

Early Childhood Parents[®]

make the difference!



Help your preschooler become responsible for personal care

When your child was an infant, you did everything for her. But now she is older and can assume a great deal of her personal care herself—probably more than you realize!

You or another adult should always supervise your child as she performs personal care responsibilities. Do not ever leave a young child alone. Do not allow a young child to touch equipment that could be dangerous, such as a stove or an iron.

Under your watchful eye, your child can and should accomplish a lot for herself. For example:

- **Cleanliness.** Your child should wash and dry her hands regularly, especially before meals and after using the bathroom. She should also practice washing her body,

brushing her teeth and combing her hair. Supervise her efforts. Help her brush hard-to-reach spots on her teeth. Encourage her to do most of the work.

- **Dressing.** Most young preschoolers can learn to pull on a shirt and pants. Help your child pick out her clothes the night before preschool and dress herself each morning.
- **Outerwear and belongings.** Teach your child to hang up her coat and backpack. Most preschool teachers expect their students to do this. So get your child to do it at home as well.

Source: Jolene L. Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, *What Young Children Need to Succeed: Working Together to Build Assets from Birth to Age 11*, ISBN: 1-57542-070-8 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

The best way to teach respect is to show respect



Being respectful is critical to success in school and life. But this doesn't come naturally to preschoolers.

You need to model respectful behaviors for your child to copy. Most importantly, you must show him respect. He can't give to others what he doesn't receive.

To show your child respect:

- **Don't speak harshly to him.** Saying, "Get over here now!" models demanding behavior. Tell him politely instead.
- **Don't belittle him.** Be supportive when he expresses needs or makes mistakes.
- **Offer to help him.** "Do you want me to pick you up so you can see better?"
- **Give your child your full attention when he talks.** Ask questions to let him know you're interested.
- **Be calm and fair.** Explain rules and decisions. Hear his side of the story before reaching a conclusion.

Source: Robin Goldstein, *The Parenting Bible: The Answers to Parents' Most Common Questions*, ISBN: 1-57071-907-1 (Sourcebooks, Inc, 1-800-432-7444, www.sourcebooks.com).

Help your child think about the stories you read together



Your child is reading when he *says* the words on the page, *knows* what they mean and *understands* the story they tell.

You can help your child if you:

- **Read him part of a story** without showing the pictures. Have him close his eyes and imagine what something in the story looks like. Ask, “The kids went on a merry-go-round. What colors do you think the horses were?”

- **Look for words** your child is not familiar with. When reading a story, point them out and help him understand their meanings.
- **Ask your child questions** about a story. Begin questions with *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* or *how*. “What did the boy do every night after dinner?”

Source: Michael H. Popkin, Bettie B. Youngs and Jane M. Healy, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds*, ISBN: 1-880283-15-8 (Active Parenting Publishers, 1-800-825-0060, www.activeparenting.com).

Schedule special time to spend with your child on a regular basis



Don't let your hectic schedule keep you from spending quality time with your child.

Preschoolers learn from their relationships

with others. But their interactions with their parents are the most important.

You are your child's greatest teacher. You can help her feel safe enough—emotionally and physically—to try new things. The more secure she feels, the more she'll explore.

Making “appointments” with your child ensures that other activities don't dominate your calendar.

Here's how to get started:

- **Brainstorm together.** Think of things you enjoy doing with each other. Making something? Going hiking? Going camping? Watching a ball game?
- **Think of things you love doing** that you'd like your child to appreciate. Eating Chinese food. Fishing. Collecting.
- **Make a list of things** your child most wants to do.

- **Mark your calendar** to do at least one thing each month. Pick a date and stick to it.
- **Refer to the list** when any free time or a free night turns up.

Are you helping your child learn from mistakes?



Learning how to handle mistakes will help your preschooler succeed in school. Take this quiz to see if you're raising your

child to have a positive attitude about mistakes. Answer *yes* or *no*.

- ___ **1. I have high yet reachable expectations** for my child.
- ___ **2. I talk about my expectations** with my child.
- ___ **3. I ask my child** if she needs help when I see she's having trouble.
- ___ **4. I let my child know** that everyone makes mistakes.
- ___ **5. I tell my child** that making a mistake gives her a chance to correct herself and get it right the next time.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means your child will learn more because she doesn't fear making mistakes. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

Early Childhood Parents make the difference!

Early Childhood Edition

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2008 NIS, Inc.

