

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

KID BITS



Safety first

Keep your child safe at school with these clothing tips. Have her wear shoes that fit properly and either tie or velcro. They're less likely to cause accidents than floppy shoes such as sandals. Also, avoid baggy clothes and cords or strings on clothing that can get caught in playground equipment.

You're the star!

Give your youngster—and yourself—a lifetime of priceless memories. On his birthday, tape him playing, singing, and telling a little about his life. Continue each year, using the same tape. You'll have a treasured record of your child growing up.

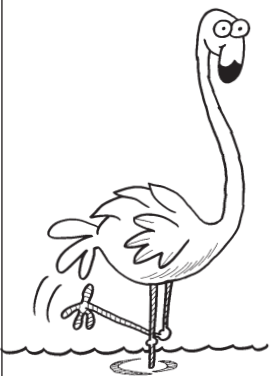
Breakfast reading

Breakfast time is a great time to work on reading skills. Quiz your youngster about the sounds of consonants and vowels on her cereal box. Try saying the sound of a letter and asking her to find it on the box.

Worth quoting

"Goodness is the only investment that never fails." *Henry David Thoreau*

Just for fun



Q: Why does a flamingo hold up one leg?

A: If he held up both, he'd fall down.

Better behavior

Through loving discipline

As your children grow up, it's natural for them to challenge you. Sometimes, it seems easier to just let them have their way. But all youngsters need limits, and they need parents to guide them.

Discipline works best with a balance of love, respect, clearly defined rules, and understanding. Here are some secrets of effective discipline.



Make the rules clear

Children do best when they know what to expect. Talk about family rules, explaining the consequences clearly. For example, for a rule such as "Take care of belongings," you might tell them if they leave their bikes out, they don't get to ride them the next day. As your youngsters learn to read, write down the rules and put them on the refrigerator as a reminder. *Tip:* Children are more likely to remember the rules if there are a few broad ones, rather than many specific ones.

Be consistent and firm

You can expect your youngsters to "test" the rules from time to time. When they do, try to stand your ground and apply the set consequences. Being firm and consistent lets them know that you mean business.

Give positive feedback

Try to focus more on what your children do right than on what they do wrong. This will encourage them to try even harder to behave. So, when you see behavior you'd like repeated, let them know. *Example:* "Thanks for hanging up your coat and backpack!" ♥

Build hand-eye coordination

Simple outdoor games can improve your youngster's hand-eye coordination for writing, drawing, and using scissors. Try these three:

1. Play catch with increasingly smaller balls (beach ball, soccer ball, softball). Or have your child throw balls into goals of different sizes (laundry basket, large box).

2. Make a ring toss game. Cut the centers out of paper plates, and let your youngster toss the rings onto water bottles. Make the challenge more difficult by having her take a giant step backward after each successful toss.

3. Fill two spray bottles with water, and ask your child to draw two circles on the sidewalk with sidewalk chalk. Race to see who can soak a circle first. ♥



Q & A Telling the truth

Q: For the third time this week, my child told a lie. They weren't big ones, but how can I get her to stop? Why is she doing this?

A: Youngsters have vivid imaginations and are learning the difference between fantasy and fact. Talk with your daughter about what's real and what isn't. *Example:* "Do talking purple dinosaurs really



exist? Let's look up dinosaurs in the encyclopedia and find out."

Children also lie to avoid embarrassment. Confronting your youngster about eating a cookie without permission may prompt her to say a monster ate it. Remind her to tell the truth, even if she's done something she shouldn't. You might say, "It's fun to pretend there are monsters, but they aren't real. What is our rule about having snacks before dinner?"

Pointing out when your child tells the truth will help build honest behavior. Write down when she admits to doing something wrong or tells you about what she has done before you are aware of it. Review the list with her, and tell her you're proud of her honesty. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



Waiting games

Waiting has become a part of our everyday lives. The next time you hear, "How much longer?" try one of these ideas to occupy your children:



▲ Play word games. Start with a simple word like *up*. Take turns thinking of opposites (*down*).

▲ Take the change out of your pocket, and let your youngsters sort it. Tell them the names of the coins, and talk about how they're alike and different. "The quarters and dimes are both silver. But the quarters are big, and the dimes are small."

▲ Work on counting forward and backward. For an extra challenge, have your children try counting from a number other than 1. For instance, you say, "7..." they would continue, "8, 9, 10."

▲ Try an alphabet search. Look around the room and find the letter A on a sign or poster. Take turns finding the letters in order until you reach Z. ♥

Routines for learning

When parents get involved in learning, children are more successful. Help your youngsters get off to a good start in school by creating habits like these at home:

- Remind your children of rules such as "reading before play or television." They show them that learning is a top priority. Also, give them a comfortable place to read or draw without distractions.
- Make time each day to look over school papers with your youngsters. Be on the lookout for notes from their teachers, and mark important dates on the calendar.
- Sharing at dinnertime is an activity that can go beyond passing the platter. Ask your children to think of one new thing they learned during the day. It might spark an interesting conversation among everyone at the table. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

A calming effect

My daughter Amy always seemed to be "bouncing off the walls"—at home, at school, just about everywhere. I didn't know what to do.

Since my sister's son is also very active, I asked her for some advice. She suggested that Amy get as much exercise as possible. So, we try to go for a walk or play in the park almost every day. On other days, Amy rides her bike or plays running games with the other kids on our block.

I've noticed that Amy is especially "wired" when she's overtired, so I make sure she gets plenty of sleep. The difference these changes have made to her behavior is wonderful—and I'm calmer, too! ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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