

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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## KID BITS

### Telling the truth

Oops! Your youngster says she didn't spill paint on the rug, but you're pretty sure she did. Gently encourage her to tell the truth. ("I know you wish you hadn't spilled the paint, but it's better to be honest.") Your calm reaction may make her feel more comfortable telling you the truth in the future.

### Family fire drill

More fires occur in the winter than during any other season. As a family, make a fire escape plan. Talk about exit routes from each room in your house, and name a safe place to meet outside, like at a neighbor's home. Then, hold a drill to practice. *Idea:* Have your child draw a map of your plan.

### Collect opposites

Opposites take on more meaning when your youngster can see or hear them. Let him create an opposites collage—he might glue on scraps of *rough* sandpaper and *smooth* satin or strips of *shiny* foil and *dull* paper. Or he could record opposite sounds (a *loud* alarm and a *soft* whisper, *high* and *low* xylophone notes).

### Worth quoting

"The more we share, the more we have." *Leonard Nimoy*

### Just for fun

**Mason:** These shoes don't fit!

**Mom:** You put them on the wrong feet.

**Mason:** These are the only feet I've got!



## Read-alouds build readers

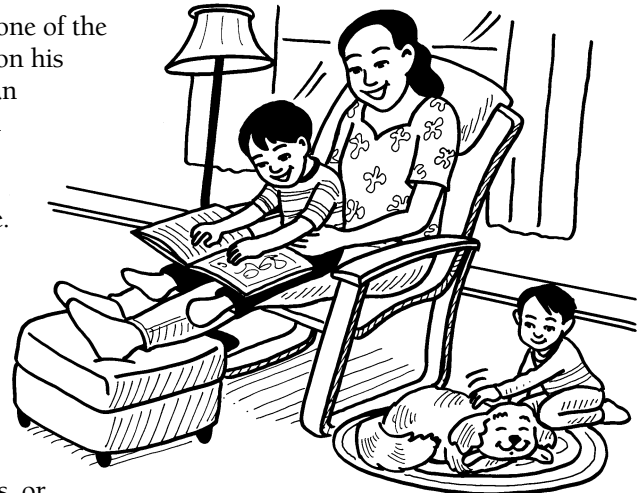
Reading to your child is one of the best ways to help him read on his own. And letting him play an active role in story time will speed up his progress. Use these ideas for encouraging him to be an eager audience.

### Touch the book

Kids this age are hands-on learners, so give your youngster opportunities to touch and handle books. He might turn the pages for you, run his finger underneath the words, or point to and name items in the pictures. All of this helps him become familiar with books and how they "work."

### Fill in the blanks

As you read, pause occasionally for your youngster to supply the next word. In *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* (Pam Adams), he could look at the pictures and "read" what the lady swallows on each page. Or he might use the context of a sentence to predict a word. *Example:* "It's a perfect day for a bike \_\_\_\_" (ride).



### Listen for rhymes

Read a rhyming story like *Green Eggs and Ham* (Dr. Seuss), and have your child clap when he hears a rhyme. Then, ask him to look at the words and compare them. What parts are the same? What's different? (*Sam* and *ham* both end with *am* but start with different letters and sounds.) He'll see how words with similar patterns often sound similar—knowledge he will use when sounding out new words.♥

## Make someone's day

Kindness makes the world a nicer place. Try these day brighteners with your youngster, and she'll see how good it feels to be kind:

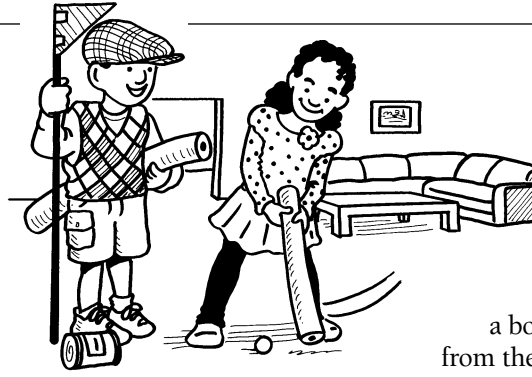
- While you're out and about, tell your child to be on the lookout for kind things to do for others. For example, she might put a dime in a parking meter that's about to expire. Or she could help unload a bulky item from someone's shopping cart at the checkout.
- A little one's drawing can bring a smile to an older person's face. Encourage your youngster to draw or paint pictures with bright colors. Together, deliver her masterpieces to residents at a senior center.♥



