

Early Childhood Parents®

March 2012
Vol. 16, No. 7

Gateway Head Start-Early Head Start
Gateway Community Action Partnership

make the difference!



Teach your preschooler the importance of responsibility

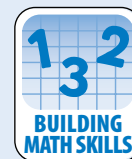
Even though your child is still quite young, she is old enough to learn that there are some things people *must* do, even if they don't want to. This is called responsibility.

Here's how you can instill responsibility in your preschooler:

- **Give your child** an age-appropriate task. Your child cannot follow through on a job if she isn't capable of doing it in the first place. She cannot clean up the whole house. But she can pick up her toys and put them in the box.
- **Make it clear** that this job is your child's, not yours. "Every day, you must put all of your toys in the box. This is *your* job. If I have to do it, the toys will go up on the shelf where you can't reach them."
- **Explain** to your child. "I know it is fun to play. It isn't fun to pick up toys. But the toys belong in the box and not on the floor. If you want to play with them, you have to clean up when you are finished using them."
- **Follow through** on consequences. Put the toys out of reach if your child refuses to pick them up. Leave them there for one day, then get them back down. Remind your child again. "The toys are back, but you will have to pick them up when you are finished playing. If you don't, they will go away again."

Source: J. Taylor, "Children and Responsibility: Teaching Kids the Importance of Following Through," Huffington Post, www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-jim-taylor/children-responsibility-suck-it-up_b_764836.html.

Start teaching your child math concepts now!



Is your preschooler ready to learn long division? Probably not! But most preschoolers can

prepare to learn complicated math skills. This makes it easier to solve problems in the future.

Encourage your child to:

- **Write and say numbers.** "Let's count together. One, two ..."
- **Count interesting things.** "How many blocks are in your tower?"
- **Find matching items.** "Where's the matching sock?"
- **Put things in order.** "Can you line up these cups from shortest to tallest?"
- **Notice patterns.** "Your shirt has stripes. They go red, blue, red, blue, red, blue."
- **Organize objects** into groups. "Cans go in the pantry. Fruit goes in the bowl."
- **Recognize shapes.** "What shape is your plate? How about your cookie?"
- **Measure in different ways.** "You're 39 inches tall!" "We need a 1/2 cup of water."

Source: E. Geist, "What Mathematical Concepts Do Preschool Children Learn?" education.com, www.education.com/reference/article/mathematics-concept-preschool-learn/.

Did you know that preschool sets the stage for a lifetime of success?



Preschool doesn't just prepare kids for kindergarten. Research shows that preschool teaches lifelong skills. Scientists compared disadvantaged kids who attended preschool to disadvantaged kids who didn't, and the preschool group grew up to have less sickness and trouble with the law—and better finances and employment!

What's so special about preschool? It builds abilities that are easier to learn at a young age, such as:

- **How to share.** Adults have to share with family, coworkers, neighbors and others. Preschoolers are taught the Golden Rule, which basically means "Treat others the way you want to be treated."
- **How to disagree politely.** It's healthy—and helpful—to have different views. It's not okay to

show them in destructive ways. Preschoolers learn the basics, including how to use polite words instead of aggressiveness.

- **How to make up.** Everyone makes mistakes. Preschoolers practice apologizing and forgiving. With help, they also learn from mistakes and improve themselves.

Source: A. Blumberg, "Preschool: The Best Job-Training Program," NPR, www.npr.org/blogs/money/2011/08/12/139583385/preschool-the-best-job-training-program.

"The more you can show children the purpose of the skills they're learning, the more they're going to see the power that the skills can provide."

—Diane Levin, Ph.D.
professor, author

A new season can result in new experiences for your preschooler



The changing of the seasons may be familiar to you, but it is exciting for a young child. There are so many new ways to use his senses. And a whole new set of possible activities opens up, as well. This is especially true now, as winter changes to spring.

