

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Arroyo Grande United Methodist Children's Center
Ms. Maddy Quaglino, Director

KID BITS



Working together

A big project like washing the car, painting a room, cleaning out the garage, or planting a garden is more fun when the whole family pitches in. Also, including a younger child in “adult” jobs can make him feel grown up—and help him learn skills that will be useful later.

A “real” painting

Encourage your youngster to develop an eye for detail. Ask her to find a painting she likes in a library book or on your wall. Then, help her make a “live” version. She might put flowers in a vase or arrange fruit in a basket. Finally, have her take a photo and compare her version to the painting.

Family activity bowl

Watching ducks, riding bikes, going on picnics... is your family thinking about all the things you'll do once it's warm? Each time someone has an idea, have him write it on a slip of paper and add it to a bowl on the counter. As the days get nicer, let your child pull out an activity to do each week.

Worth quoting

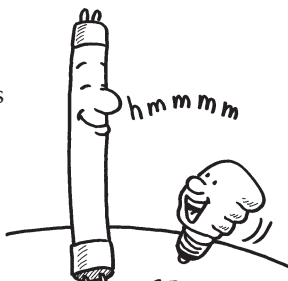
“A friend is one of the nicest things you can have and one of the best things you can be.”

Douglas Pagels

Just for fun

Q: Why do fluorescent lights always hum?

A: Because they don't know the words.



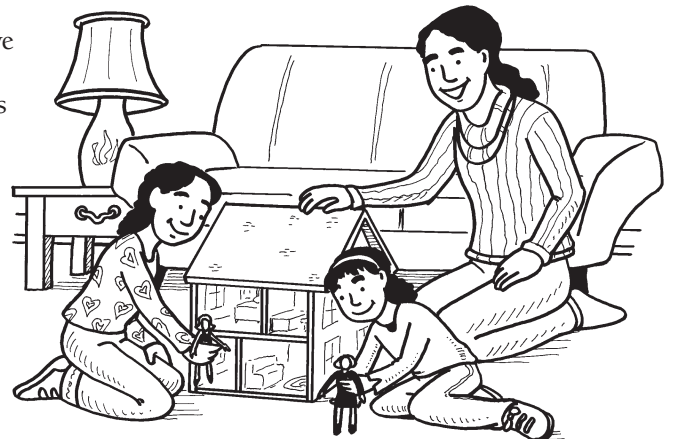
Secrets for a smooth day

Looking for ways to help your children behave at home? We asked parents to share their secrets for keeping things running smoothly with their little ones. Here are three of their ideas.

Make a stoplight.

“I hung a piece of black construction paper on the refrigerator, and my child cut out red, yellow, and green circles. I use a magnet to attach the green circle when it's okay for her to play and make noise. Yellow means slow down and be quieter, like when I'm talking on the phone or her brother is doing homework. And red means stop to do something like eat dinner or go to bed.”

Stay nearby. “Sometimes just being near my children will remind them to behave. For example, my older daughter tends to get impatient with her little sister when they play together. So I'll have



them play near me, and I'll comment every now and then on what they're doing. They're less tempted to argue if they know they already have my attention.”

Let her fix it. “When my child does something she shouldn't, I give her a chance to correct her mistake instead of punishing her. For example, if she walks across the floor in muddy boots, I'll announce, ‘Fix-it time!’ Then, I have her go back to the door, take off her boots, and wipe up the mud.” ♥

Clear conversations

Talking with your youngster will help him learn to carry on better conversations. Try these suggestions:

- Give him “sentence starters” when he needs help explaining an opinion or idea. For example, if you say, “So that reminded you of...” he might say, “That reminds me of the time we went to New York.”
- Encourage your child to be specific. If he tells you about playing at a friend's house, you might say, “Tell me more,” or ask him a question (“Does he have any brothers or sisters?”). Then, talk about your day, and have your youngster ask you questions. ♥

