

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

KID BITS



Safety first

Help your child stay safe with these clothing tips. Make sure she wears shoes that fit properly and either tie or have Velcro. They're less likely to cause accidents than floppy shoes like sandals or clogs. Also, avoid baggy clothes and cords or strings on clothing that can get caught in playground equipment.

Sizing things up

Take a walk around your neighborhood with your little one, and use objects you see to encourage him to compare sizes. Ask questions like "Is that mailbox *taller* or *shorter* than you?" or "Is the white rock *bigger* or *smaller* than the gray one?"

Helping hands

Trace around your child's hands on paper, and ask her to name different ways she is helpful. Maybe she takes care of your dog by feeding him and helps you by dusting. Together, write each example on a separate finger. Then, hang up her "helping hands" to remind her how helpful she can be.

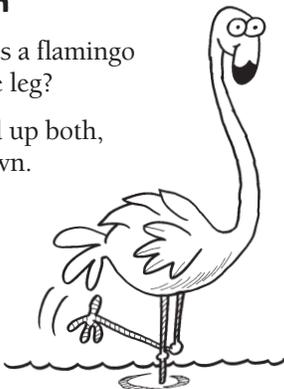
Worth quoting

"Wonder. Go on and wonder."
William Faulkner

Just for fun

Q: Why does a flamingo hold up one leg?

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



Keys to self-control

It can be a tall order for little ones to handle big emotions like anger, frustration, and disappointment. Work on increasing your child's self-control with these strategies to help him think before he acts.

Talk it out

Give your youngster words to use when he is upset. For example, if you can't find your glasses, you might say, "I feel so *frustrated!* Where did I last have them?" Then, when he's aggravated (say, he misplaced his favorite book), encourage him to use similar words. ("I feel *upset* because I want my book. I was looking at it in the living room—maybe it's there.") He'll learn to talk through his problems and be less likely to cry or whine.

Think ahead

Prepare for situations where self-control comes in handy. You could say, "I'm going to be on a work call. Let's think about what you can do if your sister is playing with a toy you want." He



may ask to join her, or he could play with another toy until she's finished. Having a plan can help your child avoid grabbing the toy or yelling at his sister.

Calm down

When your youngster begins to get upset, suggest ways to keep his cool. For instance, he might take a deep breath, count to five, or draw a picture of how he is feeling. The distraction may be enough to settle him down. And once he's used to these techniques, he'll be able to do them without a reminder from you.♥

Family playtime

Has the grown-up world left you too tired to play? Consider these ideas that will let you connect with your youngster—and unwind after a long day:

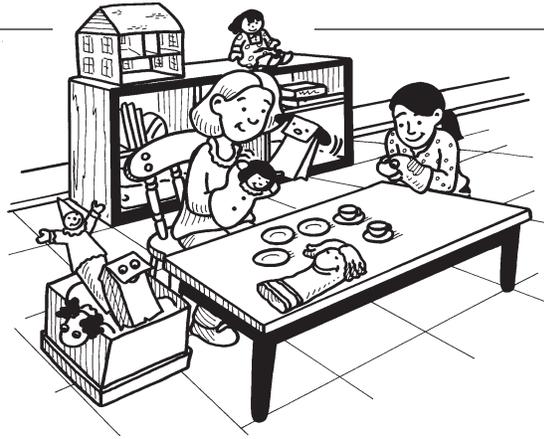
- Show her what you liked to play when you were her age. You could teach her a card game, a jump rope rhyme, or a magic trick, for instance. Next, ask her to teach you a game or an activity she enjoys.
- Step into a role. You might each pretend to be someone else (a cashier and a customer, a bird and a squirrel) while carrying on a conversation. Encourage your child to think about what her character would sound like and what she would say.
- At bedtime, shine a flashlight on the walls, ceiling, and floor. Have your youngster "chase" your beam with her own flashlight. Then, trade roles.♥



Let me think...

When your youngster is faced with a challenge, it's fun for her to come up with more than one solution or possibility. Stretch her thinking with these activities.

Puppet problem-solving. Offer a pretend dilemma for puppets, and help your child act out the solution. You could make your puppet say, "Oh, no! I have too many dishes to carry! How can I get them to the party?" (Put them in a bag, ask a friend to take some.)



Answers and questions. Tell your youngster, "The answer is a blanket. What is the question?" Take turns coming up with as many questions as possible. ("What keeps you warm at night?" "What do we sit on at a picnic?") When you run out of ideas, let her think of a new answer to make up questions for.

Stay in touch with teachers

Regular communication with your youngster's teacher sets the stage for success—and makes it easier to connect if you have a concern. Need something to talk about? Try these ideas:

- Ask for reading recommendations. The teacher is sure to know some great books you can read aloud to your child.



- Find out what the class will study next, perhaps winter weather or fairy tales.

- Tell the teacher about activities you and your youngster do at home together like planting bulbs in the garden, coloring, or telling knock-knock jokes.

- Share things your child likes about school. The teacher will be glad to know that your youngster especially enjoys read-alouds or music time.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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PARENT TO PARENT

That's my name!

My daughter has learned to read and write her first word: "Sarah." When she started school, the teacher sent home a list of ideas to help her recognize her name—and the suggestions worked!

For example, I wrote her name in pencil and let her use a different-colored marker to trace each letter as she said it out loud: "S-a-r-a-h." We also made a name puzzle. She printed her name on cardboard and drew squiggly lines between the letters. I cut them apart, and she put the puzzle back together.

Her favorite activity is listening to stories about characters named Sarah. At the library, we checked out *Sarah's Story* by Bill Harley and *Sarah Morton's Day* by Kate Waters. She loves pointing to her name as I read.

Now Sarah is learning to read other names in our family. She made puzzles for her sisters, and she wants to find library books with their names, too.♥



Getting enough sleep

Q: My son has a hard time falling asleep at night. How can I make it easier for him?

A: Getting enough sleep—10–13 hours a night—will help your child grow, stay healthy, and do well in school.

First, have him stick to a nightly bedtime routine. Your son might take a bath, brush his teeth, and listen to a story, for instance. Repeating the routine each night helps him recognize

it's time for sleep. Also, research shows that watching TV or playing video games close to bedtime can get kids wound up and keep them from sleeping. If he uses electronics, have him turn them off at least an hour before bedtime.

Finally, encourage the rest of the family to read or do other quiet activities after he says good night. Your youngster may have an easier time going to bed—and staying there—if he doesn't feel like he's missing out on the fun.♥

