

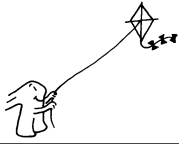
Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2013

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

KID BITS



Do-it-yourself dots

Here's a fun way to help your youngster build the fine-motor skills she needs for handwriting. First, ask her to make random dots all over a blank piece of paper. Then, let her connect the dots with different-colored crayons to create an abstract picture.

Big hug, little hug

Does your child sometimes get rough when he hugs pets or younger siblings? He can use a stuffed animal to practice hugging gently—and being considerate of others. Have him squeeze the toy tightly when you say, “Big hug!” and more carefully when you say, “Little hug!”

Family game night

Try setting aside one evening each week or month to play games as a family. If your children aren't close in age, you might play in teams or sometimes divide up and play separate games. Your youngsters will practice following rules and taking turns, and you'll bond as a family.

Worth quoting

“Real generosity is doing something nice for someone who will never find out.” *Frank A. Clark*

Just for fun

Q: Which clown has the biggest shoes?

A: The one with the biggest feet!



Things that go

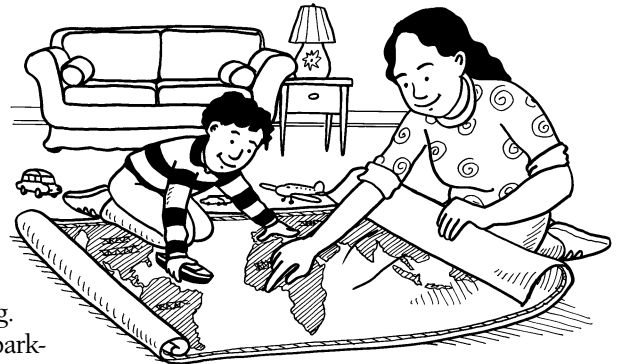
Your child probably enjoys playing with toy cars, planes, trains, and boats. Did you know that he can learn about math, geography, and reading while he vrooms and zooms? Try these ideas.

Math on wheels

Toy vehicles are perfect for sorting, graphing, and counting. Help your youngster make a “parking lot” by drawing lines on a piece of paper to divide it into even rows and columns. Then, have him sort his vehicles by color (red, black, yellow) or type (cars, trucks, vans). He could “park” each group in a separate row to make a graph. Ask him, “Which row has the most? The fewest?” To find out, he can count the vehicles in each row. Let him choose a different way to sort his vehicles and “drive” them to their new parking spots.

Plane or train?

What is the best way to get to Canada? How could you travel to Australia? Get a world map, and take turns picking a location and choosing the vehicle needed to get there. Your child will discover that the



kind of transportation you use depends on how far you're traveling and what your route is like. For instance, if he's crossing an ocean, he'll need a boat or a plane.

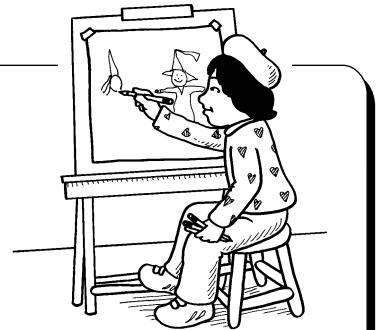
Sound-effect words

“Vroom!” “Beep!” “Choo-choo!” Children like to make vehicle sounds while they play. Use these noisy words to build your youngster's awareness of letters and sounds—*phonics* skills that can help him with reading. When he says, “My airplane goes *whoosh!*” you can ask, “What letters do you hear in *whoosh?*” Encourage him to come up with new sounds by asking him questions like “What sound does a boat make?” ♥

Honesty matters

What does it mean to be honest? Here are ways to help your youngster understand and practice truthful behavior:

- Together, think of things that honest people do. For example, they tell the truth, admit their mistakes, and don't take other people's belongings. Suggest that your child draw a picture of a friend or family member acting out one of her ideas.
- Try not to accuse. If you know your youngster isn't telling the whole truth, you might say, “It isn't always easy to be honest.” Then, wait quietly to see if she decides to be truthful. If she doesn't, remind her that when people are honest, others are more likely to trust them in the future. ♥



Steps to better behavior

As your child develops self-control, she relies on your guidance to learn about rules and consequences. Steer her toward better behavior with these three tips.

1. Make rules together. Your youngster will be more likely to obey rules that she helps to create. Jump-start her thinking by asking, “What am I always reminding you to do?” Then, turn each of her ideas into a rule that starts with “We.” *Examples:* “We pick up our belongings.” “We stay together in public.” Write



down a few important rules, and post the list on the refrigerator.

2. Stay consistent. Rules and consequences will make more sense to your child if they’re always the same. Every time she leaves toys out, for instance, you might declare them off-limits for a certain amount of time. *Tip:* If she breaks a rule, point to it on her list. You can read over the rules together so they become familiar.

3. Be specific. When you praise your youngster for following rules, focus on what she did well. “You sat down the first time I asked you” is more effective than “Good job!” If you’re specific, she’ll know exactly what she did right and can repeat that behavior in the future. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Storybook art

Recently, my son Sam brought home a tissue-paper caterpillar that he made after his teacher read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle). That gave me the idea to let him do fun art projects when we read books at home.

As we read *Over in the Ocean* (Marianne Berkes), Sam said the sea animals looked like they were made out of clay. Then, he got out his play dough and sculpted sea horses and starfish.



When we read *Color Zoo* (Lois Ehlert), he noticed that the illustrations looked like they were made of tiny pieces of paper. So he decided to draw animals on white paper and cut construction paper into teeny pieces to glue onto them.

It’s fun to see how these art projects are sparking Sam’s creativity. Plus, he’s paying more attention to book illustrations, and that helps him pay attention to the stories, too. ♥

Q & A

Volunteering at school

Q: I’m a dad who would like to volunteer in school. Most of the volunteers are moms. How can I help, too?

A: Your child’s teacher is probably thrilled to have moms *and* dads in the classroom. Getting started can be as easy as calling or emailing her. Let the teacher know which days and times work best for you, and ask where she could use the most help. She might want you to organize the books in the reading corner or cut out numbers for a bulletin board.

Also, tell the teacher whether she can call you on an as-needed basis (say, when another volunteer can’t make it or if she is planning a class party).

School specialists appreciate volunteers, too. You could ask your youngster’s teacher if the librarian or the art, music, or PE teacher could use an extra pair of hands. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Tasty science

Try this taste test to let your youngster explore his sense of smell.

First, secretly choose three foods with the same or similar textures. For example, you might get three flavors of yogurt (strawberry, blueberry, vanilla) or three vegetables (celery, cucumber, carrot).

Then, have your child close his eyes and pinch his nose. Let him taste each food, taking a sip of water between samples to “clear his palate.” Can he say what each food is? Repeat the

experiment with him not holding his nose but still closing his eyes. Does he know what they are this time?

What does he notice? Explain that our sense of smell helps us taste food.

When we chew, chemicals travel into our nose and trigger *receptors* that send messages to our brain about the flavors.

Now your youngster will know why food doesn’t taste as good when he has a cold and his nose is stuffed up! ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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