

November 2016  
Vol. 21, No. 3

# Early Childhood Parents®

Lunenburg County Schools

*make the difference!*



## Make reading an enjoyable experience for your child

**W**hat is the most important reading activity you can do with your preschooler? Having fun! It makes sense that when a beginning reader gets pleasure from reading, he's more likely to *want* to read and to read more.

To make reading enjoyable:

- **Choose books your child likes.** Visit the library regularly. Find books that match your child's interests. Ask the librarian for suggestions, too.
- **Choose a daily reading time,** such as before bed. Reading should never feel like a chore, so pick a time when your child seems to enjoy books most. Make daily reading a family habit.
- **Read in comfortable spots.** Your child may love reading

in a rocking chair, on pillows on the floor, or in his bed. Suggest that he hold a favorite stuffed animal during story time.

- **Take your time with each book.** Let your child glance through the pages and ask questions. Read with emotion. Pretend you're performing a play!
- **Attend reading events.** Reading can be even more fun in groups. Check the library's schedule of events. Does it host story times for kids? How about special events that encourage young readers?
- **Talk about what you read.** Ask your child questions as you read, such as, "Why do you think he did that?" "Was that a good ending?" Answer his questions, too. Show how much you like reading!

## Show your preschooler how to listen



Sometimes young children talk ... and talk ... and talk! And what they say doesn't always

seem to make sense! Even so, it's important to pay attention.

When you listen to your child, you are helping her build her language skills and teaching her how to be a good listener, too. These skills will help her succeed when she begins school.

To show that you're listening:

- **Avoid distractions.** Offer your attention, even if it means putting down a book, turning off the computer or ignoring your phone.
- **Do not interrupt.** Once your child is talking, give her all the time she needs. It may take a while for her to put her thoughts into words.
- **Ask questions** after your child finishes her thought to make sure you understand. Restate what she has said.
- **Pay attention** to your child's body language. Take note of her tone of voice, facial expressions and behavior. Often, "it's not what they say, it's how they say it."

# You can bring out the natural scientist in your preschooler



Young children love to figure out how the world works.

Practicing scientific skills, such as observing, testing and predicting, can help them build important school skills.

Here are some activities to try:

1. **Have your preschooler** use a magnifying glass to inspect things up close. He can pick things such as bugs, leaves or the seeds in an apple. Then he can draw pictures of what he sees and keep them in a “science journal.”
2. **Let your child play** with some measuring containers in the bathtub (under your supervision, of course). See how many cups it takes to fill a pint, or how many tablespoons make a half-cup.

While your child plays, say the names of measurements, such as *teaspoon* or *gallon*.

3. **Visit the zoo** with your child. Ask questions about the animals you see. “Why do you think seals have flippers?” or “Why do you think that snake is brown?” Together, see if you can find answers.

**“What is a scientist after all? It is a curious man looking through a keyhole, the keyhole of nature, trying to know what’s going on.”**

—Jacques Cousteau

# Children with strong motor skills are ready for school activities



Motor skills are the physical abilities children need to manipulate their bodies. Large (gross) motor skills require the

development of large muscles in the legs, back and arms. Small (fine) motor skills involve the smaller muscles in the hands, wrists, fingers and eyes.

The more developed these muscles are, the easier it will be for your child to learn to read, write and participate at school.

To help your child develop her motor skills, have her:

- **Put together** jigsaw puzzles.
- **Zip and button** her own clothes.
- **Draw, paint and color** with large crayons, pencils, paintbrushes and washable markers.

- **Cut with safety scissors** (under your supervision).
- **Pick up pennies** from a table (under supervision, of course).
- **Pretend to be different animals.** Have her hop like a frog or jump like a kangaroo.
- **Finger paint.**
- **Squeeze and form clay** or play dough into shapes and letters.
- **Build with blocks.**
- **Roll and catch a ball.**
- **String beads on laces.**
- **Turn pages of books.**
- **Dress and play with dolls** and action figures.

Be patient and let your preschooler attempt as many tasks as she can on her own. She’ll be proud of her accomplishments, especially if you notice and praise them.

# Are you building your preschooler’s independence?



Parents are naturally protective. But it’s also important to let children explore the world and develop a sense of independence. This prepares them for school and other responsibilities.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you’re balancing your child’s safety and freedom:

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you supervise** your child’s playtime with friends without hovering over them?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you offer your child** simple choices, such as “Would you like to wear a blue shirt or a red shirt?”
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you give your child** a chance to solve minor problems before you step in to help?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you show interest** in your child’s opinions and respect them, even if you disagree?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Do you play** with your child but also encourage independent play?

## How well are you doing?

If most of your answers were *yes*, you are encouraging independence. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

**Early Childhood**  
**Parents**  
*make the difference!*

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1267

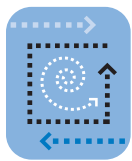
For subscription information call or write:  
The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,  
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.  
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit: [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com).

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2016 PaperClip Media, Inc.

Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.  
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.  
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.  
Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

# Help your child understand the concepts of *beginning* and *end*



An understanding of the concepts of *beginning* and *end* will help your child flourish in the classroom. Many school activities are broken up into segments that have a beginning and an end.

There are unlimited ways to help your preschooler learn and master these concepts. Here are just a few:

- **Talk about them** in your daily life. Remind your child about the beginning and end of a meal or a bath. Story time is another great opportunity—all stories have a beginning and an end.
- **Ask your child questions.** When you get in the car and buckle up, ask her if you are at the beginning

or end of your car trip. When you arrive at your destination, ask again.

