

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2011



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

### Spring safety

Keep your child safe by reviewing outdoor rules. Show him where he can play (say, in your yard and in the yard next door). Also, practice holding hands and looking both ways before stepping off the curb, and remind him never to chase balls into the street.

### A place for everything

Picking up toys is easier when your youngster knows exactly where they go. Help her take a photograph of each kind of toy (blocks, cars, miniature people). Then, have her tape the pictures to the correct toy bin. *Idea:* Build spelling and writing skills by helping her make handwritten labels to put under the photos.

### Music appreciation

Play classical music for your child. You can find CDs at the library or download free albums at [www.classical.com](http://www.classical.com). Talk about the mood (happy, sad) and speed (fast, slow) of the music. Encourage your youngster to paint as she listens, or to make up a story that tells what she thinks the music is about.

### Worth quoting

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

*Native American proverb*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What do you do when a dinosaur sneezes?

**A:** Get out of the way!



## I'm thinking...

Did you know that thinking is a skill that your child can practice and get better at? Here are games that are fun to play and will encourage her to think creatively and logically.

**New ideas.** This version of charades can get your youngster thinking "outside the box." Pick a household item (spoon), and pretend you are using it for a different purpose (paddling a boat). Let your child guess what you are doing, and then let her act out another way to use the item. Play again with a new object like a soup can or hair brush.

**Creative drawing.** To play this thinking game, make a line or a scribble on a large piece of paper. Then, take turns adding marks—without saying what your picture looks like. But with each addition, encourage your youngster to



think silently about what the drawing is turning into. What does it end up being?

**Game of logic.** Build logical-thinking skills with this activity. On a piece of paper, draw a different shape—heart, star, circle, square—in each corner. Your child's job is to match your shapes on her paper by asking "yes" or "no" questions. For example, she might ask, "Is the heart at the top?" ("No") and "Is it on the left?" ("No"). Then, she could figure out that the heart is in the bottom right corner. ♥

## Games from other lands

Children around the world play different games. Here are two that your little one may enjoy.



**"Big Snake" (Ghana).** One child (the "snake") tries to tag the others. A tagged player joins hands with the snake and becomes the "tail." Together, they tag the rest of the players. As each child is tagged, he becomes the tail—and only the leader and the tail can tag others. The last player tagged is the new snake.

**"The Chopstick Game" (China).** Each player gets two unsharpened pencils, a bowl of 10 cotton balls, and an empty bowl. Set the full bowls on one chair and the empty bowls on a second chair about 10 feet away. To play, carry one cotton ball at a time between your pencils from one bowl to the other. (If you drop one, go back and try again.) The first person to transfer all his cotton wins. *Note:* Traditionally, this game uses chopsticks and marbles. ♥

## Unplug it!

Want your child to do better in school and have healthier eating and exercise habits? Limit his TV, computer, and video-game time.

Celebrate Screen-Free Week (April 18–24) with these ideas that your family can use year-round:

**1.** Decide on a daily screen-time allowance. Most experts recommend an hour or less. You might give your child a kitchen timer to use. He can set it for one hour and then start it each



time he uses electronics. When the hour is up, so is his screen time.

**2.** Leave the TV off when no one is watching.

Have your youngster choose a program in advance and turn it on just for that show. If possible, record it so he can watch without commercials—he'll have less screen time and won't be exposed to commercials for junk food.

**3.** Help your child find alternatives to screen time. As he's cutting back, he may need help. For example, you might put baskets of books and art supplies in the living room so that when he wanders in to watch TV, he'll see other options.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Make a scene

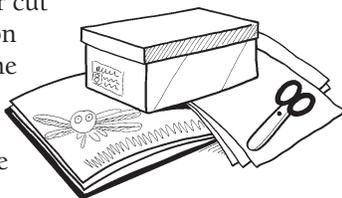


Let your child transform a shoebox into a scene from a book. She'll build reading-comprehension skills as she creates and uses her project.

**Materials:** shoebox, construction paper, scissors, glue, clay

Start by reading a familiar book such as *The Very Lonely Firefly* by Eric Carle. Then, turn an open shoebox on its side and ask your youngster to imagine that the story is taking place inside.

Help her cut construction paper to line the box so it resembles a scene from the



book. *Tip:* She can flip back through the story for ideas. For example, she might glue green paper on the bottom for grass and dark blue on the sides for the night sky. Suggest that she use clay to make characters (firefly, people) and objects (car, lantern).

Finally, she can move the pieces around to act out the story. When she's finished, let her display her scene on a table for everyone to see.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### No more bragging

Our son Kyle is a fast runner, and we have pointed this out many times. But then he started telling his friends that he was the best runner in school.

I explained to Kyle that talking about yourself like that is bragging, and it can make others feel bad. I asked him to tell me what his friends were good at. After thinking for a minute, he said Alice drew pretty pictures and Travis could count really high. I pointed out that his friends probably know what he's good at, too—he doesn't have to tell them.

I suggested that instead of talking about his own talent, Kyle could try complimenting others on theirs. Not long after our conversation, I was happy to overhear him praising a friend for kicking a soccer ball far.♥



## Q & A Keep trying

**Q:** My daughter tends to give up easily when something is hard or takes too long. How can I get her to stick with things?

**A:** Teach your child phrases that can encourage her to keep going. She can repeat them when she feels frustrated. For instance, she might tell herself, "I can do it," "I'm sticking to it," or, "It's hard, but I'll get it."

Also, help your youngster break down tasks. For instance, if she needs to

write her name 10 times, she might do 5 before dinner and 5 afterward. Or when she's learning to ride a bike, have her practice for a short amount of time and stop before she gets frustrated.

Finally, show her that you have to be persistent, too. You might say, "I'm learning a new computer program at work—it's tough, but I'll be able to do it if I keep trying."♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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