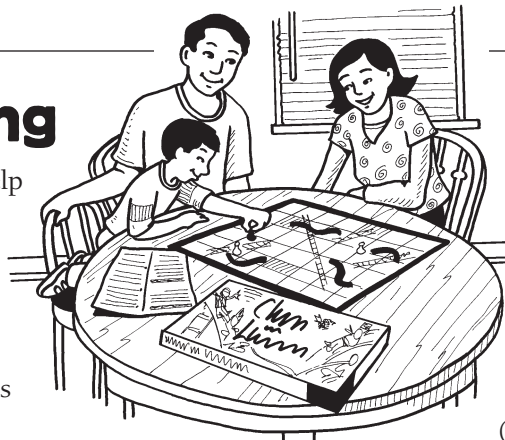


Board-game learning

Did you know that playing board games can help your child learn reading, writing, and math? Use these ideas to boost his skills while you play.

Reading

Before you start a game, read the instructions aloud, and have your youngster follow along with the printed words. Ask him to point out any words that he recognizes. During the game, he can read words on the board (“start,” “home”) or instruction cards (“Move back 4 spaces”).



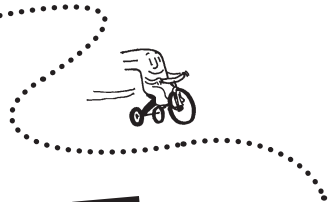
Writing

When you play word games (Scrabble Junior, Boggle Jr.), let your child write down new words that he learns. He can keep a running list in the game box. He might also practice writing by adding your own “house rules” to the back of the official rules (“The youngest player goes first”).

Math

Have your youngster name the number on the spinner when you play Chutes and Ladders or announce the dice roll during a game of Parcheesi. Also, suggest that he count out loud as he moves his token along the board—he’ll learn to match one number per space. *Idea:* Encourage him to practice estimating by predicting where he’ll land before he moves. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT



Back to work

I recently went back to work at a bakery and put my daughter Lisa in before- and after-school care. I love my job, and we need the money, but Lisa was sad that we weren’t spending as much time together.

My boss said she went through the same thing with her children, who are now grown. She explained that although adjusting to day care wasn’t easy, she believes her kids are hard workers today because she was a role model for them.



So I started talking to my daughter more about my job. I took home banana bread for her to try and showed her pictures of cakes I had decorated. I have even arranged for her class to visit the bakery for a behind-the-scenes tour.

Lisa still misses me, but now she asks questions about my baking. I think understanding what I do while I’m away from her—and seeing my enthusiasm for my job—has made things a little easier. ♥

Q & A

How to handle bullying

Q: I’ve been hearing a lot about bullying lately. Does it really start this young?

A: Unfortunately, bullying can start in preschool, so it’s a good idea to talk to your child about the topic now.

You might use a story to start a discussion. Read your youngster a book like *King of the Playground* (Phyllis Reynolds Naylor) or *Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun* (Maria Dismondy). Talk about what the bully does (threatens, teases) and how the victim handles it (tells an adult, befriends the bully).

Then, ask your child if he has ever seen anyone act like a bully. If you find out he is being teased (“Tyler makes fun of the way I talk”), thank him for telling you. Explain that it’s not tattling to get an adult’s help with a bully. Together, brainstorm ways he might respond (walk away, play with someone else). Also, be sure to talk to his teacher, since youngsters shouldn’t be expected to deal with bullying on their own. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

A three-ring circus

Turn your house or yard into a three-ring circus! Your child can enjoy the following activities that will improve her balance and coordination.

Tightrope walking. Make a tightrope by putting a 2-yard strip of masking tape on a tile floor or the sidewalk. Encourage your little one to walk along the tape with her arms stretched out to the sides, carefully putting one foot in front of the other. She might also try tip-toeing or walking backward across her tightrope.

Juggling. Let your youngster start with one sock. She should toss it up in the air with her right hand and catch it with her left hand. Then, she can toss it to her right hand and repeat the movements. Once she’s mastered that, she can try juggling two socks.

Clowning around. Have your child ride her tri-cycle through an obstacle course, just like a clown would. You might let her use recycling bins and empty boxes and have her circle around them in a figure eight. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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