

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Readiness Program
Intermediate Unit 1

October 2009

BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

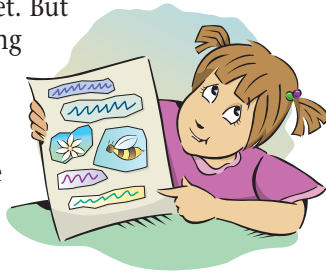
Give your child practice putting words on paper

Your preschooler might not know how to write yet. But that shouldn't keep her from learning a key writing concept: Putting words on paper is an exciting way to communicate. Here's how you can boost your child's interest in learning to write:

- **Think of your child's interests.** Does she like animals? Sports? Dinosaurs? Trucks? Collect magazines and catalogs that have pictures related to this interest.
- **Tell your child you're going to make a collage together.** Explain that a collage is a group of pictures and words that you paste on a sheet of paper. You can arrange them in a way that tells a story or is just pretty to look at.
- **Help her look through the magazines** and cut out pictures and words.
- **Ask, "Can you think of words that describe this collage?"** For example, for an animal collage, she might think of words like *baby*, *fuzzy* or *scary*. Write these words down for her on separate slips of paper.
- **Help your child arrange and paste the pictures** and words on construction paper or poster board.

Your child will be proud of her collage. Hang it in a prominent place!

Source: Peggy Kaye, *Games for Writing: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Learn to Write*, ISBN: 0-374-52427-0 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, www.fsgbooks.com).



BUILDING CHARACTER

Teach how to handle disappointment

Of course you love your child dearly. But you do not have to—nor should you—gratify his every wish. To teach your child to handle disappointment:

- **Show empathy.** "I can see you would like to stay up and watch the movie. But tonight is a school night and bedtime is 7:30 p.m."
- **Limit the "wants."** Your responsibility is to tend to your child's physical and emotional needs. It's perfectly fine to turn down his *wants*. "That looks like a really cool kitchen set. But we won't be buying more toys now."
- **Be firm.** When you say no, you probably have a good reason for doing so. Make this clear to your child. "I know you don't like it, but the answer is still no."

Source: Nancy Samalin, *Loving Without Spoiling: And 100 Other Timeless Tips for Raising Terrific Kids*, ISBN: 0-07-142492-X (Contemporary Books, www.books.mcgraw-hill.com).

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Laughs boost brain power

Research on brain development suggests that laughing improves thinking skills. Laughter also reduces stress. This makes the brain more receptive to learning. Here are some ways to encourage laughter:

- **Sing** silly songs together.
- **Read** funny books.
- **Watch** amusing videos and plays.
- **Try** to make your child laugh. Make funny faces, for example.

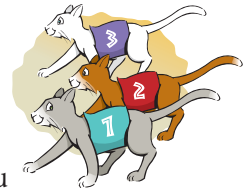
Source: Pam Schiller, *Start Smart! Building Brain Power in the Early Years*, ISBN: 0-8765-9201-9 (Gryphon House, Inc., www.gryphonhouse.com).

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

'Walk and learn' this fall

Looking for new ideas to help your child learn? Go for a walk! Then have your child:

- **Count** cats, dogs, cars, fire hydrants—everything!
- **See** how many red things he can find.
- **Identify** letters on signs. Or call out the first letter of items you pass, like "M" for mailbox.
- **Notice** any changes since your last walk.



BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Math builds thinking skills

Research shows that children exposed to math concepts in their early years do better in math in elementary school. They also do better in reading! When you "talk math:"

- **Help your child** think about what words mean—*round* cookies, the *smaller* dog.
- **Ask your child** to sort and classify items—by shape, color, size, type.



Source: Douglas H. Clements and Julie Sarama, "Your Child's Mathematical Mind," *Scholastic Parent & Child* (Scholastic Inc., www.scholastic.com/parentandchild).

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

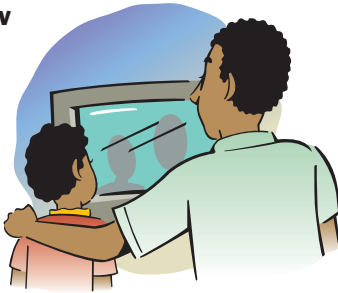
How can parents teach young kids to cope with tragedy?

Q: Children today have so much exposure to tragedy. I assure my son he is safe, but how do I teach him coping skills?

A: Your concern is valid. As adults we struggle to absorb and deal with difficult news and events. What must it be like for a child?

It's easy to become discouraged, but being a loving and caring parent is the best remedy for tragedy. Here are some key points:

- **Limit exposure.** He does not need to watch or listen to the news.
- **Limit explanation.** A young child needs just a few facts: "Some people were hurt and many others are very sad."
- **Offer reassurance.** These things do not happen often. "The adults who love you are always working to keep you safe."
- **Let your child express himself.** Drawing a picture, planting a flower or just giving a big hug can help.
- **Continue to have fun.** This may be the most important thing you can do. Research shows people most likely to overcome tragedy are those with a strong connection to family and friends. Hobbies, sharing stories, gathering for meals and other events reinforce love and happiness for your child.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you boosting learning at home?

Young children naturally want to learn. But how much they learn depends a lot on their parents. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're stimulating your child's learning:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your child to use all of her senses?
- ___ **2. Do you encourage** your child to use a table or desk? (This helps her see and focus on what she's working on.)
- ___ **3. Do you ensure** your child plays with other children often? (Children learn from playing together.)

- ___ **4. Do you ask** your child to help you solve problems?
- ___ **5. Does your child** take a break after a few minutes of learning something new?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're promoting your child's development. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"You learn something every day if you pay attention."

—Ray LeBlond

EXPANDING YOUR CHILD'S WORLD

Work with your child on how to behave in public

As your child gets older, she will have more opportunities to go places. It's important that she behave in a way that is age-appropriate and allows others present to enjoy the experience. Remind your child to:

- **Remember that rules at home apply** in public, too—no yelling or hitting.
- **Take turns.** Continue to emphasize this. It can be hard to wait for something exciting when she is with a big group.
- **Look around.** Ask your child, "How are people behaving here?" Is this a place to run around (park)? Are people walking slowly and using inside voices (museum)?

Source: Carol Baicker-McKee, *FussBusters on the Go*, ISBN: 1-56145-263-7 (Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., www.peachtree-online.com).

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Repair self-esteem after your child has a setback

When you hear "I can't!" help your child recover his self-esteem by:

- **Commiserating.** "I see how sad you are that you didn't make it across the monkey bars."
- **Letting him assist** with an important task. "Look what you did! That helped us so much!"

BUILDING MOTOR SKILLS

Strengthen writing muscles

To learn to write, children must develop the muscles in their hands. Your child can:

- **Squeeze** and create things with clay. Or make cookies with flexible dough.
- **Play** with small toys. Blocks, dolls and cars, for example, require using small finger muscles.



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