

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2005

KID BITS



Something new

You can stimulate your youngster's curiosity about her world while expanding her vocabulary. Every so often, help her discover something new, like an unusual fruit. Ask her questions, such as what she thinks it tastes like and where it's grown.

Responsible viewing

Cut down on your family's TV viewing by simply keeping your television turned off most of the time. Plan to watch certain programs, and tune in just for those shows. *Hint:* This works best if your TV isn't in the room where you spend most of your time.

What's in the bag?

Inspire your child to explore his sense of touch. Put an object in a bag, and encourage him to reach in and guess what it is. You could use a paper lunch bag and objects with a variety of textures, such as feathers, rocks, and coins.

Worth quoting

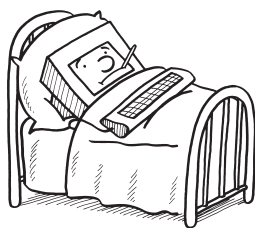
"You can be pleased with nothing when you are not pleased with yourself."

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Just for fun

Q: Why did the computer go to the doctor?

A: It had a virus!



Building independence

Do you want your child to become more independent? Assigning household tasks for your youngster to complete helps develop responsibility and independence. Here are some tips.

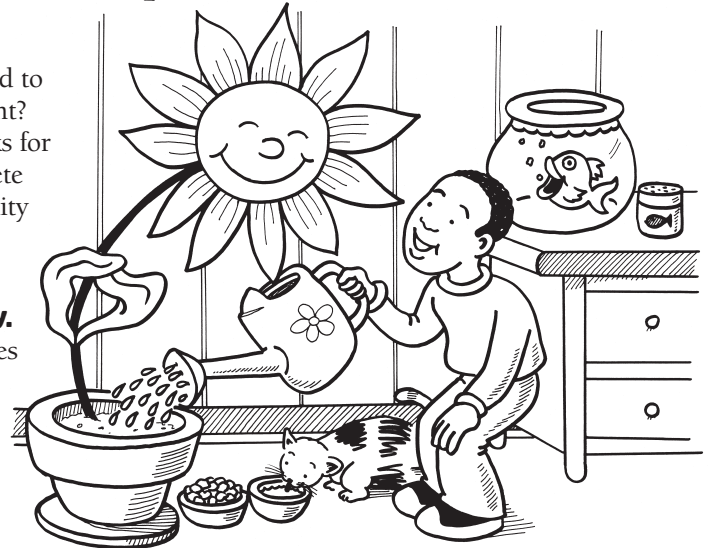
Choose tasks carefully.

Set aside some light chores for your youngster, and save the more difficult work for yourself. For example, he could dust furniture, feed pets, water flowers, or help set the table.

Keep it simple. Help your child complete her tasks successfully. If her job is to put toys away, try labeling shelves or boxes with pictures as well as words so she knows where everything goes. If she's unloading the dishwasher, take the silverware tray out of the drawer so she can sort utensils easily.

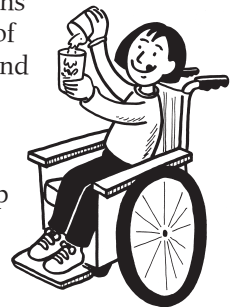
Start gradually. At first, let your youngster help *you* do the chores. When he seems ready, he can do them on his own while you work alongside. For instance, you use an upright vacuum while he uses a hand-held one. Or you can fold shirts and pants while he does towels.

Accept imperfection. Praise your child for working hard, whether the tasks are done exactly right or not. Chores might take a little longer, but you're spending quality time together—and she's becoming more independent. ♥



Take a number guess

Number sense means having a general idea of how big a number is and how it relates to other numbers. Estimating is an easy way to help your youngster develop this important skill.



