

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2006

TINY TOT PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN

KID BITS



Free play

Your youngster probably has a few after-school and weekend activities. But is there also some unstructured time in her schedule? Allow her to choose what she wants to do. Free time lets children explore the world at their own pace and exercise their imaginations.

“How long is a minute?”

When you say, “Just a second” or “In a minute,” show your child how long that is. It takes about one second to tap your thighs and clap your hands once. Explain to your youngster that a minute has 60 seconds. Together, try “tap-clapping” 60 times while you watch the clock.

Reuse and recycle

Involve your children in recycling by having them help sort items that can be reused. Then, brainstorm ways to reuse them. *Example:* Plastic grocery bags can carry books to and from the library. Let your kids know that recycling helps protect the earth’s environment.

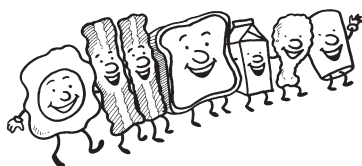
Worth quoting

“A kind word can warm three months of winter.” *Japanese proverb*

Just for fun

Q: What are two things you can’t have for breakfast?

A: Lunch and dinner.



Learning for life

What words describe a child who loves to learn? “Motivated,” “curious,” and “perceptive” are just a few. Children who possess these traits are on their way to becoming lifelong learners.

Here are some tips to help your youngster travel the street of learning.

Find motivation

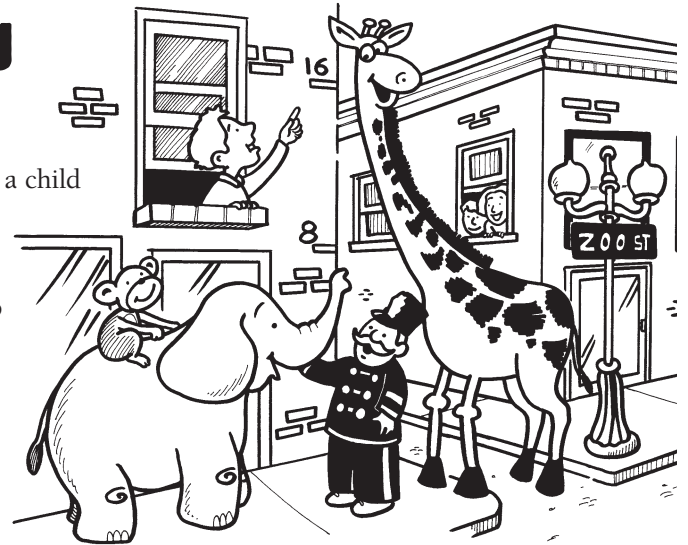
Ask your child what he enjoys at school. Then, take advantage of opportunities at home to help him learn even more about it. For example, if he can’t stop talking about his class trip to a farm, use mealtime to point out the products that come from farms: “The milk came from a cow, and the bread was made from wheat that grows in a field.”

Promote curiosity

When your youngster asks a question that you can’t answer (“How tall are giraffes?”), say, “I don’t know, but let’s find out.” A book, an encyclopedia, or a kid-friendly Internet subject directory such as Yahoo!igans (www.yahooligans.com) can help you discover the answer together. You’ll demonstrate that curiosity and learning are important for adults as well as kids.

Reflect on work

As your child creates something, such as a snake out of Play-Doh or a town out of blocks, ask him questions about it. For



instance, have him tell you how he made it and what he likes best about it. Thinking critically about his work will make your youngster more aware of his own learning. ♥

Eyes and hands

Hand-eye coordination is important for youngsters’ small-motor development. Try these activities to help improve your child’s writing, drawing, and cutting skills:

- Blow bubbles and have your youngster try to pop them before they land. She can use her fingertip or catch them between her hands.

- Let her drop coins into her piggy bank, one at a time.

- Play games such as ring toss or connect the dots.

