

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board

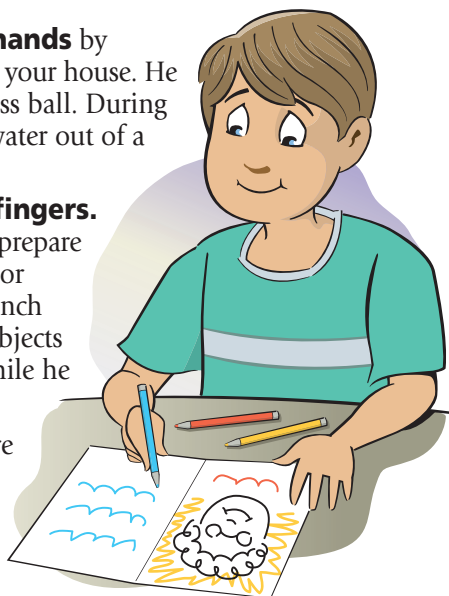


May 2013

Summer is a great time for your child to develop writing skills

Many young children love to write, and it's a skill they'll use throughout school and life. Help your child build skills that will eventually help him learn to write. For example:

- **Build up the muscles in his hands** by squeezing different objects around your house. He can play with play dough or a stress ball. During his bath, have him wring all the water out of a wet washcloth.
- **Pinch objects between two fingers.** Strengthening the *pincer grasp* will prepare your child for good penmanship, or handwriting. Encourage him to pinch open clothespins. Pick up small objects with his fingers. Supervise him while he uses tweezers or an eyedropper.
- **Provide fun utensils.** The more creative, the better! Let your child draw with his finger in sand or shaving cream. Finger paint and sidewalk chalk are also great ways for building motor skills.
- **Write often.** Show your child that you like writing and that it's an important part of your daily routine. "I make lists before I go shopping. Today we need apples, milk and beans." Let him make his own list of pictures or scribbles.



Source: T. Geiser, "Get Ready for Kindergarten Writing," education.com, www.education.com/magazine/article/prepare-for-kindergarten-writing/.



Make the most of read-aloud time

Research shows that reading with your child is among the best ways to prepare her for school success. Summer is an ideal time to establish a daily reading habit. This will start your child off on the right track when she heads back to school in the fall.

To make reading aloud a great experience for your child:

- **Look before you read.** Ask, "What is this book about? Can we get some ideas from the cover?"
- **Read a few pages,** then ask questions: "What do you think will happen next?" Predicting is
- an important skill for reading comprehension.
- **Use different voices** for the characters. Ask your child, "What would the grumpy walrus sound like?"
- **Encourage your child** to point out letters she recognizes.

Use your family's values to teach about character

To teach good character, ask yourself, "What does our family value most?" Then encourage your child to display those traits. Simple, effective approaches include:

- **Explaining a value.** "It's important to be polite, so we say nice words like *please* and *thank you*."
- **Setting expectations.** Expect cooperation, not perfection. Kids need instruction, practice and praise. "You said *please*! Your teacher will be so impressed."

Find fun ways to reinforce learning this summer

Summer is a fun time for children and parents. But be sure to review important skills your child learned during the last year! To keep your child in prime learning shape, plan summer activities that emphasize important skills, such as:

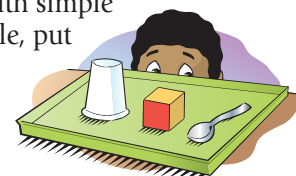


- **Reading together** and discussing the books you read.
- **Recognizing letters** and building motor skills needed to write.
- **Listening** and building comprehension abilities.

Source: E.H. Parlapiano, "Ready for Kindergarten?" Scholastic, www.scholastic.com/resources/article/ready-for-kindergarten.

Playing games can help develop memory skills

To succeed in school, children need to remember facts. You can start building your child's memory with simple games. For example, put several items on a tray. Let your child see them. Then have him close his eyes. Remove one item. Can he remember what it was?



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What can parents expect next year in kindergarten?

Q: I can't believe my daughter is about to start kindergarten. I understand the expectations for kindergarten are much higher than they were in preschool. Can you tell me what I should expect?

A: Congratulations! Your child has learned a lot in preschool and she has a solid foundation for beginning kindergarten. Here are some things to prepare for:

- **A longer school day.** This may be an adjustment for your child if her preschool session was only a few hours long. However, teachers are very skilled at breaking up the day into manageable chunks for their young charges.
- **An emphasis on academics.** Your daughter's preschool class may have been about learning to socialize and spend time in a classroom. In kindergarten, she will build on all of those skills—and develop more! Although knowing how to read isn't a requirement to enter kindergarten, your child should be able to recognize letters and numbers, as well as grasp math concepts such as *more* and *less*.



Kindergarten is an exciting introduction to the full-time academics your child will experience for the rest of her school career. With your support, she will learn, grow and thrive.



Is your child developing respect for rules?

Children have to follow rules at home, at preschool and almost everywhere else. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're emphasizing how important respect for rules will be, both now and in your child's future:

1. **Do you consider** your child's age and maturity before choosing a few key rules to emphasize?
2. **Do you state** rules simply and positively (by explaining what to do, not what not to do)? For example, "Keep your hands and feet to yourself," rather than, "Don't hit."
3. **Do you enforce** rules consistently? Kids cooperate more when they know parents won't bend important rules.
4. **Do you explain** the reasons for rules so your child is more motivated to follow them?
5. **Do you rely** much more on praise for good behavior than on consequences for mistakes?

How well are you doing? *Each yes answer means you're helping your child learn to follow rules. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

"Children need models rather than critics."
—Joseph Joubert

Demonstrate that you value and respect your child

A child's self-esteem depends on her being accepted, respected and valued by people who are important to her. For your young child, those people are her family. To build your child's self-esteem, show that you value her:



- **Interests.** You don't always have to join in. Saying "I noticed you really like to build with blocks" is enough.
- **Help.** Have your child help you with small chores. Feeling competent at home will lead to feeling competent at school.
- **Company.** Take your child places with you. Tell her you're glad to have her along.

Source: K. DeBord, "Self-Esteem in Children," North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, <http://tinyurl.com/bkdew6d>.

Make it a summer goal to build a stronger body

It's easy to overlook the importance of motor skills in school success. But having a strong and healthy body is the first step in helping your child learn. Take advantage of the summer months and get moving toward building your child's muscles, bones and joints.

Teaching self-discipline leads to school success

Self-discipline is an important trait for children to have. Instilling it can be tough; however, it is critical to school success. Start by:

- **Letting your child** practice simple, daily routines, such as brushing his teeth and putting on his shoes.
- **Teaching patience.** "We'll save up to buy that toy."
- **Letting your child** make age-appropriate decisions. "Would you like to wear red or blue shorts today?"

Source: "How to Teach Kids Self-Discipline," Parenthood.com, www.parenthood.com/article-topics/how_to_teach_kids_self_discipline.html/full-view.

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