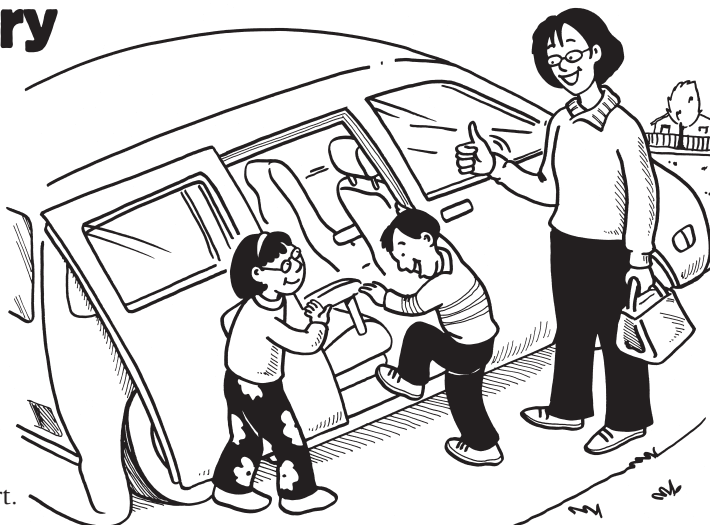
- Give your youngster two different-sized cups, and have her guess how many of the small cups of water will fit inside the big one.
- Ask your child to estimate how many steps it will take to get from the car to the house.
- Have your child estimate your family members' heights in inches. Then, help him measure to check his guesses.

Note: Stress that the point isn't to guess the exact amount but to make a careful estimate based on what your youngster knows about numbers. ♥

Sibling rivalry

Does it seem like your children are always arguing? It's normal for youngsters to bicker sometimes. Fortunately, there are several things you can do to help improve your kids' behavior. Consider these suggestions:

- Don't get involved in your children's disputes too quickly. Give them a chance to work things out on their own, unless they are in danger of getting hurt.
- Avoid placing blame on one child, as that can make rivalry worse. You can't always tell who is at fault just by looking.



- Make sure your youngsters take turns doing things that are important to them, such as choosing where to sit in a restaurant or in the car.
- Plan special time alone with each child.
- Reward your kids when they've done an especially good job of getting along.

Keep in mind that sibling rivalry often results from competition for parents' attention. How you handle their disagreements is an important factor in improving your children's relationships with each other. ♥

Q & A A lesson in ownership

Q: When we got home from a friend's house last week, I discovered a toy car in my son's pocket. After questioning him, he admitted that it belonged to our friends' daughter and that he had taken it without permission. How should I handle this?



A: Young children are often unclear about ownership and may not understand the seriousness of taking things that don't belong to them. If this is the first time your son has done this, it's a good idea not to react too strongly.

Ask your youngster to think about how he would feel if someone took one of his toy cars or stuffed animals without permission. Remind him that he wouldn't want to be friends with someone who took things from him.

Tell your son he can correct the situation by returning the toy and apologizing to the other child. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Spring-fever fighters

With the arrival of warm weather, my daughter often begins to lose interest in school. I've found several ways to keep her motivated.

I'll plan a fun activity we can do after school. Sometimes we stop for ice cream or go to the park to feed the ducks. This time of year, she also enjoys picking out school supplies to replace her worn ones, like a new set of pencils or crayons.

I make sure my daughter gets plenty of rest, too. I find she's more likely to want to play hooky if she's tired. This means not over-scheduling her evenings, as well as seeing that she goes to bed on time even though the sun sets a little later.

Finally, I let my child know that while her spring fever usually ends after the first few warm days, learning is an everyday event. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Treasure hunt

Set up a treasure hunt in your living room or backyard—and teach your youngster to use map skills at the same time.

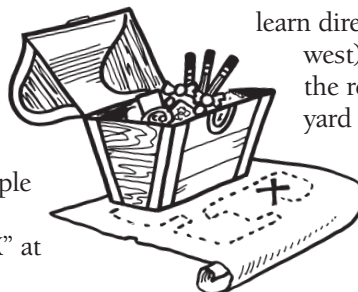
Begin by hiding a few treasures for your child to find. You can use pencils, pieces of candy, stickers, or other small treats.

Next, create a simple map of the room or yard, and draw an "X" at

the location of each hidden object. Help your child use the map to find the items. You might also encourage him to hide some objects and label a map for you.

Variation: To help your youngster learn directions (north, south, east, and west), attach a note to each wall of the room or opposite sides of the yard with the appropriate direction.

Then, instruct your child to take "three steps north" or "four steps west" until he finds the hidden treasure. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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