

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

November 2004

KID BITS



Lend a hand

Volunteering as a family is a great way to spend quality time with your kids while improving your community. It can be as simple as collecting canned goods to donate to a worthy cause or as organized as participating in a neighborhood cleanup day.

On-the-go magnet fun

If your child enjoys playing with magnetic letters on the refrigerator, try putting them on a baking sheet. Your youngster can practice reading and spelling outside on a nice day, in the car, or anywhere.

Benefits of friends

Did you know that having friends can help youngsters deal with difficult times? Children who don't have many close pals experience more stress-related problems than those who do. You can help your child make friends by inviting a classmate to dinner, a family outing, or a sleepover.

Source: New York University Child Study Center, www.aboutourkids.org

Worth quoting

"The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas."

Linus Pauling

Just for fun

Q: How many letters are in the alphabet?

A: Eleven: T-H-E-A-L-P-H-A-B-E-T



Do-it-yourself books

What's more fun than buying new books? Making them! Creating and using home-made books can teach your youngster a variety of skills. Try these ideas.

Letters

Make an alphabet book to help your child learn letters and sounds. Cut seven pieces of construction paper into quarters. Write one letter on each sheet, and use the remaining two for the cover. Have your child think of a word that starts with each letter. She can draw her own pictures to go with the word, or glue photos cut out of magazines.

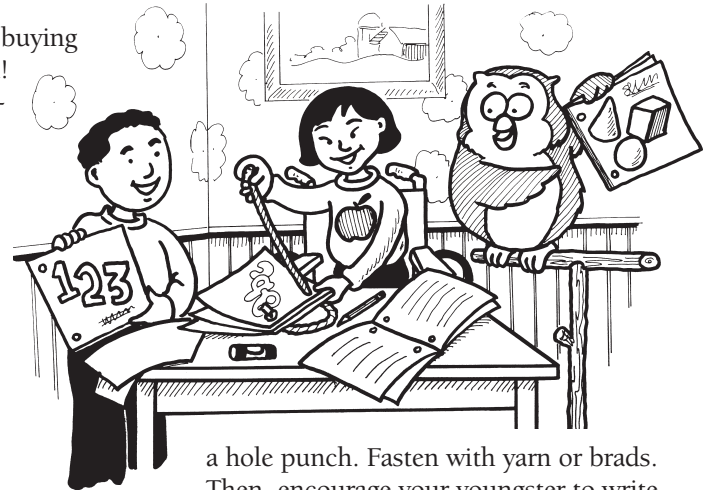
Numbers

Your youngster can practice counting and writing numbers with this book. Cut three pieces of construction paper into fourths. Number the pages 1 through 10, and save the other two sheets for the cover. Give your youngster some stickers, and have him place the correct number of stickers on each page.

Shapes

This book will teach your child about shapes, such as circles, squares, and triangles. Write the name of one shape on each page. Have your youngster draw or glue a picture with that same shape. For example, for "circle," she could draw a clock. Let her decorate two more sheets of paper for the cover.

Tips: After assembling the pages and the covers, make two holes in the edge of the book's pages with



a hole punch. Fasten with yarn or brads. Then, encourage your youngster to write his name on the cover, and have fun learning together! ♥

Stick to it!

Children often have trouble sticking to tasks like homework and chores. You can encourage persistence with these tips:

- Ask questions. If your youngster is asked to draw a house for homework, ask who lives there and what they're doing. Encourage him to add color and a background.
- Have a race. Set a kitchen timer or stopwatch, and challenge your child to put his clothes away before it goes off.
- Schedule breaks. Say, "Let's work for ten minutes, and then we'll have a snack."

