

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2011

KID BITS



I remember!

Teach your child this memory trick to help her remember more of what she learns in class. First, state three facts (“I’m 34 years old,” “We live in Texas,” “Tomorrow is Presidents’ Day”). Then, have her touch three fingers, one at a time, as she repeats them. When this becomes easy for her, try four facts.

A new baby

Your youngster might welcome a new sibling more easily if you enlist his help. For example, let him choose an outfit for the baby or sing her a lullaby. *Tip:* Mention the baby to his teacher, since a big change at home can affect his behavior in school.

Sports sign-up

It’s not too soon to think about spring! Sports sign-ups start early, so if your child wants to try T-ball, soccer, or gymnastics, now is a good time to find out what’s available. Check with parks and recreation departments, community centers, and places of worship for free or low-cost options.

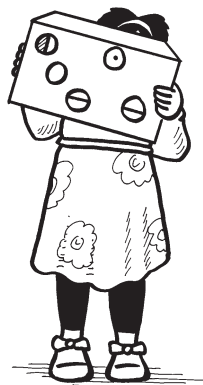
Worth quoting

“Be silly. Be honest. Be kind.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Just for fun

Q: What can you put in a box that will make it lighter?

A: Holes.



Playing with poetry

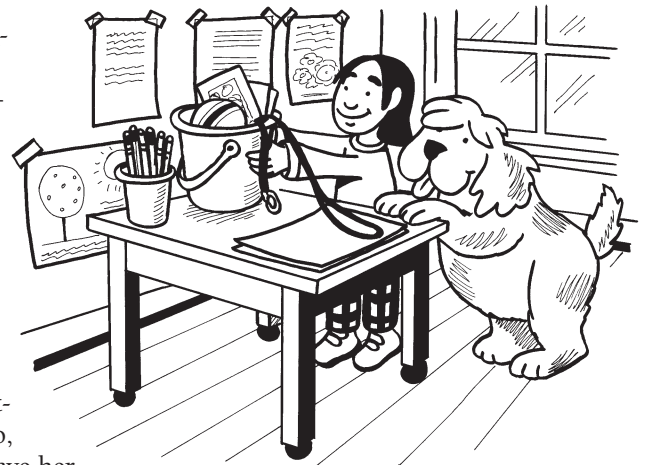
Introducing your youngster to poetry can help her learn about—and enjoy—language. Try these activities to inspire her.

Finger plays

Together, use hand motions when you recite counting rhymes. Ask your child to teach you some that she has learned at school, such as “Five Little Monkeys” or “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe.” Then, have her try to make up hand motions for other poems. Thinking of actions to go with the words will help her practice listening and reading comprehension skills.

Poetry paintings

Read a poem to your youngster, and suggest that she paint a picture to go along with it. This will encourage her to think about what the poem means. She might enjoy using finger paints or watercolors. Ask her to tell you which words in the poem gave her ideas for her picture. *Tip:* Help her write the poem’s title



and the poet’s name on each painting, and collect the pictures in a folder.

Poem bucket

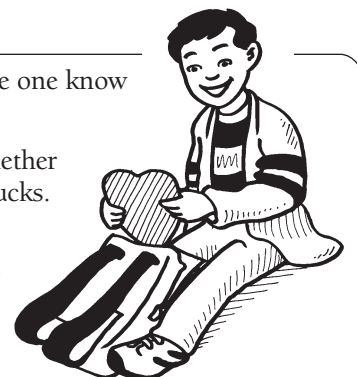
Have your child write her own poetry. She can start by choosing a favorite topic and gathering related toys or household items in a “poem bucket.” For instance, if she wants to write about her dog, she might get his old leash, ball, and picture. Then, help her write or dictate a line about each object. Encourage her to use short phrases that rhyme. When she’s finished, have her put her poem in the bucket along with the items.♥

“I love you!”

Here are some fun and easy ways to let your little one know how special he is:

- Spend time together doing something he likes, whether you’re pretending to be superheroes or racing toy trucks.
- Include him in things you enjoy. You might take him with you to the coffee shop on Saturday morning and let him order for both of you. Or plan a special trip to the bookstore and ask him to choose a book for you to read together.

- Cut out a paper heart. Write “You’re a great kid!” on it, and tuck it into his school bag.♥



Responsible me

Who is responsible for your youngster's words and actions? He is! These suggestions can help you raise a child who takes pride in his growing responsibility:

- Use the word "responsible" frequently. It will become a regular part of your child's vocabulary, and he'll start thinking of himself as a responsible person. You might say, "You're responsible for giving this note to your teacher" or, "Can you be responsible for replacing the toilet paper?"



- Encourage your youngster to take responsibility for his words and actions. When he agrees to do something ("I promise I'll clean it up"), let him know he's responsible for following through. If he makes a mistake, help him decide how to fix it. Say he breaks a friend's pencil—he might sharpen a new one for her.

- Help your child keep a list of ways he shows responsibility each day. When you ask him about his day at school, have him tell you something responsible he did and write it down ("I was the line leader"). He'll have a reminder of how responsible he is becoming. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Fun with textures

These activities can help your youngster notice different textures and learn science vocabulary.

What's the pattern?

Can your child figure out a pattern just by touch?



Have your youngster close her eyes while you choose two sets of objects with different textures and line them up in a pattern (cotton ball, barrette, cotton ball, barrette). With her eyes still closed, let her feel the items and tell you what comes next in the pattern (cotton ball). Then, she can make a pattern for you to identify by touch.

Texture hunt

Encourage your child to search for different textures in your house or yard. Have her find objects that are smooth, rough, soft, and hard. Ask her to describe how each one feels. ("The rock is smooth. The pinecone is rough.") ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q & A

Surprise bag

Q: We spend a lot of time in the car running errands and taking our daughter to school and activities. How can I keep her occupied?

A: Try turning car time into learning time with a special "to-go bag."

Get a reusable shopping bag from a grocery store or dollar store, and toss in a few different items each time you go out. For example, one day you might include a small muffin pan and colorful beads that your youngster can count and sort into the cups. Another day, put in some clay and spare change. Your child can press the coins into the clay to make prints or roll the coins inside the clay and then dig them out to strengthen her hand and finger muscles.

Tip: For extra reading and writing practice, include a picture book, writing tablet, and crayons and markers. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Dealing with autism

Our son has always been quiet. We weren't concerned until his teacher raised the issue one day when I picked him up from school. She said that Andy didn't speak much in class and he wasn't interested in playing with the other children.

She suggested that we talk to his pediatrician, who referred us to a specialist. That doctor diagnosed Andy with a mild form of autism. We were surprised, since our son knows a lot of words. The specialist explained

that many children with autism can talk, but they struggle with social skills.

Andy qualified for speech and occupational therapy from the school system, and he's making progress. The therapists gave us ideas to use at home, and we

joined an autism support group. Through events like playgroups and picnics, we're getting to know other people in our situation, and it helps to know we're not alone. ♥

