

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



February 2013

Your child is ready to learn about responsibility even in preschool

The best way to teach your child responsibility is to *give* her responsibility. Having simple chores to do at home teaches your child that maintaining a home is a family effort and she is an important part of the family. This lesson will also give her school readiness skills a boost!

Here are some chores to consider if your child is at least three years old:

- **Set and clear the table.** Have her start with the forks, spoons and napkins, and gradually expand the job.
- **Feed dry food** to family pets and give them water.
- **Put away clean clothes** and put dirty clothes in a laundry basket.
- **Sort laundry** into piles of light and dark clothes.
- **Match up pairs** of socks.
- **Treat library books with respect** and keep them organized.
- **Bring in mail or newspapers** (unless this requires going out on the street).
- **Use simple cleaning tools**, such as a feather duster or a lightweight handheld vacuum.
- **Pick up** and put away her toys.



Help your child build good self-esteem

A child with healthy self-esteem has a sense of being competent, productive and confident. Fostering this in your child will help him later in school and the rest of his life. Work with your child so he develops traits that say:

- **I am competent.** Too often, parents say *yes* when a child wants a toy but *no* when he wants to help. If your child wants to help you do laundry, say, "Sure, please hand me everything that is blue."
- **I am productive.** You're not an entertainer, and you don't need to keep your child constantly fascinated. Offer books, crayons and blocks, and encourage him to play on his own. Applaud his efforts.
- **I am confident.** Help your child be successful by recognizing his accomplishments. Success breeds success—and your child will develop a sense of confidence in himself. When your child sets the table or picks up his toys, compliment him! His confidence in himself will boost his self-esteem.

Source: J.I. Clarke and others, *How Much is Enough? Everything you need to know to steer clear of overindulgence and raise likeable, responsible and respectful children*, Marlowe & Company.

Develop your child's writing skills with creative activities

Simply practicing writing the alphabet isn't the only way to develop writing skills! Try these fun activities with your child:

- **Painting, drawing and shaping clay** build important finger muscles.
- **Writing with a pointer finger** in paint or sand lets your child practice letter shapes. 
- **Making simple labels** (*door, chair*) can boost your child's interest in writing.

Remember, almost any way to practice fine motor skills will help build writing skills.

Source: "Fun Preschool Writing Activities—Get your preschooler excited to write!" Preschool-Learning-and-Crafts.com, www.preschool-learning-and-crafts.com/preschool-writing-activities.html.

Notice correct behavior

Do you compliment more than you criticize? This is an important step toward improving your child's behavior. Speak up when she takes a toy from her brother. But comment even more when she shares with him. She'll soon get the message that doing good things feels great, which will build her confidence.

Reading and learning make a perfect pair

Make your home reader friendly, and you'll have a lifelong learner. Here are some ideas:



- **Surround your child** with books. Make weekly trips to the library. Check out garage sales, too.
- **Be enthusiastic** about reading. Let your child see you reading every day.
- **Expose your child** to new words. Read to him every day. Talk about what you read.

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities, "Home Literacy Environment Checklist," Get Ready to Read! www.getreadytoread.org/images/content/downloads/literacy%20checklists/HomeLiteracyEnglish.pdf.

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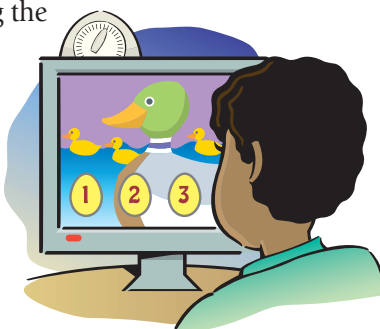


Are educational computer games okay for my child?

Q: My son received some computer games from a family member. Now he wants to play them all the time. They are educational, but I worry about too much of a good thing. How can I integrate the computer games into his daily activities?

A: Educational computer games can be a good thing—they teach some skills that can help in school. But you're right. Every child needs a balance of activities. Here are some ideas for putting the brakes on too much screen time:

- **Set and enforce limits.** About 30 minutes a day is enough on the computer, especially if your child also watches TV. To help your child respect those limits, use a timer. When it beeps, he'll know the 30 minutes are up.
- **Encourage active play.** Your child should have some time outdoors every day except when the weather is very harsh. Playground time is ideal, but if that's not possible, take your child for a short walk down the block and back.
- **Have plenty to do inside** with crayons, paper, books and toys such as blocks, puzzles and animals for pretending. Rotate toys. Put some out for a few days, then put them away and put others out, so he won't get bored. Remember that garage sales or friends with older children can be great sources for very inexpensive (or free) toys.



Are you making reading irresistible?

Reading with your child is one of the most important ways to prepare her for school. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're making reading fun:

- ___ **1. Do you pick** books that will appeal to your child? You might find books about her favorite topics.
- ___ **2. Do you read** with enthusiasm? Use different voices for characters and change your tone in exciting ways.
- ___ **3. Do you discuss** what you read? Ask questions such as, "What do you think will happen next?"
- ___ **4. Do you let** your child interrupt you while you read? It's good to let kids ask questions and fill in words they've memorized.

- ___ **5. Do you build** on what you read? Read favorite books repeatedly so your child gets the most out of them.

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

"We can teach from our experience, but we cannot teach experience."

—Sasha Azevado

Encouraging curiosity strengthens thinking skills

Is your child always asking *why*? Good for her! She's using some of her best learning tools. To keep encouraging her enthusiasm for learning:

- **Go on a word hunt.** Does your child know that words can be found in places other than her books? Challenge her to look for words when you go on errands.
- **Use hands-on materials.** Have her sort silverware or work on an age-appropriate puzzle.
- **Explore her interests.** Does she love dolphins? Help her find out more—where they eat, where they can be found, how they take care of their young.

Source: Going to School, "Grade-by-Grade Learning: Kindergarten," PBS, www.pbs.org/parents/goingtoschool/what_kinder.html.

Practice communication skills to help learning

Help your child set the stage for all kinds of learning by working on:

- **Listening.** Teach him to make eye contact and wait his turn to speak.
- **Using manners.** Role-play situations.
- **Following instructions.** Gradually move up to multi-step instructions.

Add size to your child's developing concepts

Your child is learning about colors, shapes and numbers. But what about the concept of size? Use words like *bigger*, *smaller*, *shorter* and *taller* as your child explores the world around her. As she learns spatial reasoning skills, you might compare:

- **Family members.** Ask your child, "Who is *taller*—your brother or cousin Jimmy?"
- **Stuffed animals.** Is Teddy *bigger* or *smaller* than Bunny?



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