

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2003

## KID BITS



### Snug as a bug?

Is your child's car or booster seat strapped snugly and properly into your vehicle? If you're not sure that it's installed correctly, contact your local police or fire department for assistance. For more information about car seats, go to [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

### A delicious thought

When the cereal box is almost empty, have your youngster pour what's left into a zip-top plastic bag. Then, add dried cranberries, soy nuts, peanuts, raisins, or sunflower seeds. Your child will have a nutritious snack that could save you a few pennies!

### Dialing for numbers

Does your child have trouble remembering her phone number? Help her practice dialing it on your home phone. And whenever you're out and need to call home, let her dial the number for you.

### Worth quoting

"To love a child is to act in the child's best interest." *John Rosemond*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why do firemen wear red suspenders?

**A:** To keep their pants from falling down!



## Ready for the future

Whether your child is in preschool, prekindergarten, or kindergarten, how do you know if your youngster is ready for next year? The following lists can be used as a guideline.

### Ready for kindergarten

Does your child...

- ✓ Show an interest in reading? Know that the print in books is actually words? Know how to use a pencil, crayons, and child-safe scissors?
- ✓ Follow simple rules and directions? Work successfully in small groups? Express her feelings in clear sentences?
- ✓ Count to 10 and recognize some letters of the alphabet? Know basic shapes (square, triangle, circle) and several colors?
- ✓ Take care of his belongings and help put things away? Use the bathroom and dress himself without assistance?

### Ready for first grade

Can your youngster...

- ✓ Write and spell her name? Copy letters, numbers, and shapes? Recognize and spell some common sight words?  
*Examples:* see, the, at, I, a, me, was.



- ✓ Listen quietly to a short story and answer questions about it? Do a simple puzzle?
- ✓ Repeat short messages? Work alone without distracting others? Be away from you all day without being upset?
- ✓ Follow three-step directions? *Example:* "Open the door, let the dog out, and close the door."

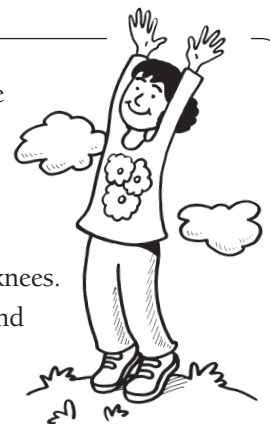
*Note:* All children develop at their own rate. If you have questions or concerns about whether your child is ready for next year, talk with his teacher or day-care provider. ♥

### Get moving!

As the weather gets warmer, make time to get your family outside for some physical activity. Before everyone heads out, try these stretching activities to warm up winter muscles:

1. Lie on the floor. Keeping your arms down flat, stretch them out to the sides. Then, raise them over your head.
2. From a standing position, squat down and hug your knees.
3. Stand up and reach high for the sky, first with one hand and then the other.

*Hint:* Repeat each exercise several times. To make warm-up even more fun, turn on your family's favorite music while you work out together. ♥



# Comprehension checkup

When you read a book to your child, you can usually tell if she enjoyed it. But how do you know if she understood it? Learning to follow what's going on in a story is an important reading skill.

As you read together, occasionally ask your youngster questions like these to check her comprehension:

- After reading the title aloud, ask, "What do you think this book might be about?"



- When you've read a page or two, ask, "Why do you think (a character) did what he did? Would you have done the same thing?"
- When you come across a new word, ask, "Can you tell me what this word might mean?"

After you've finished the book, pose these questions to your youngster:

- "Can you make up a different title for this story? A different ending?"
- "Did you like the story? Why or why not? What was your favorite part?"
- "What problem did (a character) have in the story? What was the solution?" ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Taking a nature hunt

Why not take advantage of your youngsters' curiosity by sending them on a nature scavenger hunt. It's a fun way to encourage a love of science and sharpen their observation skills at the same time. Ask them to search for items like these:

- ▲ five different rocks or flowers
- ▲ two feathers or seeds
- ▲ four leaves of different shapes
- ▲ something soft, cold, or slippery
- ▲ something green, orange, or brown
- ▲ a twig or branch longer than your finger



*Reminder:* Be sure your little ones don't take home things they find in a national or state park. Teach them this motto: "Take only memories, leave only footprints." ♥

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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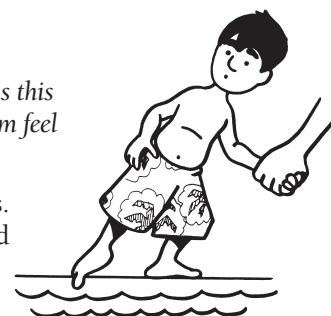
## Q & A Water fears

**Q:** I've signed up my child to take swimming lessons this summer, but he says he's afraid. How can I make him feel more comfortable?

**A:** Many children are anxious about trying new things. If your child hasn't had experience in water, you should start slowly. A plastic child-size pool filled with a few inches of water is a safe and fun way to introduce water play.

Next, help your youngster get used to larger areas of water. Start by taking him on a walk outside the swimming pool gate where he can see other children having fun. Then, spend time with him in the shallow areas of the pool, gradually working up to a water level at his waist. With a little time and patience, your son is likely to overcome his fear.

*Important:* Never leave a young child unattended near water. ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT A lesson in responsibility

Last month, a stray puppy found its way to our doorstep. After checking with our neighbors and scanning the newspaper's lost-and-found column, we realized the puppy needed a home. We decided that Max, as he was soon named, would become part of our family.

My wife and I had a long talk with our children about how to care for Max. The kids had a great time looking for books about

dog care at the library. Soon, everyone in the family had become responsible for some part of tending to Max.

Our eldest takes him out each morning and afternoon. Our middle child feeds him, and our youngest pours cups of water into his bowl when it gets low.

It has worked out beautifully. Max gets a lot of love and attention, and even our youngest child has learned a valuable lesson in responsibility. ♥