- **Play games.** Many children's board games have pathways that the game pieces must travel. There is a beginning and end to these pathways.
- **Create simple mazes** on a piece of paper. Guide your child's hand and show her how the pencil travels from the beginning of the maze, all the way to the end. As your child grows, you can develop these concepts further and build thinking skills by introducing her to more complicated mazes.

**Source:** B. Daniel, *The Playful Child*, School Specialty Publishing.

# Use everyday opportunities to teach your preschooler respect



Showing people respect isn't just a nice thing for kids to do. It's a principle to live by. The basic idea is: There are many different people in the world. They have their own thoughts, feelings and needs. And children need to take that into consideration.

Respectful and kind children get along better with others. They do better in school and they help make the world a better place.

To teach respectful behavior:

- **Don't let your child** hurt you or others. "It hurts when you hit."
- **Let your child know** you have rights and needs, too. "Please wait. I'm on the phone right now."
- **Point out others' feelings.** "Maria is sad. What do you think will make her feel better?"

- **Show respect** for people in your daily interactions.
- **Talk about differences**—people from different cultures, and children with different likes and dislikes.
- **Rehearse how to act** in advance of events—how to behave at a play or birthday party, or how to ask the teacher a question.
- **Practice taking turns** when playing or talking.
- **Practice kind ways** of saying *no* to playmates.
- **Don't over-indulge** your child. Don't lead him to believe he's the center of the universe and others don't count.
- **Praise your child** when he considers others' feelings.

**Source:** B. Conner, *The Parent's Journal Guide to Raising Great Kids*, Bantam Books.

**Q:** My child's preschool teacher says our son has trouble interacting with other children during free play. He either argues with them or avoids them. What can we do to help?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Many preschool children need a little help to develop their social skills. To help your child with these skills:

- **Play with him.** Aim for at least 10 minutes a day on the floor with your child and his toys. When he starts playing, join in and encourage him to interact with you. Or you can think of a pretend game to play together. For example, the toy animals are going to hop on the toy cars and go on an adventure.
- **Schedule playdates.** Before a child can do well in a group, he must master one-on-one interaction. Invite a friendly child over to play with your son. Invite only one at a time, and keep the playdates short at first—an hour or two. Make sure there are enough toys for both children. Plan something special for the last 15 minutes, such as a puppet show or a favorite snack.
- **Talk with him** about his experiences. If he says, "Jamie wouldn't play dinosaurs with me," you could ask, "Did you and Jamie want to play with the same dinosaur?" If so, talk to your child about taking turns. If Jamie wanted to play something else, talk with your child about first playing what Jamie wants to play, then asking him to play what your child would like to play.

Consistent practice will benefit your child. So keep at it!

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Exercise may contribute to school success



Exercise is good for the body—and for school success, too! Studies indicate that exercise may cut

boredom, improve focus and boost self-esteem.

How much is needed to make a difference? About 20 minutes of activity at least three days per week, the research shows.

Try these family fitness tips:

- **Schedule regular times** for exercise and stick to them. Think about when your child is likely to have the most energy.
- **Take turns** choosing kinds of exercise. If your child loves soccer, for example, agree to play together at least once a week.
- **Keep an exercise log.** It's fun to look through it and see how committed your whole family is to good health.
- **Drive less and exercise more.** Could you walk to the library? Ride bikes to the store?
- **Think of creative ways** you and your child can exercise. You could pick apples, fly a kite or play hopscotch. On rainy days, you might make up a dance or build an indoor obstacle course.
- **Use exercise rather than food** as a reward. "After you pick up your toys, we can go to the park."
- **Limit screen time.** Watching TV and playing games online doesn't require much physical energy.

**Source:** A. Singh, Ph.D. and others, "Physical Activity and Performance at School," *JAMA Pediatrics*, American Medical Association, [nswc.com/ec\\_exercise](http://nswc.com/ec_exercise).

## Is your kindergartner distracted in school? Try these quick fixes

**Y**our kindergartner has been in school for a few months now. The teacher calls and says your child is having a difficult time paying attention in class. What should you do? First, stay calm!

Difficulty focusing is not necessarily a sign of an attention deficit disorder. Sometimes, a few simple strategies can improve your child's focus:

- **Change seats.** Ask the teacher if your child can be seated close to her and away from the windows and doors. Sights and sounds from outside may distract your child.
- **Talk about the school day.** Ask the teacher for the class schedule and review it with your child. Anticipating an activity may



help her concentrate on what is going on in class.

- **Work with the teacher.** Ask if there are specific times your child tends to be distracted. Does she tune out during long lists of spoken instructions, for example? By sharing information and working together, you will be able to help your child.

## Offer encouragement during the different stages of writing



Anytime your child purposefully makes marks on paper, he is developing his writing skills. Pay attention to your child's writing and encourage him through each stage.

If your child is:

- **Scribbling**, do not ask, "What is that?" Instead, say, "Please tell me about your picture!" You may be surprised at the thought your child put into it.
- **Drawing lines**, ask him to tell you about his drawing. Write what he says about it beneath the lines. Then read it with him.
- **Writing letters** that don't make up words, ask him to tell you what he wrote. Write it correctly for him below his letters. Read it together.
- **Writing beginning** and ending consonants, such as "CT" above a picture of a cat, help him sound out the word he wrote. Say, "Yes, C and T are sounds in the word *cat*!"
- **Writing real words**, read the words with him. (Misspellings are OK at this age.) Continue to ask about his writing and drawing. Before long, simple sentences will follow.