

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May 2005

KID BITS



Beginning writing

Help your youngster begin to spell while he's still learning the alphabet. How? Suggest that he write down the sounds he hears in words. At first, he may write only the first and last letters ("fd" for "friend"). But as he practices, he will spell more and more words correctly.

A toy time-out

If your kids are arguing over a toy, try giving them a "toy time-out." Tell them that no one plays with the toy until the disagreement is settled. In the meantime, they have to play with something they can share more easily, such as a box of crayons.

Lace it up

Simple "sewing" can improve your child's fine-motor coordination. Cut several shapes from cardboard. Using a single-hole punch, make small holes, about an inch apart, around the edges of each shape. Give your youngster some yarn or a shoelace, and show her how to thread it through the holes.

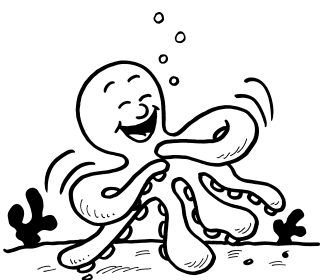
Worth quoting

"What is now proved was once only imagined." *William Blake*

Just for fun

Q: Where is the ocean the deepest?

A: At the bottom!



Making decisions

As children grow older, they have to make more choices for themselves. Starting early will give your youngster practice with simple decisions—before the more serious ones come along.

Here are some ways you can promote good decision-making skills.

Talk it out

Help your youngster weigh the pros and cons of each option. Seeing both sides will make it easier for her to choose. *Example:* If she's trying to decide whether to spend her allowance on a snack or stickers, you might offer ideas such as "Candy tastes good, but doesn't last long," and "Stickers are fun to play with, but cost more."

Think it over

Try asking your child questions that will encourage him to think through the decisions he makes. For example, if he's throwing a ball in the living room, ask him to consider why throwing the ball inside isn't a good idea. (He might break



something.) What would be a better choice? (Rolling the ball on the floor or taking it outside.)

Give it a chance

Encourage your youngster to give her decisions a try before changing her mind. For instance, if she wants to take gymnastics but is ready to quit after the first practice, persuade her to attend a few more classes. That way, she'll have the experience and knowledge she needs to make an informed decision. She may find that her first choice was the right one after all. ♥

Poetry fun

Exploring poetry with your youngster will help her appreciate language and boost her vocabulary. Get started with these ideas:

■ Check out an anthology of children's poems at the library. Have your child open the book and point to a poem. Then, read the poem together. Try *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein or *The New Kid on the Block* by Jack Prelutsky.

■ Help your youngster write a poem. Write the following sentence on a sheet of paper: "I see _____, I hear _____, I feel _____, I smell _____, I taste _____." Challenge him to create his own poem by filling in the blanks with a word or phrase to go with each of his five senses. ♥



Get creative!

Providing your child with opportunities to use her imagination promotes her thinking and social skills, as well as creativity. Try these tips to inspire your youngster:

- Put on a puppet show. Make a puppet by drawing a face on a small paper plate and gluing it to the bottom flap of an unopened paper lunch bag. Show your youngster how to place her hand in the flap of the bag to make the puppet “talk.”



- Play charades. Write simple actions on slips of paper. *Examples:* play baseball, wash your hair, make a sandwich. Let your child choose a slip and perform the action for the rest of the family to guess. Encourage him to come up with charades of his own.
- Use literature. Read a fairy tale, and have your youngster pretend she’s a character in the story. For example, she could be Little Red Riding Hood and take a picnic lunch to her grandmother’s house.

For added fun, give your child red fabric to use as a cape and a basket to carry her lunch. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Magazine collage

Do you have a stack of magazines taking up space in your basement? Dig them out and help your youngster practice grouping and critical thinking by making collages.

Have your child choose a theme and look for objects in the magazines that relate to it. Brainstorm ideas by asking him questions, such as “What do you want to do this summer?” If he says, “Go to the beach,” he could cut out pictures of umbrellas, swimsuits, boats, and seafood. Then, have him glue or tape them on a piece of heavy paper. Other theme ideas include living things, objects made of metal, or things that are blue.

Tip: Your youngster can practice writing by labeling the objects after he glues them on. ♥



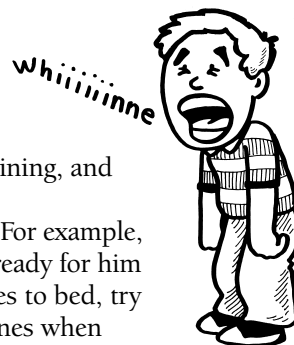
Q & A Wiping out whining

Q: My son whines whenever he wants something. When I tell him to stop, it gets worse. What can I do?

A: Start by figuring out what triggers your child’s whining, and then try to prevent it.

Does he whine when he’s hungry, tired, or bored? For example, if he seems to whine right after school, have a snack ready for him when he gets home. If he starts whining before he goes to bed, try moving bedtime up by half an hour. If he usually whines when you’re shopping, give him some encouragement beforehand: “We’ll only shop for a short while. I know you’ll be able to use a nice voice in the store.”

Finally, try ignoring your youngster’s whining. By taking away his audience, you may also take away his motivation to whine. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT Summer playdates

Inviting my daughter’s friends over for playdates during the summer is a great way to help them stay in touch. However, the fun can sometimes turn to chaos. I’ve discovered several things that help playdates go more smoothly.

I always have an activity planned. Sometimes I’ll put out art supplies, like construction paper, markers, scissors, and glue. I remind the kids of

the rules up front, such as cleaning up each activity before beginning a new one.

I’ve also learned that it’s better for my child to have one friend over at a time. When there is an odd number of children, someone always seems to get left out.

Finally, I keep the playdates short—all kids tend to get cranky after a couple of hours, no matter how much fun they have together. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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