

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Little Ones Preschool, Inc.
Sheree Feldman - Director

KID BITS



Practice direction words

Would your youngster make a good remote-control robot? Use direction words (*forward, backward, right, left*) to tell her how to move across a room. Then, you can be the robot and let her give you directions. Getting more comfortable with these words will help her in math *and* in everyday life.

Drive, sail, or fly

Here's a fun way for your child to practice sorting skills. Have him gather toy cars, boats, and airplanes. Together, divide a large sheet of paper into three sections for land, water, and sky. Ask him to steer each vehicle to where it belongs. For example, a jeep goes on land, a tugboat in the water, and a plane in the sky.

Routines are important

Children who grow up with routines handle change more easily than those who don't. That's because a predictable schedule gives your youngster a sense of security that boosts her confidence for trying new things. *Tip:* Regularly talk about routines so your child knows what to expect when she wakes up or gets home from school.

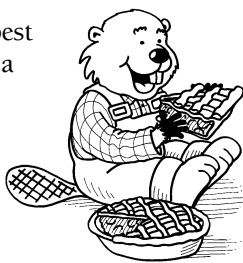
Worth quoting

"Give your dreams all you've got, and you'll be amazed at the energy that comes out of you." *William James*

Just for fun

Q: What's the best thing to put in a pie?

A: Your teeth!



My ABCs

"Now I know my ABCs, next time won't you sing with me?"

Singing the alphabet song and playing with letters build early reading skills. Use activities like these so your little one will recognize the alphabet from A to Z.

Molding

Help your youngster make his own alphabet mat. He can print the alphabet in large letters on a sheet of paper and tape wax paper on top. Have him roll clay between his hands to create "snakes" and shape them to cover the letters on the mat. Encourage him to say each letter as he forms it.

Building

Ask your child to get two blocks or Legos for each letter of the alphabet. Together, use masking tape and a pen to label each pair. He should write an uppercase letter (A) on one and its lowercase match (a) on the other. Then,



mix the blocks all together, and let your youngster find matching letters to build houses with.

Fishing

During bath time, toss a set of magnetic or foam letters into the tub. Give your child a plastic cup or large spoon, and have him fish the letters out in alphabetical order, saying each one as he goes. If he needs help remembering which letter comes next, sing the alphabet song with him until you reach the letter he needs.♥

What to expect at parent-teacher conferences

A parent-teacher conference is a quick checkup for your child's progress. Here's what you need to know before you go:

- Conferences allow you to learn about your youngster's strengths and weaknesses and to find out how you can support her at home. If she has trouble counting to 10, for example, her teacher might suggest a counting game to play.
- Be prepared to share information about your child, too. It will be helpful for the teacher to know your youngster's likes and dislikes or about things going on at home that may affect her behavior in school.
- Find out how to contact the teacher if there are problems between conferences. Let her know the best time and way to reach you.♥



Free play

Inventing games and activities lets your child explore and learn at her own pace. Consider these ideas for helping your youngster benefit from “just playing.”

Provide materials. Spark her imagination by combining toys or household items with everyday events. After a doctor appointment, you might put her doctor kit with her dolls, for example. Before recycling cardboard boxes, have her pick some to build a shopping center like the one you just visited.



Ask questions. It's okay to steer your youngster toward a type of activity, but let her guide the actual play. So instead of making specific suggestions, prompt her with a few words. For instance, you could help set up her easel and then ask, “What should we paint?” rather than saying, “Let's paint a picture of a pony.”

Note: Hectic schedules can make it hard for your child to find time for free play. Consider ways to add downtime, such as keeping a few days free of scheduled after-school or evening activities.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



Long ago and far away

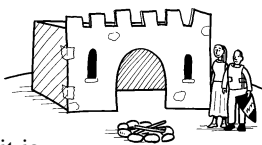
Knights and castles make for fun stories, and since most fairy tales take place in the past, they also offer your child a first look at history. Next time you read a fairy tale to him, try this.

Look at the pictures

Ask him to identify activities that are different from how we do them today. For example, he might notice a character getting water from a well rather than turning on a faucet, or people riding in carriages instead of in cars.

Act it out

Encourage your youngster to use action figures and pretend it is the same time and place as in the story. He could build a castle for them to live in, have them cook their food over a pretend “open fire,” or make them carry candles so they can see in the dark. Let him tell you the story of how his action figures lived “back then.”♥



Q & A Being considerate

Q: Our daughter has a tendency to do things without thinking of other people's feelings. How can we teach her to be more considerate?

A: It's perfectly normal for youngsters this age to be a little self-centered. They are still working out how their words and actions affect others.

One way to help her learn is to have her pretend to be the other person. Say she colors on the table at the library. Ask how she would feel if she worked there and had to clean that up.

It's also a good idea to encourage your daughter to make things right. Instead of simply apologizing, suggest that she do something to show she's sorry. If she accidentally rips another child's picture, she could get tape and repair it.♥



PARENT TO PARENT Settling down for bedtime

Our son Isaiah always seemed to be full of energy and zooming around the house at bedtime. Getting him to bed was such a problem that I worried something was physically wrong with him.

I asked the pediatrician about it. She told me that when kids get too tired, their brains actually release hormones that keep them awake. She suggested that I watch for signs that Isaiah is getting sleepy and adjust his bedtime to match. For instance,

he might slow down in his play or start rubbing his eyes and yawning—signals that his body is ready for sleep. The doctor also said we could help him learn to relax for sleep by providing simple cues, such as reading the same storybook or listening to the same quiet music every night.

Now, thanks to the doctor's suggestions, bedtime is going a little better. Hopefully, that will continue—for Isaiah's sake and mine!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
 540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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