Editor & Publisher: *John H. Wherry, Ed.D.*

Available in four editions: Early Childhood Edition (*Parents make the difference!*), Elementary Edition (*Parents make the difference!*), Middle School Edition (*Parents Still make the difference!*) and High School Edition (*Parents Still make the difference!*). All four editions available in English and Spanish.

One Year Subscription Rates*

Individual Subscription. \$109 (U.S. funds)—gives you the right to copy and/or electronically distribute up to four (4) articles per issue in your own publications. Attractive discounts available for subscriptions to additional newsletter editions. Call for details.

Extra Copies. When you have an Individual Subscription (above) you are eligible to purchase extra copies for parents and staff. Those who receive the extra copies have no rights to reproduce or excerpt material from the newsletter. Extra copies are available in bundles of 25 newsletters. You choose the number of bundles you need. The subscription price is \$89/year per bundle of 25 newsletters (U.S. funds). That price provides a bundle of 25 newsletters of that edition, nine (9) times per year.

Ready-To-Reproduce Subscription—gives you the right to make as many copies as you need of the entire newsletter at your school building, school district or regional education service agency. Includes rights to full print reproduction and electronic distribution to parents at your school or district. You'll receive black and white master copies for print reproduction. Downloadable issues, for print or electronic distribution on your website or via email, can be personalized with your name/school name or a school/district slogan and are provided in your choice of color or black and white. Personalized electronic issues can be automatically uploaded to your website each month at no additional cost.

Prices for Ready-to-Reproduce edition: School Building \$339 (U.S. Funds); Small School District (up to 2,500 enrollment) - \$569 (U.S. Funds); Medium School District (2,501 to 25,000 enrollment) - \$789 (U.S. Funds); Large School District (over 25,000 students) - \$999 (U.S. Funds); Regional Education Service Agencies - call for price.

Attractive discounts available for subscriptions to additional newsletter editions. Call for details.

*All subscriptions for one full year from the date we receive your order. Canada add GST. Canadian GST Registration No.: 128-424-462. NC add tax.

For more information call or write: The Parent Institute, (800) 756-5525, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. Fax: (800) 216-3667. All subscriptions available in English and Spanish. Call for multiple subscription discount information.

Help your preschooler increase learning ability by eating smart



What your child eats—and when he eats it—affects his ability to learn. Junk food is high in sugar and “bad fats.”

These have negative effects on intelligence and behavior, says neurologist David Perlmutter. To boost your child’s brain power, he advises:

- **Give him “smart fat”**—DHA and essential fatty acids. These are found in fatty fish and DHA-enriched eggs.
- **Avoid “trans” fats.** Say *no* to fast food french fries and chicken nuggets. Read labels carefully.
- **Provide lots of protein** from lean meat, eggs, beans, seeds and whole grains. Insufficient protein is linked to mood swings. It causes problems with alertness, memory, movement and balance.

- **Ensure a steady source** of slow-burning carbohydrates. These convert into glucose—the brain’s main source of energy. Include fiber-rich vegetables, fruits, legumes and whole grains.
- **Avoid foods** with rapidly processed and refined carbs, like sugar and white flour. They leave children irritable and foggy.
- **Never skip breakfast.** Doing so affects your child’s memory, and language and problem-solving skills.
- **Give your child healthy snacks** between meals to maintain glucose levels. Try peanut butter on apple slices, for example.

Source: David Perlmutter, *Raise a Smarter Child By Kindergarten*, ISBN: 0-7679-2301-4 (Morgan Road Books/Random House, 1-888-591-1200, www.morganroadbooks.com).

Follow a few simple guidelines when you discipline your child



There is a time to negotiate with your child—it’s called late adolescence. But now—with your preschooler—the only

one in the driver’s seat should be you.

That’s not to say that you should overwhelm your child with a long list of do’s and don’ts. Instead, have a few important rules, such as “You must stay next to me when we’re in a crowded place,” and be firm about them. “Mommy, I’ll hold your hand if you buy me a piece of candy,” should never get your child the candy. It should get him whisked into the shopping cart with the lap belt fastened securely around him.

Here are a few more discipline tips to keep in mind:

- **Be battle-wise.** Your child may use some behaviors, such as making faces, simply to irk you. Ignore these “smallies” and they may go away.
- **Avoid arguments.** Even if you stick to your firm rules, the little lawyer in your child will still want to test them. Say, “That’s the rule. I will not change my mind.” Repeat as needed.
- **Consider choices.** No one, least of all a child, likes to feel powerless. So give him daily choices when both options suit you—an apple or a pear for snack, reading to him or doing a puzzle together.

