

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2004

KID BITS



Week of the Young Child

The Week of the Young Child is April 18–24, 2004. What could you do to support this year's celebration? Consider reading aloud at your youngster's school. Or help the school arrange for someone else to do so, such as a local celebrity or politician.

Catch 'em being good

When you compliment your child for good behavior, you're apt to see more of it. *Example:* When your youngster puts away her toys, write a thank-you note and leave it on the toy box. Help her read it—and watch her smile!

Language builder

Try this vocabulary game with your child. Say a word (for instance, "hot"). Together, think of as many words as you can that are related to the word. *Examples:* "sun," "oven," "summer." Let your youngster choose the next word, and play again.

Worth quoting

"Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend." *Albert Camus*

Just for fun

Q: Which monster flies his kite in a rainstorm?

A: Benjamin Frankenstein.



Playing is learning

Did you know that some of the simplest things make the best toys for youngsters? Items like boxes, clothing, and pots and pans are usually already on hand. And most important, they encourage things children love best—creativity, learning, and play.

Try these activities with your child.

Boxes

Playing with empty boxes can build many skills. Your youngster will use his imagination to create, his fine-motor skills to stack, and his sequencing skills to think ahead. See how tall he can stack the boxes before they fall. Ask your child to copy a simple structure that you have built.

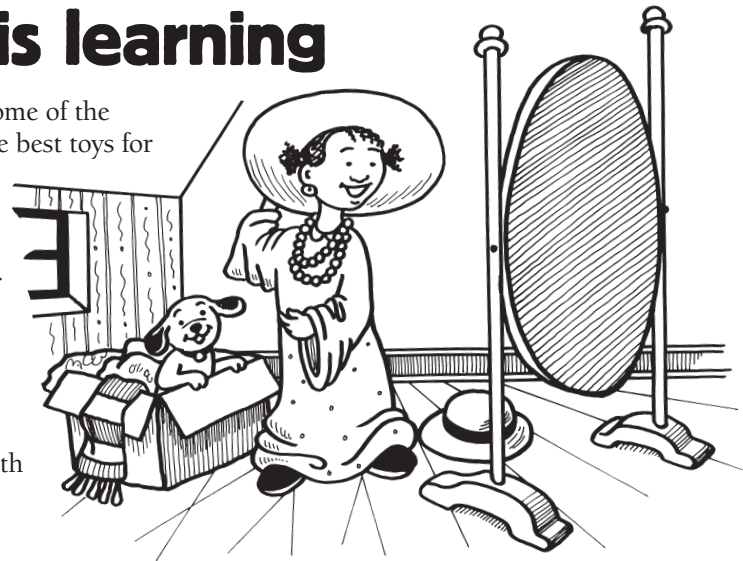
Hint: As he builds, help him count the boxes.

Clothing

Children like pretending they're everything from superheroes to mummies, ballerinas, and firefighters. Your youngster can explore her imagination by playing dress-up. Simply fill a plastic tub or box with a variety of items. Include hats (baseball hat, sombrero, helmet), clothing (dress, jacket, vest), and accessories (tie, belt, necklace, purse, briefcase).

Pots and pans

Pots and pans give kids practice with coordination, measurement, and

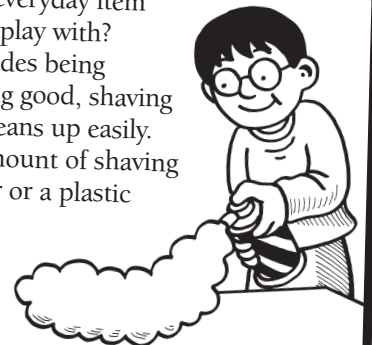


estimation. Let your youngster stack the pots, or sort the pans by size and fit them inside each other. Fill one pan with water, and ask him to guess whether the same amount of water will fit into the other pans. Then, let him check his guess. ♥

Clean up your act

What's another everyday item your youngster can play with? Shaving cream! Besides being squishy and smelling good, shaving cream is safe and cleans up easily.

Squirt a small amount of shaving cream onto a mirror or a plastic surface such as a placemat. Have your child use his fingers to draw or write in the shaving cream. When he's finished, wipe the area with a clean, damp cloth. For even more fun, add tempera paint or food coloring to the shaving cream.