Let your child know that you're proud of him when he doesn't give up easily. ♥

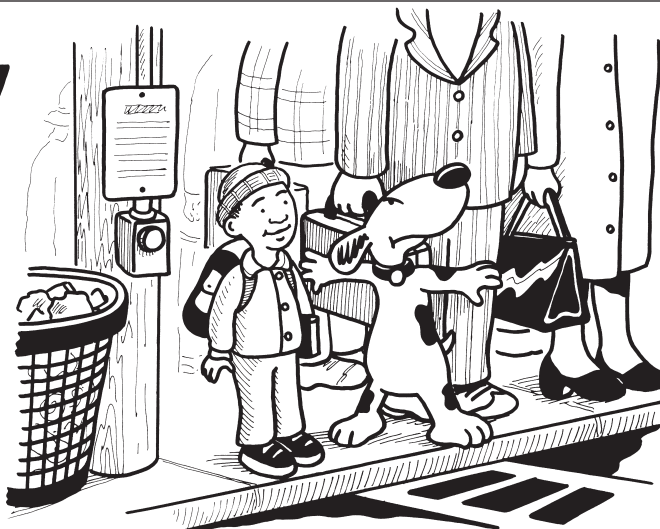


Stranger safety

Does your child know what to do if a stranger approaches him? Although it can be a scary topic, it's important for your youngster to have a plan.

- First, tell your child that although most people won't hurt him, there are some who can be dangerous. Because you can't tell by looking at people whether they're "safe" or not, your child shouldn't talk to adults he doesn't know.

- If a stranger goes toward your youngster, let her know to walk away and tell someone, such as a neighbor or store employee. If the stranger touches her or tries to make her go somewhere, she should yell, "Help! I



don't know this person!" This sends a clear message to others that she's in trouble.

- Remind your youngster to beware of any uncomfortable situation—even if it involves somebody she knows. Children are more apt to be harmed by someone they're acquainted with than by a stranger.

Note: As you talk, keep your tone calm and nonthreatening so you don't frighten your child unnecessarily. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

It's raining, it's pouring

This activity can help answer the question, "Where does rain come from?"



Using a permanent marker, draw a line from one side of a small, resealable plastic bag to the other, one inch from the bottom. Have your youngster pour in water up to the line. Then, seal the bag and tape it to a sunny window.

After several days, the sides of the bag will look "cloudy" due to condensation. If he taps the bag firmly, water drops will run down the sides, and it will "rain."

Explain to your youngster that when the sun shines on water, such as a puddle or pond, the water evaporates, or rises as a vapor, and makes clouds. When the clouds become too full, they "overflow," and it rains. ♥

Q & A School shy

Q: At a recent parent-teacher conference, I was told that my child doesn't participate much in class. How can I help?

A: It's not uncommon for children to withdraw a little when they start school. The newness of the situation and the activity in the classroom can be overwhelming.

Talk to the teacher to see how your child is doing. For example, if the work is too easy or too hard, he may be less apt to join in. Ask if your child can share a special interest or talent with the class. He will be able to participate in his own way and feel a sense of belonging. You might also try playing school with your youngster. Take turns being the student so he can practice raising his hand and participating.

With your encouragement and a little time, your child will soon be comfortable joining the classroom activities. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT Creative lunches

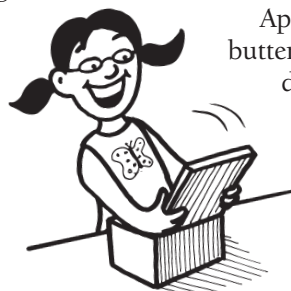
My daughter used to come home with her lunch box half full. She said she was tired of the same old things. So, I decided to get creative—and give her healthy lunches.

Instead of sandwiches, I sometimes pack pasta salad. Once I made mini-pizzas by spreading tomato sauce on whole-wheat crackers and adding shredded cheese and pepperoni slices.

To make sure my child gets plenty of fruits and vegetables, I make kebabs using melon, grapes, and marshmallows on a toothpick.

Apples stuffed with peanut butter and raisins are a big hit for dessert, and they provide more protein and fiber than the usual cookies.

My daughter loves her new meals. And she almost always comes home with an empty lunch box! ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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