk around your neighborhood to look for letters. Each time he discovers one on a sign, car, or mailbox, he can cross it off. For example, a one-way sign has an *a* and a *bus* stop sign contains a *b*.

ABC memory

To make this game, cut a file folder or cardboard box panel



into a dozen two-inch squares. On six of the squares, have your child write a letter. On the other six, have him draw a picture of something that begins with each letter he wrote. To play, place the cards facedown in four rows of three, and take turns flipping over two at a time. Keep pairs that match. The player with the most matches wins.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Getting along with others

As a cashier in a supermarket, I've noticed that employees are happier when they work together peacefully. I shared this with my son to encourage him to get along with his classmates.

I told him that helping one another makes the day nicer. For example, I sometimes bag groceries or check prices for other cashiers. I asked my son how he can help classmates. He suggested opening a friend's milk or teaching her to draw animals.

I also explained how we make decisions. For instance, the manager usually lets us take turns working in the express lane or getting the first break. If we can't remember whose turn it is, we sometimes flip a coin. My son liked that idea and said he'll try it if he and a classmate can't agree.

Now, we swap stories of nice things we do or problems we solve. I think it helps both of us think about how we treat others.♥



Q & A Conference time

Q: Our first parent-teacher conference is coming up. How can we get the most out of it?

A: A conference is an opportunity to meet your child's teacher and learn about the school day. Here are a few tips to make good use of your time.

Start by putting the conference date and time on your calendar, and plan to arrive on time. Some parents make a list of questions to ask. You might wonder which classroom activities your youngster chooses or who she plays with, for instance.

At the conference, the teacher will probably show you examples of your child's work. She might also mention skills she needs to work on (raising her hand, using scissors). And she'll probably offer suggestions for helping your youngster outside of school.

When you get home, talk about the conference with your child so she'll know that you and her teacher are working together. After about a week, you might write or e-mail the teacher to say how you're following up on her suggestions.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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