Source: Ari Brown, M.D. and Denise Fields, “The 20 Commandments of Toddler Discipline,” *Parents*, September 2006 (Meredith Corp., 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).

Q: How can I get my child settled into preschool? I know that once she gets into the routine, she’ll be fine. But I dread the days until then.

Questions & Answers

A: Starting preschool is a major transition for every child, even those who deal well with change. A child who is uncomfortable with the unknown will require more time, patience and practice with this transition. You can gently ease your child into it if you:

- **Take her to school** before the first day. Most preschools have an open house the week before school. Children and parents can meet the teacher and spend time in the classroom. If yours doesn’t, at least take your child by the school so she can see the building.
- **Point out the practical.** Children often worry about preschool because they don’t know how they are going to do things there that they do at home. Show your child where the bathroom is. Show her the hook where she will hang her coat.
- **Stay for a few minutes only.** Start a five-minute routine when you arrive at preschool. Greet the teacher together. Look at a book with your child. Hug her and tell her you will be there when school is over. Then hand her over to the teacher—and go.
- **Be patient.** It may take your child a few weeks to feel comfortable. Even if she seems fine in class, she may work through her anxieties by having “meltdowns” at home with you. This should eventually ease. If it doesn’t, speak to her teacher or doctor about it.

—Maria Koklanaris,
The Parent Institute

The Kindergarten Experience

Explore new ways to get involved in your child's school



Kindergartners whose parents participate in activities at their school do better academically. According to recent research, they read

better. They spend fewer years in special education. Plus they're less likely to be held back later.

So work with your school, your child's teacher and the class. Your child will see that school is important and want to excel!

Here are some options:

- **Attend open houses** and other parent meetings. Prepare questions to ask the teacher.
- **Build an ongoing relationship** with your child's teacher. Set up private meetings if needed.
- **Tell your child's teacher** about any issues going on at home—such as an illness in the family.
- **Tell the teacher more** about your child—what she does and talks about at home. This gives her a more complete picture of your child.
- **Listen openly to the teacher** when she talks about your child. She has an objective viewpoint.
- **Become active** in the parent-teacher association. Help raise funds for your child's school by participating in fundraisers.
- **Take part in kindergarten activities.** If you can take off work, volunteer to be a reading buddy. Speak to the class about your job. Chaperone a field trip.

Source: Susan Schneider, Consultant Editor, *Working with the Professionals To Get the Best for Your Child*, ISBN: 0-7370-0084-8 (Time-Life Books, 1-800-950-7887, www.timelife.com).

Improve attendance by helping your kindergartner love school

It's only natural that when you love an activity, you want to participate in it. So if your child loves and is attached to school, he'll want to attend.

You can't force your child to love school. But you can do a lot help him feel attached and encourage school enjoyment and attendance. Here's how:

- **Ask your child** what he likes best about school. It's okay if he says, "recess." All that matters is that he has happy times at school. Say, "Oh, I loved recess, too. It's so much fun!"
- **Encourage your child** to bond with his teachers. Talk about his teachers at home, emphasizing that they care for him and want him to learn. Help your child make thank-you cards or draw special pictures for his teachers.



- **Encourage your child** to get to know school friends better. You may want to allow him to have a school friend over to play, or include a school friend in a family activity.

Source: Jolene L. Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, *What Young Children Need to Succeed: Working Together to Build Assets from Birth to Age 11*, ISBN: 1-57542-070-8 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-866-703-7322, www.freespirit.com).

Build social, emotional skills for success in elementary school



Kindergarten teachers say social and emotional skills are more important to school success than being able to read or hold a pencil. Yet they report that 20 to 30 percent of students don't have these skills.

Children with good social and emotional skills get along better with others. They have self-control and confidence. They're excited and curious about learning.

To help your child develop these skills, encourage her to:

- **Play and cooperate with others** in a group. Invite friends over or take your child to a playground.
- **Share with friends and family.** Get her to take turns and let others play with her toys.
- **Empathize with others' feelings.** Ask her how a character in a book feels after something bad happens.
- **Be curious.** Answer her "Why?" questions. Look things up together at the library or online.
- **Persist in solving problems.** Tell her not to give up. She can learn!