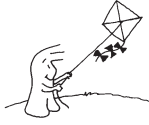


Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2011



KID BITS

Strategy games

Card games that you played as a child, such as Go Fish and Old Maid, can teach your youngster to think strategically. She'll learn to remember what she did on her last turn and to anticipate another player's next move ("She asked for a 5, so she probably has at least one 5").

Giggle time

Laughter can help your youngster relax and stay upbeat. Encourage a sense of humor by laughing together at funny books like *Hey, Pancakes!* by Tamson Weston or *The Foot Book* by Dr. Seuss. A librarian can recommend more silly titles.

Words that fit

Boost your child's vocabulary by asking him to guess words he'll hear when he goes somewhere. *Example:* "Can you think of three words they'll use at the birthday party?" (presents, cake, candles). Then, suggest a few more challenging words (helium, piñata). Try this in a variety of situations (grocery store, visiting Grandma).

Worth quoting

"There's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self."

Aldous Huxley

Just for fun

Q: Why do polar bears have fur coats?

A: Because they would look silly in parkas!



My community

Exploring your community will show your child how people live and work together. Try these activities so he can discover what makes your city or town special.

See your town

Take a walk through your town and point out buildings (houses, apartments, businesses, schools). Help your youngster read signs like "dry cleaner," "pizza," or "post office." Encourage him to tell you why each place is important ("We need a gas station so people can put gas in their cars"). He will learn what kind of homes and businesses make up a community.

Thank workers

Some places, such as dental offices, restaurants, and fire stations, post customers' greeting cards and thank-you notes on a bulletin board. Help your child notice what workers do and write them a note. He might choose something specific that he liked ("The tacos tasted so good") or show appreciation



for something special ("Thank you for letting me sit inside the fire truck").

Act it out

Pretend play can help your youngster understand what people do in your community. After an outing, take out toys and household items that will spark his imagination. For example, if you visit a bakery, gather a rolling pin, an apron, play dough, and cookie cutters. When you come home from the veterinarian's office, give your child stuffed animals, a toy stethoscope, and bandages.

Tip: If you visit other communities, talk about how they are the same as and different from your own. ♥

Staying focused

As your youngster gets older, she'll need to concentrate on tasks for longer stretches of time. Here are ways you can help increase her attention span:

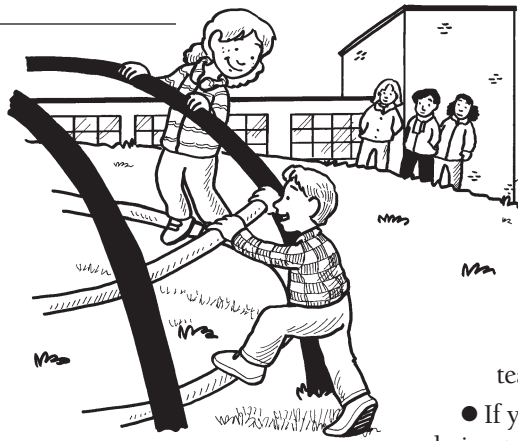
- Suggest hands-on activities that require attention to detail, such as cutting out paper dolls, putting together jigsaw puzzles, or searching for four-leaf clovers.
- Audiobooks can encourage your child to sit and listen to a story. Look for these in the library or at a used bookstore. Before she starts one, say, "When you're finished, tell me what the story was about." Knowing she'll get to share with you will motivate her to pay close attention. ♥



How to handle teasing

Remember the old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”? It’s not really true—youngsters can be hurt by teasing and nasty words. Arm your child with tools like these to help her cope with teasing:

- Listen when she tells you she’s being teased. Then, help her practice responses. She might just shrug and walk away to play near the teacher. If she feels confident enough, she can tell the other youngster,



“That’s not nice, and it hurts my feelings.” *Tip:* Have her practice in front of a mirror or with family members.

- Talk with your child. Ask her why the teasers might be acting that way. Do other children tease them? Also, you might share stories from your childhood of how you were teased and how you handled it.

- If your youngster tells you a classmate is being teased, praise her for letting you know and suggest ways she might help. For instance, she can invite the child to play at recess or sit beside her during circle time.

Note: Talk to your youngster’s teacher right away if she is frequently teased or seems afraid of another child.♥

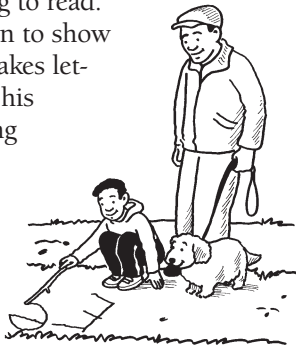
Q & A Fun with handwriting

Q: My son Noah is learning to print in school. I usually use a computer at work and at home—how can I help him?

A: Most of your child’s school assignments will be handwritten when he’s young, so it’s important for him to write legibly. Also, learning to form letters can help him distinguish one from another (E vs. F, M vs. W), which is an important step in learning to read.

Ask your son to show you how he makes letters, and copy his examples. Being in the role of “teacher” will motivate him to practice.

Also, try to provide a variety of tools for writing, such as colored pencils, fine-tipped washable markers, and glitter pens. Using different colors and textures can make handwriting fun. Your child might even write outside—he can use a twig to make letters in snow, sand, or dirt.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Jump and measure!

A family jumping contest is a fun, active way for your child to practice measuring. Try these steps.

1. Jump. Use chalk or tape to mark a starting line. Each athlete stands on the line, swings his arms, and jumps forward as far as he can. Hand him chalk to mark his landing point and write his initials beside it.

2. Measure. After each turn, have your youngster measure how far the person jumped. He can use his own feet as a unit of measurement by walking heel-to-toe in a straight line between marks. Let him write the correct number of “feet” by each person’s name on a sheet of paper.

3. Compare. Ask him questions about the results. “How many ‘feet’ was the longest jump?” (9) “The shortest?” (4) Help him find the difference between the shortest and longest jumps. (5 “feet”)

Tip: Play a few more times to give family members a chance to beat their distances!♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Parent helpers

Last fall, my daughter’s teacher invited parents to share talents and hobbies with the class throughout the year.

A mother who is a professional photographer showed her cameras and some photos she had taken. Another mom loves gardening but couldn’t go to school because of her work schedule, so she sent seeds for the kids to plant. And

a father who coaches soccer showed the class how to dribble and pass.

My daughter came home excited about each demonstration, and she wanted me to visit her class, too. I enjoy quilting, so I shared several of my finished quilts with the class. I also took in a quilt in progress so I could show the students how I make them.

The kids had fun and, best of all, my daughter was proud that I had helped her class.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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