

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

October 2004

KID BITS



Building map skills

It's never too early to introduce your youngster to maps. Let her see you using them in the car or at the shopping mall. You could also help her use building blocks to make a three-dimensional "map" of her bedroom.

National School Lunch Week

Many schools will focus on good nutrition with this year's National School Lunch Week theme, "Reach Your Peak with School Lunch." Consider visiting your children's school and joining them for a healthy meal during the week of October 11–15.

Safety "brake"

Teach your child to stop at curbs with a simple game. Draw a line with sidewalk chalk a few inches from the edge of the road. Have him practice walking to the line while saying, "Brake!" and looking both ways for cars.

Worth quoting

"Cheerfulness is contagious, but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier." *Anonymous*

Just for fun

Mother: Bobby, the salad tastes funny. Are you sure you washed the lettuce?

Bobby: Yes, I did. Look! The soap's still on it.



Autumn adventures

For learning

The seasonal changes that fall brings can make learning about nature easy and fun. Try taking a walk outdoors with your child to gather leaves, cones, twigs, nuts, and seeds. Then, help your youngster use the collection for activities like these.

Leaf rubbing

Practice observation skills with your youngster by looking closely at the leaves. Point out their shapes and details, such as the veins. Then, help him tape a leaf to a table, and place a sheet of thin white paper on top. With a colored pencil or crayon, have him lightly rub back and forth on the paper. The outline of the leaf and its veins will appear.

Seed collage

Talk about the seeds your child has collected, and teach her their names. *Examples:* "Maple tree seeds look like helicopters as they flutter to the ground." "You'll find pine seeds inside this pinecone." Tape or glue seeds to a large sheet of construction paper or poster board, and together write their names beneath them.

Nature writing

If you keep the leaves for a few days, they will become dry and crumble. Encourage your little one to practice writing her



name by making large letters with glue on heavy paper. Let her tear the leaves into small pieces and sprinkle them onto the glue. She could also use twigs, seeds, pine needles, or other natural items. ♥

Exploring online

Did you know the Internet has activities to support what your child is learning in school? Here are three places to get started:

- Use the What Tree Is It? Web site to identify leaves that your youngster collects on a nature walk. www.oplin.org/tree/index.html
- Many children's authors have sites with activities related to their books. Jan Brett, author of *The Mitten* and *Town Mouse Country Mouse*, offers printable finger puppets and masks of her characters. Your child can use them to act out the stories. www.janbrett.com
- LearningPlanet.com features several interactive math games, including Count Your Chickens and 123 Order. www.learningplanet.com/sam/cyc/index.asp and www.learningplanet.com/act/123order.asp ♥



Listen and learn

Good listening skills are important to your child's school success—and better behavior. Help sharpen little ears with these suggestions:

- Be a good listener yourself. Sometimes busy parents are distracted when their children talk to them. Let your youngster know you're paying attention by looking her in the eye and responding to what she says.
- Stick to your word. If you frequently say one thing and then do another, your child will soon learn to tune you out. *Example:* You tell him he can choose only one item to buy at the store, but then let him have two when he complains.
- Provide listening practice. While reading a story aloud, stop every so often to ask, "What do you think will happen next?" You'll be able to tell how well your child is listening, and he'll soon learn to anticipate your questions.



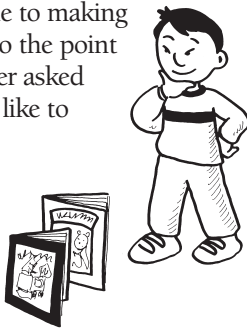
- Talk to your youngster frequently as you go about your day. "I'm adding detergent to the clothes washer. Now I'm going to close the door and press the button." You may be surprised to hear her imitate you while she plays. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT Having their say

Our children could never agree when it came to making a decision. It got to the point where we no longer asked them what they'd like to have for dinner or which bedtime story they'd like us to read.

To avoid arguments—and teach the kids about fairness at the same time—we started voting whenever a disagreement came up. Of course, we don't vote on things that aren't negotiable, such as bedtime. And we make the voting easier by giving them no more than two or three options.

Now when it comes to simple choices, such as picking a restaurant or book, the majority rules. Everyone knows the decision is final, which cuts down on arguments—at least most of the time! ♥

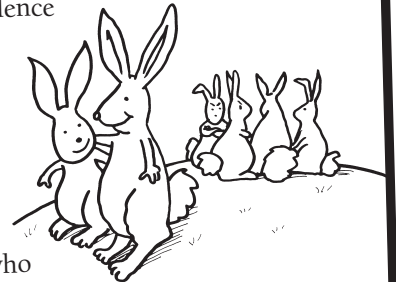


Q & A Going along with the crowd

Q: I overheard my daughter and her friends making fun of a classmate who is small for her age. When I asked her about it later, my daughter said she participated because everyone else did. How can I help her stand strong next time?

A: Being prepared can give your daughter confidence to resist peer pressure. Help her think of ways to deal with tough situations.

For example, instead of joining in the teasing, your youngster could change the subject by suggesting a game to play. Or she might try leaving the group and finding other classmates to play with. *Tip:* Role-play with her to give her practice. Take turns pretending to be the child who is being pressured. ♥

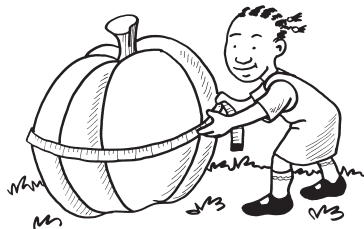


ACTIVITY CORNER Pumpkin! Pumpkin!

Kids love pumpkins—they're big, bright, and exciting to dig into. Go to a farm or grocery store with your youngster to pick out one of these fun fruits. Then, try the following ideas.

How big is your pumpkin?

Use a flexible tape measure to figure out the circumference of the pumpkin.



Your child could also weigh the pumpkin using bathroom scales.

What's inside?

Encourage your little one to put her hands in the pumpkin and pull out the pulp and seeds. Talk about what the pumpkin looks like inside and how it smells and feels.

Learn more.

Find out how pumpkins grow by reading a pumpkin story, such as *The Biggest Pumpkin Ever* by Steven Kroll, or *Pumpkin Pumpkin* by Jeanne Titherington. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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