Here are some ways to enjoy this new season with your child:

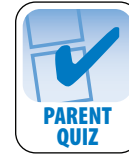
- **Show your child the fun** in a windy day. Go to the park and fly a kite together. Or put on oversize T-shirts and pretend to be kites as the shirts flap around you. Take note of what other things blow around in the wind. What

are the flags doing? How about the trees?

- **Walk outside with your child** when the weather permits. What signs of spring can each of you find? Have a "spring scavenger hunt." Look for crocuses pushing up, buds on the trees and birds nesting.
- **Explore the grocery store** with your child on a day when you have to be indoors. Search for fruits and vegetables that are coming into season now. Choose one together. Take it home and prepare it for your next meal.

Source: "Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring Activities," National Association for the Education of Young Children, www.naeyc.org/tyc/missjackie/winterspringactivities.

Are you building your preschooler's social skills?



Social skills help your child in all relationships, including those with her teachers. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below

to see if you're helping your child develop social skills:

- ___ **1. Do you give** your child opportunities to play with peers—at preschool, your home and playgrounds?
- ___ **2. Do you practice** essential social skills at home, such as taking turns and saying *please* and *thank you*?
- ___ **3. Do you model** positive ways to communicate with others, including when you're angry or upset?
- ___ **4. Do you compliment** your child when she's kind to others? "You shared your snack with Sarah. She's so happy!"
- ___ **5. Do you point out** social skills you see in books, on TV and elsewhere? "Look! The puppy was nice to the kitten. Now they're friends!"

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're helping your child socialize well. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

Early Childhood
Parents
make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1267

For subscription information call or write:
The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit our website: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2012 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Maria Koklanaris & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Conversations help you prepare your child for kindergarten



It is always important to talk with your child. But when your child is about four, his language skills are exploding.

Having as many conversations as you can takes advantage of his new skills. And it also puts your preschooler on the best track to be ready for kindergarten.

Here are some new ways to talk to your child:

- **Use more complex words.** Instead of telling your child, “I’m happy,” try saying, “I’m *delighted!*” Say it with a big smile on your face and he will likely get your meaning.

And you have just expanded his vocabulary.

- **Introduce concepts.** Your child can now understand more about time, for example. He knows everything does not happen right now. Use the words *yesterday* and *tomorrow*. With a calendar, show him *next week* or even *next month*.
- **Use figures of speech.** “You are being as quiet as a mouse!”
- **Continue reading to your child** daily, and talk about the story, setting and characters in the book.

Source: “Child Development Tracker: Language,” PBS, www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopmenttracker/four/language%20.html.

Have science fun with your preschooler during bath time



Most preschoolers love to splish and splash in the bathtub. While they’re there, they can learn some important

science concepts.

To turn your tub into a fascinating science lab, gather together some important science tools: sponges, a meat baster, plastic boats, empty plastic bottles, a small rock, a spoon, plastic tubes and straws, plastic pitchers, a large plastic bowl, soap bubbles and rubber animals. Put these near the tub in a netted bag that can be hung up to dry.

For your science activities, encourage your child to:

- **See which items** sink and float.
- **Use the pitchers** to pour and measure. Discuss the meaning of *full*, *half full* and *empty*.
- **Pour water** into plastic bottles. Ask, “Which has more water?”

“Which has less?” Have your child pour each bottle’s water into a bowl to verify his predictions.

- **Fill one container** with water and another with soap bubbles. Discuss the concepts of *heavy* and *light*.
- **Float the large bowl** on the water. Help your child count how many rubber animals he can put into his “boat” before it sinks.

While your child is in the tub, also review a little anatomy. Tell your child which body parts to wash. Start with the larger parts—like legs and arms. Then identify smaller ones—such as wrist, ankle, shoulder, knee and chin.

Then before your child gets out of the tub and dries off, have him count his fingers and toes!

Source: “Preschool Indoor Fun,” Gayle’s Preschool Rainbow, www.preschoolrainbow.org/parent.htm.

