

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



Colorful laces

Practicing with two different-colored laces can help your youngster learn to tie his shoes. Tape one end of each lace to a table, about an inch apart. Refer to the colors as you talk him through the steps. ("Make a loop with the red lace. Wrap the yellow lace around it.")

Investigate a pumpkin

Your child can practice science skills by exploring a pumpkin. Ask her how it looks (orange, round) and feels (hard, smooth). Then, carve it open so she can describe what's inside (stringy pulp, white seeds). If you bake muffins or a pie, she can discover the pumpkin's taste, too.

Happy birthday!

A birthday party gives your youngster opportunities to practice manners. If he's the host, remind him ahead of time to thank guests for his gifts—even duplicates. When he's a guest, encourage him to wish his friend a happy birthday and thank the parents before he leaves.

Worth quoting

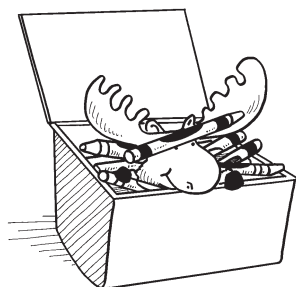
"The whole world opened to me when I learned to read."

Mary McLeod Bethune

Just for fun

Q: Why did the moose paint himself all different colors?

A: So he could hide in the crayon box.



Developing self-control

What keeps your child from whining in a store or grabbing a friend's toy when they're playing? The answer is self-control, and it's a lifelong skill that your youngster can develop now. Here's how.

Practice problem solving.

Encourage your child to find alternatives when he can't have his way. For example, talk about how he might pass the time while waiting his turn for a toy (spin a top, practice juggling). Or help him brainstorm ways to distract himself if he gets upset in a store. *Tip:* Make a "problem and solution" list together. Write down the ideas, and let him illustrate them.

Use signals. Together, come up with silent reminders that can boost your youngster's self-control. For instance, tapping your forehead might remind him to think before he topples his brother's block tower, while putting



a finger to your lips could tell him to lower his voice. With practice, he may learn to control his impulses just by thinking of the signals.

Play together. Stretch your child's self-control with silly games. For example, try "The Staring Game." Look directly at each other and try not to be the first one to smile. Or play hide-and-seek and ask funny questions as you search for one another. ("Are you hiding in your backpack?") The goal is to keep from laughing and giving away your location.♥

Let's write!

Does your child make wavy lines and pretend she's writing? Is she starting to print some letters or words? Try these tips for supporting her as she builds writing skills:

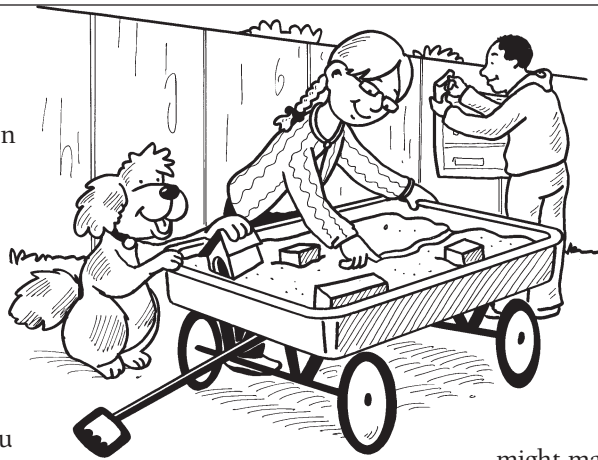
- When your youngster draws a picture, encourage her to label items by using letters she knows (f for flower, s for sun). Or you can say, "Tell me about your picture," and then ask her to write the words under her drawing.
- Keep paper and pencil handy. You might play house and have your child make a shopping list or imagine you're at a restaurant and ask her to write down your order.♥



Make a map

Creating a 3-D map is a fun, hands-on way for your little one to begin learning about geography. Here's a project you can do together:

1. First, fill a cardboard box or plastic container with rice or sand. Encourage your youngster to "draw" streets by dragging her finger through the rice. Then, have her place blocks along the streets to make a city. Ask her to tell you what kind of building each block represents (red rectangle for a fire station, yellow square for her school).



This will help her understand that maps use symbols to stand for real-life objects.
Tip: Suggest that she look for different materials to add new features to her map. For instance, she might tear out a circle of aluminum foil for a pond or build a bridge out of Popsicle sticks.

2. Next, help her draw a map of her box on a piece of paper. You might make the streets and let her draw and color shapes for the buildings. Have her make sure that she matches the shapes and colors on her paper to the blocks in her box. Explain that maps help people find their way around, so it's important that symbols go in the right spots.

3. Finally, switch things around. Draw a map together, and then build a 3-D version in the box. This is good practice for reading maps in real life. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

My family is special

What makes your family unique? This game will show your youngster what sets you apart from other families.

Materials: 26 slips of paper, pencil

Have your child write each letter of the alphabet on a separate slip of paper and put them in a bowl in the middle of the table.



Then, take turns drawing a slip from the bowl and saying a word that begins with that letter and is about your family. It could be the name of a person, place, or thing, or an event. For example, you might say "Korea" for K if that's where your family is from or "Fluffy" for F if that is your cat's name. If you get stumped, let your youngster call a grandparent or another relative for suggestions.

Tip: Have someone write down the words so you can post the list and remember what's special about your family! ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Stress-free bedtime

My son Robert often falls asleep during rest time at day care, so he comes home full of energy. He usually isn't ready to go to sleep at bedtime, but he's often tired in the mornings. After several evenings of bedtime battles, I came up with a plan that has worked for both of us.

Robert still goes to bed at 8 p.m., but he doesn't have to try to sleep right away. After I read a bedtime story and tuck him in, he can look at a book, listen to a story on CD, or draw a picture using a clipboard. I often hear him telling his stuffed animals about his day at school.

This quiet time in bed helps my son wind down and makes it easier for him to fall asleep. Best of all, he wakes up in the morning rested and ready to start the day. ♥



Q & A

Speech: What's normal?

Q: My daughter has trouble saying her l, r, and s sounds correctly. Should I be concerned?

A: If teachers and classmates can understand your daughter's speech most of the time, there's probably nothing to worry about. Some children are seven or eight before they can pronounce every sound correctly. The sounds l, r, and s, along with ch, sh, th, v, and z, are often the last ones a youngster learns.

But if people frequently have trouble

figuring out what your child is saying, talk to her teacher. The school might refer her to a speech pathologist for testing.

If your daughter does have a delay or disability, the specialist will recommend speech therapy. The good news is that

this therapy is offered free through the school system—and many youngsters enjoy the sessions because they're filled with language games and activities. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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