

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



February 2012

Begin with basics of telling time

You want your child to be able to tell time. But she needs to understand the *concept* of time before she can look at a clock and meaningfully inform you that it's 3:25. To get started:

- **Talk about the day.** Your child should understand that *today* is now, *yesterday* is what happened until she went to sleep last night, and *tomorrow* is what it will be after she finishes the next sleep. Say, "Yesterday you went to school. Today we are at home. Tomorrow, after you get out of bed and eat breakfast, we'll go to Grandma's."
- **Talk about segments of the day.** *Morning* is the time between waking up and lunch. *Afternoon* is between lunch and dinner. *Evening* is dinner and bath. *Night* is when it's dark and she's sleeping.
- **Talk about before and after.** "Before you brushed your teeth this morning, you ate breakfast. After you put your shoes on, we went to the grocery store."



When your child has mastered these concepts, then it's time to talk about the clock. Teach the names of the *hour hand* (the short hand) and the *minute hand* (the long hand). Then teach her some times that have importance in her daily life. "See how the long hand is on the 12 and the short hand is on the 1? That means it's one o'clock and time for lunch."

Source: J. Silberg, *500 Five Minute Games*, Gryphon House.



As winter ends, look for new activities

It's February. Winter isn't over yet, and your family may be feeling a little housebound. If you're ready to try some new activities, remember the old saying, "Look before you leap." Here are some things to consider:

- **Development.** Can your child lift a bowling ball? Can she make it through a hike? Avoid activities that are beyond your child's physical ability.
- **Maturity and temperament.** An active child may love the ice rink, but might get fidgety sitting at the movies. And a quiet child may be happier with a short visit to a museum.
- **Cost.** Many parents of young preschoolers report having to leave activities before they "got their money's worth." Check the local paper or a community website for free or low-cost family-friendly activities.

Source: C. Baicker-McKee, *Fussbusters on the Go: Strategies and Games for Stress-Free Outings, Errands and Vacations With Your Preschooler*, Peachtree Publishers.

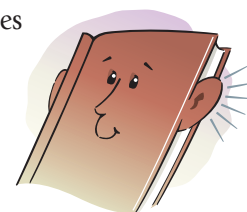
Design special Valentines

Spark your preschooler's creativity and thoughtfulness this Valentine's Day by making cards for family and friends. Your loved ones will appreciate one of your child's drawings tucked into an envelope. Help him make an X and an O at the bottom of each picture to symbolize a kiss and a hug.

Listening supports learning

Children who have developed good listening skills have a better chance of succeeding when they begin school. In other words, children who *listen* well *learn* well.

You have opportunities every day to help your child become a good listener:



- **At meal time.** Let each family member talk about his or her day. Don't allow others to speak while someone is talking.
- **At story time.** Reading with your child teaches her to listen and pay attention. Ask questions about the story afterwards.
- **At play time.** Games such as "Simon Says" are fun and they teach listening.

Blocks build math concepts

Playing with blocks doesn't just build motor skills. Use blocks to sort and make patterns—two important math skills for your child to learn. With your child:

- **Build two towers**—one with numbers, one with letters.
- **Build a tower with a pattern**—number, two letters, number, two letters.



Source: "Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/math/part_pg8.html#fun-1.

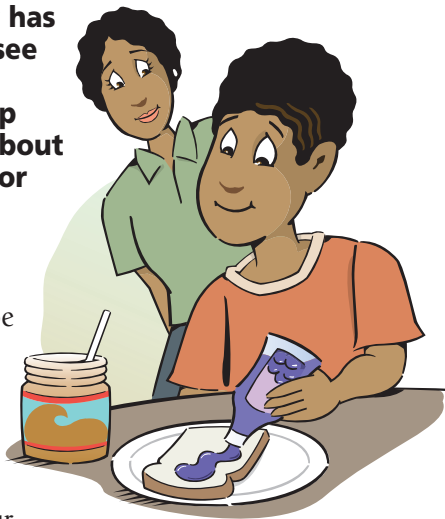


How can parents promote responsibility in children?

Q: My son's kindergarten teacher has indicated that she would like to see the children start assuming more responsibility. I would like to help my child. Can you give any tips about the responsibilities appropriate for a kindergartner?

A: There is a big jump in expectations between kindergarten and first grade. Teachers want students and parents to be ready. That is why your son's teacher is stressing responsibility. Your son should continue to work on mastering responsibility:

- **At home.** He should be able to take care of personal needs. With your supervision, he can dress himself and take care of his hair and teeth. He can bathe with you nearby. He can tie his shoes. He should be responsible for his school things. He can find a place to keep his backpack and help make his own lunch.
- **At school.** Your son's first-grade teacher will expect him to work more independently. For example, he may have to complete a worksheet at his seat after the teacher explains the assignment. He will be expected to listen and follow directions. Practice giving your child instructions. Begin with two-step directions and increase the number of steps as he shows mastery.



Do you know the basics of discipline?

Disciplining—or teaching—children is one of parents' toughest jobs. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're focusing on the essentials:

- ___ **1. Do you choose** a few important rules and explain them in simple words your child understands?
- ___ **5. Do you celebrate** your child's good behavior much more often than you notice her mistakes?

- ___ **2. Do you enforce** rules consistently so your child always knows what's expected of her?

- ___ **3. Do you set** expectations that are appropriate for your child's age? This prevents being too lenient or too tough.

- ___ **4. Do you react** calmly and carefully when your child misbehaves, providing her with a good behavior role model?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're using a good discipline method. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Don't handicap your children by making their lives easy."
—Robert A. Heinlein

'Is my child keeping up?'

With so many "educational" products available in today's society, it's natural for parents to worry about their child's development. The truth is that every child is unique. Your child may talk differently from a child of the same age, yet both may be considered normal. If you have concerns about your child's language or overall development, don't run out and buy the latest miracle product. Instead, consult your pediatrician and ask for development guidelines.

Source: "Child development chart: Preschool milestones," Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.com/health/child-development/MY00136.

Character counts at school

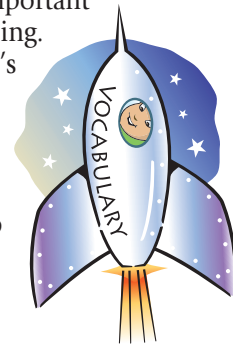
It's important for preschoolers to know how to get along with others—and no one is more well liked than a child who knows how to be fair. Encourage your child to:

- **Follow** the rules.
- **Share** with others.
- **Listen** to people and don't blame them for things.

Source: "Character Critters," Family and Consumer Sciences: Oklahoma State University Extension, http://fcs.okstate.edu/parenting/building_character/critters.

Talking boosts vocabulary

Preparing to read is an important step toward lifelong learning. And the bigger your child's vocabulary, the better! You can help your child by making the most of everyday conversations. Many preschoolers like to talk a lot. Use this as an opportunity to introduce new words. "Wow. That building is so tall! It's a *skyscraper*!" Your child will make the connection and remember the new word.



Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Erika Beasley. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2012, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005