

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2006

Tiny Tot Preschool & Kindergarten

KID BITS



Write it right

It's tempting to teach your youngster to write only in capital letters. Many children find uppercase letters easier, but lowercase letters are used much more often. If you favor both kinds (when you write a note that your child dictates, for example), he'll learn correctly from the beginning.

DID YOU KNOW?

Most school bus injuries happen when getting on or off the bus. If your child will ride a bus to school, prepare her by taking a trip on a city bus. Or pretend your car is a bus, and have her practice boarding—looking both ways as she carefully climbs in and out.

It's my turn!

Learning to take turns can be fun with simple games. Roll a ball back and forth with your youngster, play dominoes, or alternate singing lines from a song. As you play, talk about taking turns: "You go first. Then, it's my turn."

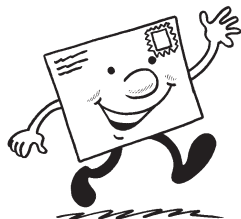
Worth quoting

"If you see a friend without a smile, give him one of yours." *Proverb*

Just for fun

Q: What starts with a "p," ends with an "e," and has thousands of letters?

A: "Post office!"



Step one: Get involved!

Do you want to get involved at school this year but aren't sure how? Even if you're not able to volunteer on a regular basis, you can still help your child succeed. Here are some easy ways to start now.

Get to know the teacher

You can introduce yourself in person by going to an open house, back-to-school night, or a one-on-one meeting. Help the teacher learn about your child by sharing a fact or two: "Connor loves music, and he has a new sister."

Get to know the program

Look through the books or papers your youngster brings home. If he will learn about animals this year, plan a trip to the pet store or zoo. If he's going to be doing gymnastics at school, help him turn somersaults or walk on a balance beam at the playground.

Get to know what works

Find out what motivates your child. Does he love show-and-tell? Help him collect pinecones to share. If he looks forward to art class each Tuesday, talk about it Monday night.

Note: Try to find time—perhaps in the morning before work or during the day when a neighbor can babysit younger siblings—to visit your child at school. Ask the teacher how you can volunteer. Does she need parents to help with



art projects or to make photocopies? Maybe you could have lunch with your child or go on a field trip. ♥

After-school fun

As your youngster adjusts to a new year, stay connected with her by setting aside time together at the end of the school day. One way to do this is to plan something special once a week, such as:

★ Taking a quiet walk through the neighborhood. Choose something to count as you go (cats, pickup trucks, basketball hoops).

★ Making a castle out of a large cardboard box. You can add adventure to everyday activities by doing them inside your castle.

Examples: read a book, eat a snack.

★ Getting down on the floor and playing with toys together. Dress up, build with blocks, or make things with clay. ♥



Math vocabulary

Math can seem like a foreign language to young children. It's full of new vocabulary that is often confusing. Try using math words in everyday conversation so they'll be familiar as your child learns to add, subtract, count, and measure.

Words that compare how much or how many (more, less, same, equal). You can talk about these words while cooking or during meals: "Whose glass has *more* milk—mine or yours? That's right. Mine has *less*. Look. Daddy has the *same* amount as you have."



Words that compare size or weight (smallest, largest, tallest, longest, heavier, lighter). Try practicing while playing: "Which truck is the *longest*?" or "Is this doll *heavier* or *lighter* than that one?" *Tip:* Have your child put several objects, such as rocks or books, in order from smallest to largest.

Words that explain direction or position (over, under, top, bottom, first, last). Use words like these when you do chores together: "Your socks go in the *top* drawer. Pajamas go in the *bottom*. What goes in the *middle* drawer?" or "We'll dust the television *first*, the lamps *next*, and the tables *last*." ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



Beginnings and endings

Help your youngster listen for beginning and ending sounds in words—an important early reading skill. Here's an activity that can be played anywhere: in the grocery store, at the dinner table, or in the car.

Say a short word, such as "dog." Your child must think of a word that begins with the first or last sound of that word (door, goat). For older children, you might try longer words. Continue taking turns, helping your child if he gets stuck.

Note: Since this game is about sounds, don't worry about letters. For example, if your word ends with "k" (park) and your youngster says "cookie," praise him for getting the sound right. If you think he's ready, point out that his word actually begins with "c," even though it sounds like "k." ♥

Q & A Tending to tears

Q: *Our son gets upset easily. Yesterday he burst into tears because he couldn't make it across the monkey bars like his friend did. When he's at school, I won't be there to calm him down—what can I do now to help him?*

A: Some children are extra-sensitive at times. This can be good—sensitive youngsters are sympathetic toward others. But they also can become frustrated easily.

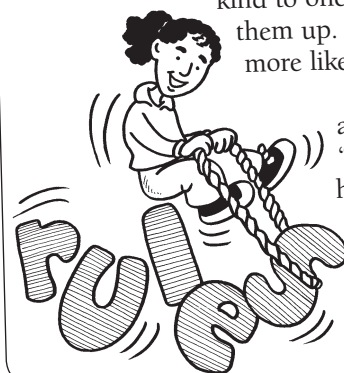
When your child gets upset (say, when his picture doesn't come out the way he wanted), ask, "What could you do now?" (get a new piece of paper and start again). Also, try to praise him when he solves a problem without getting upset: "You worked really hard to put your train track back together. Good job!"

Finally, acknowledge your youngster's frustration: "I know you're disappointed that you got paint on your new shirt. We'll wash it when we get home." ♥



PARENT TO PARENT Household rules

My daughter Anna recently brought home a list of class rules. I loved the simple, positive way they were written: "We take care of our room" and "We are kind to one another." Anna said the children had helped make them up. I thought that was a great idea—kids are probably more likely to follow rules they write themselves.



I decided to make a list for our house as well. I asked my children to help me think of some rules. "No hitting or kicking," my son said. I wrote, "We keep hands and feet to ourselves." "No throwing food," my daughter suggested. I added, "We have good manners at the table." Anna isn't reading yet, so I drew a simple picture as a reminder next to each rule.

Since we've posted the rules on the refrigerator, I've noticed better behavior in our house! ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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