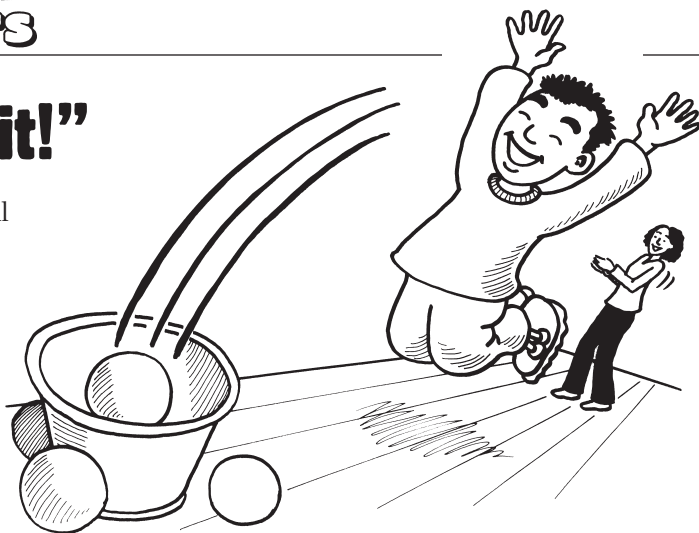
Editor's Note: Use a foam shaving cream rather than the gel type. ♥

“I can do it!”

“I can’t reach my toy. It fell behind the couch.” Want to turn your child’s negative thinking into something more positive? Teach him to turn “I can’t” into “I can.”

Ask questions to help your youngster come up with a solution. Examples:

“Can you think of a way that we could solve this problem?” “What could we use to get your toy?”



Recall other solutions with your child. Example: “Do you remember how we reached the bucket we needed? What did we use?”

Praise your youngster when he finds the solution to a problem. “Wow! Using the broom to get your toy is a good idea!” Letting him know you’re proud of him will encourage him to try again.

Building successful experiences will help build positive thinking. The next time your youngster says, “I can’t,” tell him, “Yes, you can do it. You’re a good thinker. Let’s find a way together.” ♥

Exploring the library

Libraries have some of the most valuable resources imaginable. Try these tips for making the most of what they have to offer—beyond the usual books and magazines:



▲ Many libraries provide computers for public use. If you’re not sure how to use them, just ask. *Remember:* Some libraries do not have filters (programs to screen out unsuitable material) on their computers. Be sure to sit with your little one while she explores online.

▲ Consider choosing videos based on books you and your child have read. When selecting videos, check the due dates. At some libraries, checkout time for videos is shorter than for books.

▲ Most libraries now have music cassettes and CDs that can be checked out. Look for lullabies and sing-alongs. Libraries may also offer books-on-tape (also known as audiobooks). ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Settling an energetic child

My daughter Brandy has always been easily “wound up.” She often gets so excited that she has trouble quieting down. My wife and I decided to make some changes in her routine to help her be calmer.

Each morning, we talk with Brandy about the day ahead. She seems to be more relaxed when she knows what to expect. We also noticed that she rarely had time by herself—either her mother, her younger brother, or I was always around. So now, we make sure she has several minutes each day to play alone in her room. Brandy actually looks forward to the quiet time.

These two simple steps have really helped Brandy relax. We love her enthusiasm and excitement—but we’re also happy that now she can calm down, too! ♥



Q & A Caregiver checklist

Q: Can you give me some tips on choosing a child-care provider for my youngster?

A: Consider these suggestions:

- Meet the child-care provider in his or her own space. Make sure the area is safe and includes fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and hand-washing facilities.
- Look for adequate indoor and outdoor play space for your child, as well as age-appropriate toys and learning materials.



- Visit the facility when children are present. Pay attention to whether the youngsters are enjoying themselves.
- Request an open-door policy that allows unannounced visits to the provider’s facility or home.
- Obtain several written references, or speak with other parents who use the provider’s services.

You may also want to create a written agreement detailing your and the provider’s expectations. Examples: drop-off and pick-up times, what happens when your youngster is sick, etc. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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