

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2004

KID BITS



Classroom volunteer

Many teachers decorate bulletin boards and create other displays to make their rooms inviting. Why not get involved right away by offering to help with these projects. It's a great way to learn more about what's happening in your youngster's classroom.

Handwriting workouts

Did you know that exercising her hand muscles helps your child write more neatly? Let her use tweezers to pick up small objects, like dry pasta or beans, and drop them into a cup. Stringing beads or doing puzzles can also strengthen tiny muscles.

A formal affair

If your little one's table manners could use some polishing, try having a "formal" dinner once a month. Have everyone dress up, and cook a special meal. Focus on different manners each month, such as using silverware correctly or passing food politely.

Worth quoting

"Those who love the young best stay young longer." *Edgar Friedenberg*

Just for fun

Parent: What did you learn in school today?

Child: We learned to write.

Parent: What did you write?

Child: I don't know. I can't read yet.



Smooth sailing with routines

As your family eases back into the school year, relaxed mornings can set the tone for nonstressful days. A well-planned routine will help. Here are three ideas to start the school year off on a peaceful note.

Be an early bird

Set your alarm to wake you up early. Take a few minutes to snuggle with your little one and perhaps read a story. Or build a reward into the morning: If she's ready on time, she can play until it's time to leave.

Give your youngster a role

Your child will get used to a morning routine more quickly if he has a hand in creating it. For example, you might let him choose whether he will get dressed before or after breakfast.

Get organized

Set aside a special place for everything your youngster must take to school, such as books and show-and-tell items. You might put them in a shoebox or plastic tub. Place it in a spot that's easily visible.

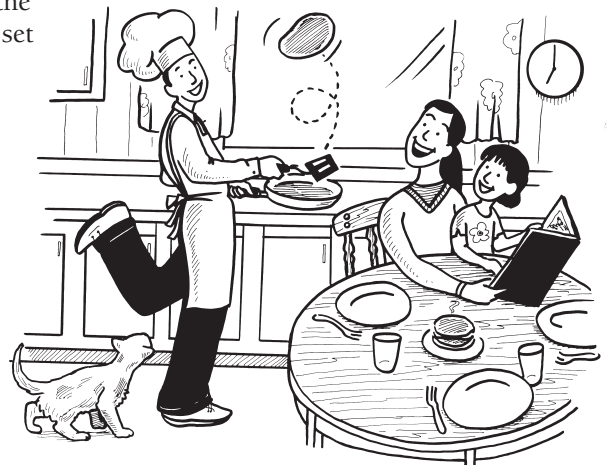
Win, lose, or draw

Does your child bend the rules in order to win games? Chances are he's just beginning to understand the concepts of winning, losing, and rules. The right games can teach these ideas in a gentle way:

- Choose games with few rules, such as Go Fish, or simplify more complex games. For example, if you're playing checkers, you might allow your youngster to move backward as well as forward until he becomes more familiar with the game.

- Play games of chance to give your child an opportunity to win. Board games with dice or spinners are good choices.

Once he has experience with winning *and* losing, your youngster will understand why it's important to stick to the rules. ♥



Be prepared

Whatever you include in your routine, prepare for it as much as possible the night before. *Examples:* packing lunches, writing notes to the teacher. That way, you won't feel rushed if something unexpected comes up the next day.

Tip: Young children like repetition, so try to make your youngster's routine predictable by doing everything in the same order each day. ♥



Supermarket skill builder

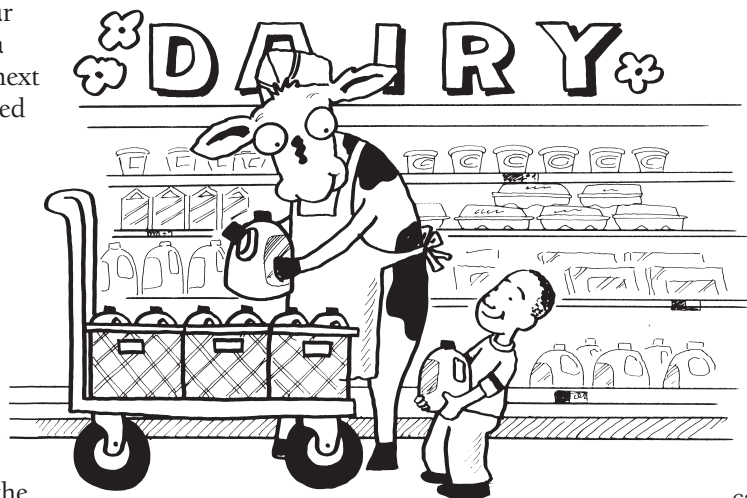
Grocery shopping with your youngster doesn't have to be a chore. Instead, think of your next outing as a field trip jam-packed with learning opportunities.

Before you go

Let your child watch while you make a list. Then, make a point of reading the list while you shop. Children are more motivated to write when they see it as a useful tool.

During the trip

What better place to discover food groups than in the grocery store? As you put an item in the



cart, identify it as meat, dairy, fruit, grain, or vegetable. Talk about why it's important to eat foods from each group every day.

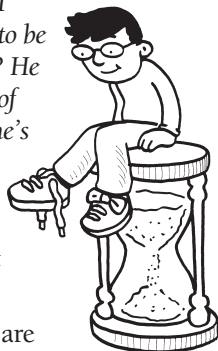
Back at home

Wrap up your shopping adventure by putting the groceries away together. Sort them by shape for added fun: "The cans are round, and they go in the cupboard. The boxes are square. We put those in the pantry."

With a little extra effort, a visit to the supermarket can satisfy your little one's hunger for learning—and make shopping more pleasant for everyone. ♥

Q & A Just a minute!

Q: How can I teach my son to be more patient? He often pushes in front of other children when he's in line at the slide. If he asks me to do something and I'm too busy to do it right away, he throws a fit.



A: Young children are naturally impatient. Your youngster will learn to wait as his self-control increases, but you can help speed up the process.

Try to be exact when you tell your child how long he must wait. For example, help him count the youngsters in front of him at the playground. If he needs your help tying his shoes and you say you'll do it in a minute, ask him to count to 10 six times. Then, do your best to help him before he finishes counting. Remember to praise him for his increasing ability to control his behavior. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Make time for reading

With my family's busy schedule, finding time to read with my daughter is a challenge. One way I manage to squeeze it in is by keeping a shopping bag of books in the car. Whether we're waiting for our food in a restaurant or sitting in the doctor's office, we always have a story on hand.

If we're in a rush at bedtime, I read to my child while she's taking her bath. Or I read a short book while she's brushing her teeth. She knows she's not finished brushing until the story is over!

By taking advantage of a few extra minutes whenever we have them, I know I'm giving my daughter plenty of reading and listening practice. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Family timeline

At school your child will meet students from many kinds of families. She can learn more about her own family—and practice sequencing skills—by making a timeline of her life.

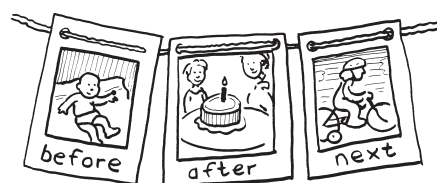
You'll need family photos, construction paper, glue or tape, a pencil, yarn, and a hole punch.

Start by going through photo albums together and talking about what's happening in the pictures.

Ask your youngster to help you choose several that show important events, such as a wedding or moving to a new house.

Mount one photo on each sheet of paper. Next, help her put the pictures in order, writing words like "before," "after," and "next" below the photos.

Then, string them together with yarn, and hang the timeline in her room. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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