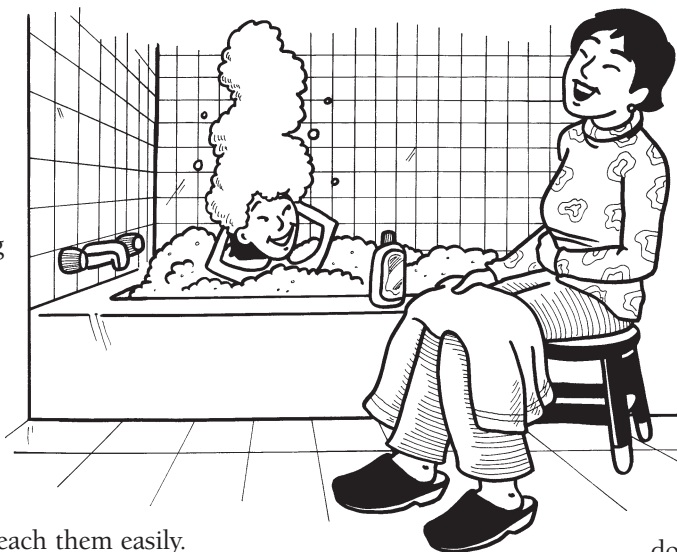
- Give your child crayons or colored pencils instead of markers. They’re narrower and take more effort to write or draw with, so they work little muscles harder. ♥



Encouraging independence

Jane can soap and rinse herself during a bath. Timmy still needs help getting dressed. These children have different levels of independence. How can you encourage your child's independence? Here are several ideas:

- Let your youngster choose her clothes each day. You can help by storing the appropriate clothes for the season in lower drawers where she can reach them easily.
- Give her the job of making her bed each morning. She can pull the covers up neatly over the pillow, and



you can show her how to tuck in the corners.

- Pack her lunch together. Ask her to choose a drink, sandwich filling, and fruit. Give her a spoon to spread jam or cream cheese on the bread. Have her put the items in her lunchbox.

Tip: It's okay if your youngster's clothes don't match exactly,

or if the jam doesn't cover the whole slice of bread. Your little one will soon get the hang of it! ♥



Q & A Sick or not?

Q: My son sometimes says he has a tummy ache and asks to stay home from school. How do I know if he's really sick?

A: It can be hard to tell whether a child's complaints of a stomachache or headache are due to sickness. If your youngster has no fever or other signs of illness such as pale skin or red eyes, he may just be hoping for a day with you. If you decide to let him stay home, it's best to keep him inside and doing quiet activities, like a jigsaw puzzle.

Should his complaints become frequent, try to find out if he's worried about something. Has he been having trouble at school? Is he upset with a friend? Talk to your son's teacher about possible problems at school, and consider a visit to his doctor. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Name that tune!

You can improve your child's listening skills and help him appreciate music at the same time. How? Try one of these activities based on the popular TV show *Name That Tune*:

- ▲ Have family members take turns humming tunes to guess. Choose popular children's music or other familiar songs. *Examples:* "Old McDonald Had a Farm," "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "Happy Birthday."
- ▲ Record short segments of songs on a tape player. You can get them from the radio or your CD collection. Include

several different types, like classical, folk, blues, pop, and country. Your child may not recognize them the first time you play, but he's sure to know them after several games.

- ▲ Play online at www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/nametune1.htm. This site has more than 100 children's tunes, as well as oldies and patriotic songs. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

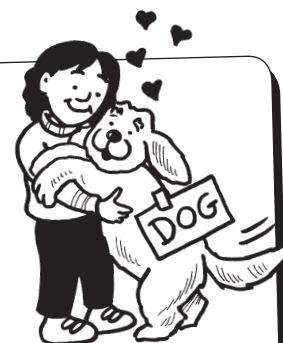
Labels for reading

One day at the hardware store my daughter pointed to a brand-name sign hanging from the ceiling. "That says 'refrigerator!'" she told me. Although that wasn't really what it said, I was thrilled. Alisha had seen the company name on our refrigerator at home, and recognized it in the store.

That experience gave me an idea. I wrote labels for common household items, such as "door," "window," and "table," on index cards and taped them to the objects throughout our home.

Alisha quickly noticed the labels. "What does that say?" she asked, pointing to the telephone. I read the label for her, and she immediately began "reading" all the cards.

Although Alisha is still using the objects for clues to what the cards say, it's only a matter of time before she'll be able to read the words herself. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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