

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2005

KID BITS



Math that's good enough to eat

Create addition problems for your youngster, and let him use snacks to solve them. For example, put five jellybeans in one pile and four in another. Help your child count them one by one to come up with the total number of jellybeans. Finger foods like cereal, popcorn, and raisins all make fun counters.

DID YOU KNOW?

Building blocks are a great way for your little one to learn. By letting your child play with blocks, you are encouraging creativity and giving her practice with shapes, patterns, and problem solving.

A leadership lesson

Whenever possible, give your child the opportunity to play with younger children. He'll learn leadership skills and feel a sense of importance. Showing another child how to do something, such as tie his shoelaces, will reinforce the skill for your youngster as well.

Worth quoting

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it." *Alan Kay*

Just for fun

Q: Where do fish sleep?

A: In a waterbed!



Learning social skills

Part of being successful in school is learning how to be part of a group. Now that a new year is under way, it may be time to review some social skills with your child.

Consider the following suggestions.

Sharing

Help your youngster experience firsthand what sharing feels like. You might give her something to pass out to her classmates, such as cookies or stickers. Encourage her to share on other occasions by reminding her of the good feeling she got from being generous.

Respect

Teach your child to respect others. For example, if some of his classmates are from another country, suggest that he learn to say hello in their languages. He will realize how hard they must work to learn his language. *Tip:* Have your child make a card for a friend who



celebrates a different holiday than your family does.

Patience

Encourage your youngster to be patient. For example, let her know that she should wait quietly for snack time, help from her teacher, and her turn to speak in class. She can practice patience at home by working on a giant jigsaw puzzle or making a collage with you. ♥

Volunteer tips

Many parents work full-time but still want to stay involved in their children's classrooms. If you aren't able to volunteer on a regular basis, try these ideas:

- Put together treat bags for a class party.
- Take part in an evening event such as a science night or book fair.
- Contribute goods for a bake sale, or help with other fundraisers.
- Type or photocopy handouts or worksheets.
- Help make props or costumes for plays.
- Contact local businesses and ask them to donate classroom materials to the school.
- Create or maintain a class Web site.
- Join a school committee or parents group, such as a PTA/PTO or a Textbook Adoption Committee.
- Invite a class to visit your workplace for a tour. ♥

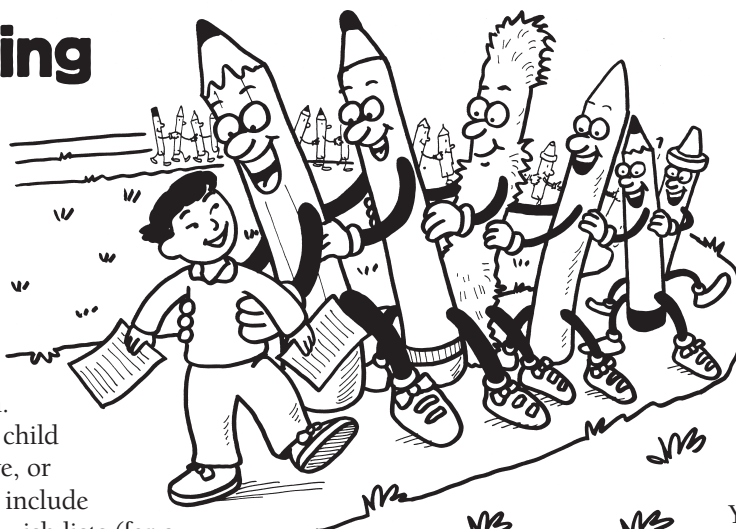


Exciting writing

Your youngster is probably just beginning to write. How can you help him enjoy this new skill and encourage him to keep writing?

Provide opportunities to practice writing.

Many children start by writing their names on pictures they've drawn. You might consider helping your child write a letter to a friend or relative, or even send an e-mail. Other ideas include writing thank-you notes, making wish lists (for a birthday or other special occasion), or labeling family photographs in a scrapbook or photo album.



Provide writing materials.

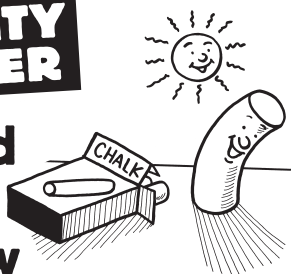
No special supplies are necessary, although some children enjoy using colored pencils or pens, and paper in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes (drawing paper, stationery, postcards).

Hint: Pipe cleaners aren't just for crafts. The fuzzy, flexible sticks are also fun to "write" with.

Your youngster can spell a word or her name by bending them into letter shapes. Use glue to attach them to a piece of construction paper. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Me and my shadow



Here's a fun way for your child to learn about light and shadow—and practice hand-eye coordination.

Go outside on a sunny day, and stand with the sun behind you so that you cast a shadow on the sidewalk. Let your child trace around the edges of your shadow with chalk. Before moving, mark the spot where you were standing. Then, in a different spot, draw your youngster's shadow, and mark where she was standing.

Later the same day, go outside and stand in the same spots. Point out that your shadows are in different places. Explain to your child that shadows are caused when something like her body blocks the sun's light. As the sun's position in the sky changes, the position of her shadow changes, too. ♥

Q & A

Ready for a team sport?

Q: My daughter is in kindergarten and wants to play a team sport like soccer or T-ball in the spring. I want her to get exercise, but isn't she too young?

A: Young children's motor skills are developing rapidly, and they're eager to use them. But some experts believe that team sports are too structured for youngsters. They feel that kids' muscles and imaginations will develop better if they engage in unstructured play.

On the other hand, sports can teach valuable skills, like teamwork and self-discipline. And some leagues don't keep score—children play to learn and get exercise, rather than to compete.

If your little one wants to join a team, cheer from the sidelines, but don't focus heavily on winning. And if you decide to wait for a while, be sure your daughter gets plenty of exercise every day. For example, you could take walks together or visit a playground. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Family field trips

Not too long ago, our kids told us that their weekends were "boring." So my wife and I started planning family field trips a couple Saturdays each month.

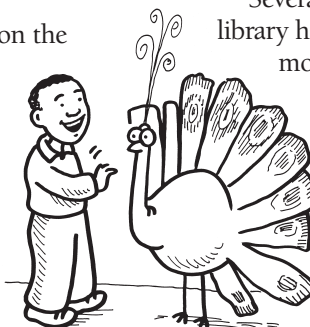
After doing some research on the Internet and in our local newspaper, we found places to visit that are both educational and inexpensive.

One of our favorite outings is to the petting zoo, where the boys discovered exotic animals they'd never seen before. Another time

we went to the indoor swimming pool, where they practiced their strokes for summer. Last week we visited a museum that gave a tour and a short art lesson.

Several bookstores and the public library host story times on Saturday mornings. We even found one that lets the kids make a craft after the story.

Our children no longer complain that weekends are boring—and learning isn't limited to school days! ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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