

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2010

Arroyo Grande United Methodist Children's Center  
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## KID BITS



### Family traditions

Traditions can strengthen relationships and bring your child comfort. Notice which activities your family shares regularly, and try to stick with ones your youngster especially enjoys. They might be as simple as blowing good-bye kisses through the school bus window. Or they could involve a special holiday dish or a birthday morning ritual.

### Respecting property

Teach your youngster that taking care of property is respectful. You might point out that replacing the cap on the toothpaste shows respect for the next person who brushes her teeth. Or explain that keeping your table clean in a restaurant is respectful toward the waiter who will clear it.

### Introducing homework

Help your child get into the homework habit. If he doesn't have regular assignments yet, set aside a few minutes each evening for him to practice something he did in school. Suggest that he write words he knows on a chalkboard or show you which objects float in the bathtub.

### Worth quoting

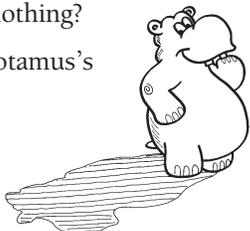
"It's okay to make mistakes. Mistakes are our teachers—they help us to learn."

*John Bradshaw*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's as big as a hippopotamus but weighs nothing?

**A:** A hippopotamus's shadow.



## Number games

Games that involve counting, estimating, and sequencing can spark your youngster's interest in numbers and help her do well in math. Together, play these games that use items you probably have around the house.



### Count and build

Gather blocks and a deck of cards, and let your child practice counting and recognizing numbers. Put the cards (face cards and jokers removed) facedown in a pile. Take turns drawing a card, saying the number (ace = 1), and stacking that many blocks. For example, draw a nine and make a tower that is nine blocks tall. Build a new tower on each turn (keep your old ones, too), and see who has the tallest one after three rounds.

### Grab and estimate

Can your youngster tell at a glance how many objects she sees? Improve her number sense with this game. Fill a bowl with 20 same-sized objects (marbles, pennies). Take turns grabbing a small handful and putting them on a plate.

Estimate how many you picked up. Then, check your estimate by counting the items. After a few tries, your child may discover that she's getting more accurate.

### Pick a number

Add some math practice to tic-tac-toe. Draw a grid with three rows and three columns, and help your youngster write the numbers 1–9 in the squares. Give each player a different kind of token (buttons, dry beans). To play, decide on a square to claim (4), and say the number that comes before it (3) and the number after it (5). Place your marker in your square. Cover three spaces in a row to win.♥

## Organized for a new year

Take advantage of winter break to help your child get organized. That way, he'll be ready to jump into the second half of the school year.

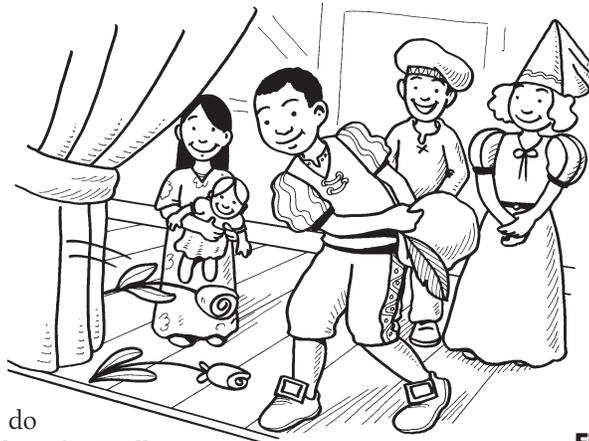
- Get supplies in order. Give your youngster a plastic cup for storing each type of material: pencils, crayons, safety scissors, and glue sticks. A box lid is good for storing writing paper and construction paper. Fresh, accessible materials will encourage him to practice writing letters and cutting and pasting.
- Organize your coat closet. If possible, place hooks at your child's level where he can hang his coat and school bag. Ask him to clear a spot on the floor for shoes and make room for a basket to keep mittens and hats. He'll be more likely to put things away if he helps decide where they go.♥



## Confident me!

Confident students learn more. That's because they're willing to try new things and take "good" risks. Use these suggestions to help your child develop strong self-esteem.

**Focus on effort.** Encourage your youngster to feel proud when he tries hard, not just when he succeeds. If he's learning about rhyming words, you might say, "Friend and sand do sound a lot alike—how about *band* and *sand*?" He'll feel confident trying again.



**Encourage him to try.** Doing something new, like being in the class play, may seem difficult to your child. If he knows you're there to support him, he'll feel more secure. Offer suggestions ("We'll work on your lines a little each day"), and let him ease into the situation (have him perform in front of your family first).

**Find success.** Help your child discover activities that allow him to be successful. For example, he might feel confident in a parent-child basketball or T-ball class before joining a team. Or look for activities that are known to boost self-esteem, such as Scouts or Tae Kwon Do. Together, celebrate milestones like earning badges or belts.♥

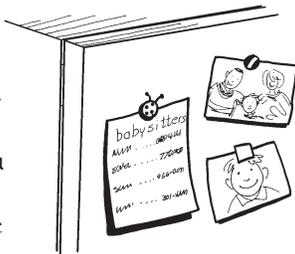
## Q & A Finding babysitters

**Q:** How can I find babysitters for evenings or weekends? And how can I make sure they'll take good care of my son?

**A:** Word of mouth is usually the best way to find a sitter. Ask friends and neighbors who they use or whether they have children in high school or college who can sit. If your son's in day care, his provider might recommend a sitter.

Start by calling potential sitters until you find one who sounds like she might work out. Then, have her come over so you can watch her interact with your child. If you like what you see, try her out. Write down instructions ("Please give Tyrone a rice cake and milk around 7 p.m."), and go over rules ("You can talk on the phone after bedtime, but no guests").

Afterward, ask your youngster what they did and if he had fun. If he seems comfortable with the sitter, you might hire her again.♥



## Talk about drawings

When your youngster shows you a drawing, you may be unsure whether it's a dinosaur or a flower. You can help her develop her thinking and language skills by talking about her picture. Try these ideas:

- Let your child tell you about what she drew. Then, ask questions that will encourage her to think. For instance, if she says she drew a scary dinosaur, ask her what makes it scary. You might also ask her why she chose orange or if she can think of other orange animals.
- Suggest that your youngster make up a story about her picture. Start by having her tell you what the dinosaur is doing. React to what she says. ("Really? That sounds interesting!") Help her move her story along. ("Then what happens?") As she tells her tale, she'll practice using language and expressing herself.♥



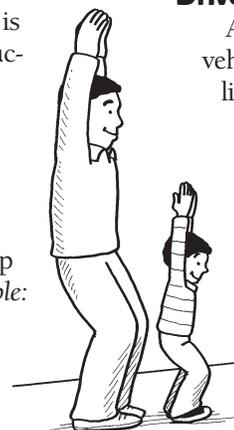
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Following directions

Teachers know that following directions is an important skill for school success. These activities will give your child practice when he's at home.

#### Strike a pose

Choose a silly pose and give your child directions—one step at a time—to copy you. *Example:* "Bend your knees. Close your eyes. Put both hands straight up in the air." Then, let him pick a pose for you.



#### Drive a car

Ask your child to choose a toy vehicle. Have him pick a starting line (say, the kitchen doorway), and you secretly think of a destination. Give him "driving directions" through the house to reach the finish line (down the hall, under the table, into the guest room). *Idea:* Let him ride his bike or scooter outside, and give him directions through your neighborhood.♥

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5567