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EARLY CHILDHOOD

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Your School Name Here
Your Name and Title Here

Sample Issue

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

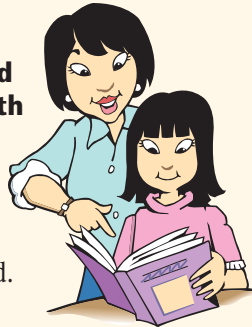
How can parents raise good readers?

Q: I know it's really important for kids to be good readers. When should I start helping my child with reading? What are some ways I can do this?

A: It's never too soon to start! Long before children actually "learn to read," they build reading skills. For example, talking and singing build verbal skills. And listening to books teaches about the written word. Some of the best ways to prepare for reading are:

- **Encourage your child to talk.** Then listen to her. Ask questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer.
- **Teach about books and printed materials**—how to hold them, turn pages, and follow words from left to right.
- **Use the alphabet.** Sing the alphabet song. Point out letters. Have fun writing words, such as your child's name.
- **Emphasize the sounds of language.** Use nursery rhymes and songs. Let your child hear how words are made up of smaller parts and sounds.
- **Read aloud to your child.** Help her see the connection between printed words and the words you say.

Source: Bonnie Armbruster, Fran Lehr and Jean Osborn, "A Child Becomes a Reader: Birth Through Preschool," The Partnership for Learning—National Institute for Literacy and RMC Research Corporation.



MAKING TIME COUNT

Family time is a worthy investment

Spending time with children isn't always easy or convenient. But the results are amazing. You may be surprised by how much the time means to your child—and how much it will mean to you. Try these simple ideas:

- **Establish new traditions.** For example, prepare breakfast with your child once a week.
- **Do simple chores.** Kids enjoy learning new things, such as how to water plants or sort clothes.
- **Watch your child play.** Notice what he enjoys. Find new and creative ways to join in.
- **Limit TV and videogames.** Choose reading, exercise, make believe and other fun pastimes instead.
- **Plan uninterrupted activities together.** Put them on your family calendar, even if it means you must rearrange your schedule to accommodate them.

Source: Alan Greene, "Spending Time With Kids," Parenting Health Center.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Meet all your child's needs

Parents "do" so much for children that sometimes their emotional needs get overlooked. Make sure you:

- **Appreciate** your child's imagination. Have fun pretending together.
- **Talk** about your child's joys and fears.
- **Accept** your child for who he is. Compliment his strengths.
- **Provide** a loving and safe home. Kids need to be around caring adults.

Source: Heidi Hoff, "Ten Things a Preschooler Requires," Partnership for Learning.

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

Establish a learning habit

Help your child practice some new concepts this month. For example:

- **Demonstrate** patterns. Get out some coins and place a penny, then a nickel, then a penny, on the table. See if he can tell you what should be next.
- **Build** visual and spatial skills with puzzles and patterns. Help your child put together some simple jigsaw puzzles. Or make your own by cutting a photo into pieces, then having your child reassemble it.



BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Draw responsibilities

Drawing is a good way to remind children of responsibilities. For example, ask, "How should we take care of our new puppy?" Help your child think of answers, such as "Feed her." Then have him draw a picture of himself doing that. Hang the art in a noticeable spot.



WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Build strong parent-teacher relationships

Preschool teachers nurture children and help them get ready for kindergarten. They introduce them to new activities and skills. But for the best results, teachers need parents to be involved. You can:



- **Share information about home life.** This might concern a family matter that affects your child's emotions, for example, or something about your child's hobbies. The goal is to help the teacher understand your child.
- **Ask the teacher what you can do.** Some teachers invite parents to read to the class. Others welcome homemade crafts or treats. If you have special skills to contribute, mention them.
- **Show appreciation for the teacher's efforts.** Let her know what's working. "Joey loves coming to school. He tells me about story time every day. Thank you!"
- **Attend parent conferences and events.** Look for opportunities to strengthen the school-family connection.

Source: Steven P. Shelov, M.D. and Robert E. Hannemann, M.D., *The American Academy of Pediatrics: Caring for Your Baby and Young Child from Birth to Age 5*, ISBN: 0-553-37184-3 (The Bantam Doubleday Publishing Group).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you motivating your child to want to learn in preschool?

It's not good to force preschoolers to sit still and learn. But there are ways you should encourage learning. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're using some of them.

- ___ **1. Do you let** your child choose from a variety of activities?
- ___ **2. Do you allow** unstructured playtime so your child can explore her interests?
- ___ **3. Do you offer** tasks that are challenging but not overwhelming?
- ___ **4. Do you give** your child freedom to run, touch, get messy and learn by doing?

___ **5. Do you play** with your child every day?
How did you do? Each yes answer shows you're making learning fun. For each no answer, use that idea from the quiz to change your answer to yes.

"For a small child there is no division between playing and learning."

— Penelope Leach,
*Your Baby & Child:
 From Birth to Age Five*

Teach your child: 'It's the right thing to do'

A toddler behaves to earn approval—or to avoid a negative consequence. An older child starts to learn good behavior because "It's the right thing to do." Here's how to set your child on this lifelong path:

- **Give unconditional love.** Kids who are secure in their parents' love tend to behave better than those who are not.
- **Correct your child** if she is disrespectful. "In our family, we use kind words." Be a good role model.

Source: Peg Rosen, "How to raise a really GOOD kid," *Parents* (Meredith Corporation).

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Attendance matters!

Help your child develop good school habits early. The most important is attendance.

Regularly sending your child to preschool, except when he's sick, shows him that attending school is good. To make this a habit:

- **Be excited** about school yourself.
- **Do not interrupt** the school day.
- **Make sure** your child gets enough sleep.

Source: Parent Spot, "School attendance: It matters more than you think!" Mohonasen (New York) Central School District.

DISCIPLINE

Curb the 'gimmies' easily

It's common for kids to beg for treats at the store. But there's an easy way to stop this. Before the trip, explain what you will buy. Then—no matter how much your child begs—stick to the shopping list. Soon your child will realize that whining just doesn't work.



Source: Shari Steelsmith, *Go to Your Room! Consequences That Teach*, ISBN: 0-9650-4772-5 (Parenting Press).

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 1-800-756-5525
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