Q: My grandfather is in his 90s. He is now quite ill, and won’t be with us much longer. “Papa” has been an active and important part of my five-year-old daughter’s life. This will be her first experience with death and grief. How can I help her get through this sad situation?

Questions & Answers

A: It is never easy to lose someone you love. And although it is a painful subject, it is important and necessary for children to understand death and deal with grief.

Here are some tips:

- **Be honest with your child.** She probably understands that Papa is now much more frail than he used to be. Say simply, “Papa is very old. He has lived a great life. But he’s sick now, and his time here with us on earth is coming to an end. We’re going to miss him so much. And we’re going to let him know how much we’ll always love him.”
- **Reassure your child.** A young child will easily make the false association that if one loved person dies, another loved person might die soon, too. Say to your child, “I am here for you. I am going to take good care of myself. I will be with you for a long, long time.”
- **Share your beliefs.** If your family has religious beliefs about death and what follows, share them with your child.
- **Encourage your child to talk.** Make clear to your child that she can come to you with any questions or thoughts she has about what is happening.

—Maria Koklanaris,
The Parent Institute

The Kindergarten Experience

Improve your kindergartner's reading skills



Kindergarten has been underway for months and you may be wondering, "When will my child learn to read?"

Many kindergartners read simple books by the end of the year. But every child is different, and that's okay!

No matter what stage of reading your kindergartner is in, it's important to:

- **Use new words.** Mention them in ways that show what they mean. "Clifford is the biggest dog I've ever seen! He's *gigantic!*" This builds your child's vocabulary. Then she's more likely to recognize words when reading.
- **Read a variety of materials.** Eventually your child will read all kinds of things, such as poems, instructions, biographies and more. If you've exposed her to many printed materials, she'll be more comfortable with them.
- **Encourage participation.** Many kids memorize their favorite books. When you're reading aloud, let your child chime in and "read," too. If she can't figure out a word, let her give it a good try before sounding it out together.
- **Play with letters.** Practice making words out of letters, such as child-safe refrigerator magnets. You can also cut letters out of paper and arrange them into words together.

Source: "Discovering the Written Word," PBS, www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/kindergartner/main.html.

Self-confidence can boost your child's success in kindergarten

A confident child is a child with a head start. A confident child believes he can learn, believes he can make friends and believes he can be a success. And he sets out to do so. Look for and encourage these signs of self-confidence in your kindergartner:

- **Your child likes himself.** He seems comfortable with himself and is happy, most of the time, at home and at school. He rarely puts himself down.
- **Your child is optimistic.** His attitude is usually, "I can do it!" "This will be fun!"
- **Your child has friends** and believes that his friends like him and that they will have a nice time when they get together.



- **Your child feels secure** around the adults in his life. He knows you love him unconditionally. He thinks his teacher likes him and wants to help him learn.

Source: "Lack of Self Confidence in Children," Lance Armstrong Foundation, www.livestrong.com/article/174132-lack-of-self-confidence-in-children.

Encourage your kindergartner to practice writing every day



Throughout school and life, people use writing to communicate feelings and knowledge. They write stories, letters, emails, essays, job applications and more. To help your kindergartner become a strong writer (and enjoy it!):

- **Keep writing supplies handy.** Provide a variety of materials that will interest him, such as pencils, markers, crayons, lined paper and construction paper. Make time to use them often.
- **Ask questions** that inspire writing. If your child draws a picture, have him describe it. "Can you

tell me a story about the person in your picture?" If he can't write the story, do it for him.

- **Make a book.** Have your child draw a series of pictures and put one on each page. Attach the pages with staples. Add words and read it together.
- **Look for opportunities to write.** Your child might copy a favorite poem, keep a journal, make a shopping list, take notes on a nature walk or send a card. You can also deliver "mail" to each other!

Source: "Helping Young Children Develop Strong Writing Skills," Reading Rockets and Colorín Colorado, www.readingrockets.org/webcasts/3001/.