# Less screen time = more family time

Replace TV, video games, and cell phones with face-to-face family time! Here are easy ideas that encourage you to laugh, play, and talk together in person.

**Instead of TV shows at breakfast...** put cereal boxes on the table, and take turns reading the jokes, facts, or stories on them. Make up your own tales, too. Your child can start with “Once upon a time.” Then, go around the table, adding to the story until someone wraps it up with “happily ever after.” These activities will all build language skills.



**Instead of video games after school...** make a game using things from around the house. Your youngster could use her creativity to create an indoor golf course with cardboard, paper cups, empty cans, and other objects. Or she might set up a bowling game with plastic bottles from the recycling bin and a tennis ball.

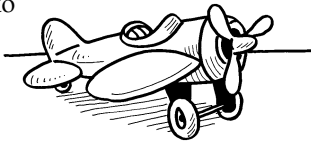
**Instead of cell phone apps in the car...** boost your child’s powers of observation by listing items to spot out the car window (heron, ice cream shop, orange car). Let her check off each thing that someone finds. How many can you get before you reach your destination? ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT Parents pitch in

One night, my son Eli was unhappy because his favorite toy airplane at school was broken. He asked if I would fix it.

The next day, I talked to the teacher and offered to repair the airplane, and any other toys that needed to be fixed, over the weekend. She was grateful for the help, and as I worked, I had an idea. What if parents formed a club to do tasks for busy teachers? I mentioned this to the teacher and a couple of other parents, and they thought it was a good idea. So together, we formed a volunteer team.



Now when teachers have a job for us, they email me, and I coordinate with the other volunteers to schedule the tasks. So far this year, in addition to fixing toys, we’ve washed dress-up clothes, built a puppet stage, and taken pictures for the school website. ♥

**OUR PURPOSE**

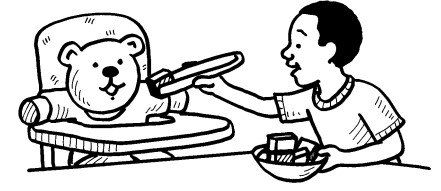
To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Tweezers and tongs

Little fingers need strong muscles for writing, cutting, coloring, and more. Provide your youngster with tweezers and tongs for giving those muscles a workout.



**With tongs:**

- Take turns adding one wooden or foam block at a time to a tower. See how tall you can make the building before it falls over.
- Have him serve snacks to himself or feed “snacks” to his stuffed animals.
- At bath time, he can fish toys out of the water and into a bucket.

**With tweezers:**

- Let your youngster place pennies into his piggy bank.
- Make a messy pile of toothpicks, and pick up one toothpick at a time.
- Hide small toys in a bowl of uncooked rice, and ask your child to “rescue” them. ♥

## Q & A Learning with games

**Q:** My children love board games and card games. Can you recommend some educational ones?

**A:** Good news—it’s easy to find games that help children with a variety of skills. For instance, playing Candy Land is a fun way for kids to learn colors, Hi Ho! Cherry-O lets them practice counting, and Boggle Jr. is great for spelling. There are many versions of Zingo!—these games teach everything from sight words to number recognition and telling time.

And games like checkers and Concentration let children work on planning ahead, remembering, and solving problems. All of these games can teach your youngsters to follow rules, take turns, and show good sportsmanship, too.

When you’re shopping at a store or a yard sale, look for games that fit your children’s interests and abilities. You could also swap with neighbors or ask relatives to hand down games their children have outgrown. ♥

