

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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## KID BITS

### The attendance habit

Students who have good attendance in preschool and kindergarten are likely to continue the habit throughout their school careers. Talk to your little one about why it's important to go to school—so he can learn about letters and numbers, finish his art projects, and play with his friends.

### Family-night leader

Consider holding a weekly family night, and take turns picking activities to do. When it's your youngster's chance, she might decide where to go for a walk and what snack to bring. She'll practice making decisions, and you'll add variety to your evenings.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Your child's brain is like a construction site. Every time he has a new experience, his brain creates new connections. The more experiences he has—like romping in the woods, visiting a craft store, or watching a school marching band—the more "building" is going on at the "construction site."

### Worth quoting

"Some old-fashioned things like fresh air and sunshine are hard to beat."  
*Laura Ingalls Wilder*

### Just for fun

**Q:** How do you stop a dog from barking in your backyard?

**A:** Put it in your front yard!



## Discipline with love

To encourage better behavior from your little one, you may find that gentle, loving strategies get the best results. Keep these tips in mind.

### Remain calm

Take a deep breath before you correct your child. Then, try whispering instead of shouting. ("Close the door *gently* instead of slamming it.") To hear what you're saying, your youngster will need to slow down and listen carefully. *Bonus:* You'll set an example of how to stay calm even when you're frustrated or angry.

### Be respectful

Giving your undivided attention when you talk to your child about her behavior shows respect. Kneel to her level rather than disciplining her from across the room. Acknowledge her feelings, but remain firm as you explain what she did wrong. ("I know you're upset that your brother won't give you his toy, but we don't pinch.")



### Find the good

Your youngster naturally wants to please you, so when she behaves well, let her know that you noticed. ("You put your clothes in the hamper without my reminding you. That helps keep our house neat.") Positive reinforcement will motivate her to repeat her good behavior.

*Tip:* Use consistent consequences to get your child to follow rules. For example, if you take away a ball every time she throws it in the house, she'll learn not to throw it.♥

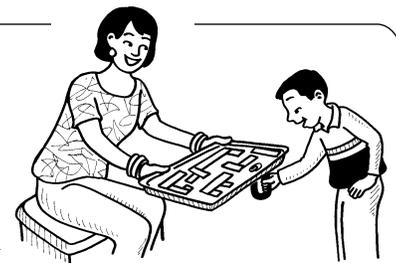
## That's a-maze-ing!

Creating and playing with 3-D mazes gives your youngster's fingers a workout and strengthens muscles for writing. Here are suggestions.

● **Toy route.** Have your child arrange an obstacle course of small toys on a sheet of paper. He can use a crayon to create a path on the page by drawing around and between the objects.

● **Magnet magic.** Ask your youngster to make a maze on a cookie sheet with strips of masking tape. Place a paper clip at one end, and hold the cookie sheet while he steers the clip along the path by moving a magnet underneath the sheet.

● **Sweet or salty.** Give your child a toothpick and a plate of sugar or salt. He could use the toothpick to clear a path for you to follow with your finger. Then, trade roles.♥



## Conversations that build vocabulary

Your youngster's vocabulary grows the fastest during his first six years—and a bigger vocabulary will help him do better in school. Expand his “word bank” by weaving new words into everyday conversations.

**In the car...** Use “fancy” words for familiar things. You could say, “The *florist* has a lot of daisies today” or “When the *pedestrians* get to the other side of the street, it will be our turn to go.”



**At the grocery store...** Name or discuss fruits and vegetables. You might point out *artichokes* and *nectarines* or explain that apples can be used to make *cobbler* or *cider*.

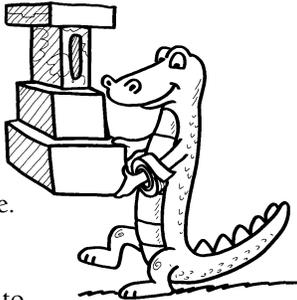
**In the doctor's office...** Use words that describe your child's experiences. During a checkup, for instance, introduce words like *stethoscope*, *vaccination*, and *reflexes*.

**While doing chores...** Be specific as you work together. Examples: “Please help me measure the *detergent*” or “Hold the candle while I dust the *sconce*.” ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER What's in a box?

Did you know that the cardboard box was inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame? Boost your youngster's creativity and imagination with these “ideas in a box”:

- Set out boxes of various shapes and sizes. Add a roll of duct tape. Your child can stack and tape boxes together to make all kinds of structures. Perhaps she'll build a cottage with a chimney, a castle with turrets, or a submarine with a periscope. *Idea:* Offer to cut flaps or windows if she needs help.



- Provide arts and crafts supplies like crayons, markers, glue, construction paper, tissue paper, and aluminum foil. Your youngster could color or cover a box to turn it into a striped circus tent, a shiny space station, or a brick apartment building. *Tip:* If a box is big enough, let her climb in and decorate the inside! ♥



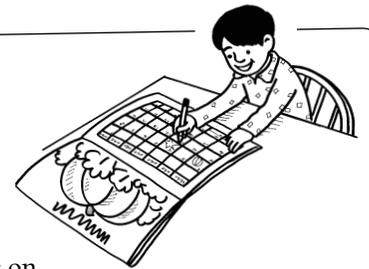
## All ready with routines

Daily routines let your child know what to expect. Plus, they help him develop skills like time management, organization, and planning. Try these strategies.

**Count down.** Use a timer to keep your youngster on track when he's getting dressed or picking up toys. He may enjoy trying to beat a timer set for 5 minutes—and then trying to beat 4½ minutes tomorrow.

**Clean up.** Help your child come up with an organized way to store his toys. He might sort them by putting blocks into a basket, action figures into a shoebox, and books on a shelf.

**Plan ahead.** Let your youngster keep his own calendar and draw symbols on it to signify special days. For instance, on days he has music class, he could draw a drum. Together, check his calendar each night, and talk about his plans for the next day. (“You get to be the line leader tomorrow.”) ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

### It's fun to be a good sport

My daughter Rosie had meltdowns when she lost games. When my other daughter Katie begged to play board games without her sister, I decided to ask the PE teacher for advice.

Mr. Jackson said that kids need to learn to lose—and win—gracefully, but what matters most at Rosie's age is having fun. So he focuses on players' efforts *and* their successes. For instance, if the class plays Duck, Duck, Goose, he cheers on students for trying hard as well as for catching other players.

Before our next board game, I encouraged Katie to congratulate Rosie on good moves. So she gave her sister a high-five when she captured one of my tokens. When Katie won and Rosie started whining, she said, “I know you're mad you lost, but wasn't it fun to capture Dad's tokens?”

It took a few games, but Rosie has started congratulating Katie on good moves, too. She's still not happy when she loses, but I think she's realizing that games are fun no matter who wins. ♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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