



Spark your child's creativity with homemade valentines

This Valentine's Day, give your child the gift of art and creativity. Sit with your preschooler and create some fun, artistic valentines together. You can:

- **Tape a scrap of textured cloth** to a table. Lace works well. Put a sheet of thin white paper on top. Give your child a red crayon to rub on the white paper so that the texture of the scrap underneath appears. Then fold the paper and turn it into a card, or cut it into a heart shape and glue it to the front of a card.
- **Paint on unusual surfaces.** For example, your child could paint on foil with thick red paint. Cut out a heart from the painted aluminum foil, and glue it to the front of a folded piece of paper.
- **Cut out heart shapes.** Let your child trace and color the shapes. Show how to overlap the shapes to make different designs. Your child can also use the shapes to make people or animals. Experiment with different materials for tracing, such as paints and chalk.
- **Create a woven heart.** Help your preschooler cut out the shape of a heart from a piece of sturdy construction paper. Use a hole-punch to make holes all along the edge of the heart. Then let your child weave a piece of yarn or colorful ribbon in and out of the holes.
- **Challenge your child** to think of other ways you can make valentines together. Anything goes!

Healthy sleep habits set kids up for success



New research suggests that children who get at least 10 hours of sleep at night on a regular basis

have an easier time making the transition to kindergarten. These children experience greater success in emotional development, learning engagement and academic performance throughout their kindergarten year.

The study also showed that taking naps during the day to make up for less sleep at night did not have the same effect.

To help your child get at least 10 hours of sleep each night:

- **Stick to a schedule.** Enforce a regular bedtime and wake time.
- **Encourage physical activity.** Exercise and fresh air help children sleep better.
- **Set a screen time curfew.** Kids should avoid bright screens for one hour before bedtime.
- **Follow a bedtime routine.** Your child could take a bath, enjoy a story and talk about the day.
- **Make your child feel safe.** Put a night light in the room and say you'll peek in periodically.

Source: D.M. Teti and others, "Sleep Duration and Kindergarten Adjustment," *Pediatrics*, American Academy of Pediatrics.

Encouraging your child to ask questions promotes learning



Active learners do not just take knowledge in. They are always trying to find out more.

Most preschoolers do this by asking a constant stream of questions.

While all those questions may be frustrating at times, they are an essential part of a child's development. So encourage your child to continue asking the questions that lead to learning. Here's how:

- **Play guessing games** such as I Spy. Ask your child to think of an object in the room, one you can both see. Explain that you will guess what it is by asking questions. "Is it blue? Is it on the floor? Can we eat it?" Once your child understands the game, reverse roles. You think of something, and have your child ask the questions to guess what it is.

- **Choose a category.** For example, say, "Birds fly. Can you tell me something else that flies?" Or, "Which animal says *Moo*?" If your child answers correctly, keep going. "What does the pig say?" Let your child ask you questions, too.
- **Read books together** that contain questions, such as *Why?* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger. Point out that each time the character asks a question, he learns something new.

Source: L. Noda and others, *Off to a Great Start*, Wright Group, a division of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

"The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge."

—Thomas Berger

Five steps can help you address your preschooler's misbehavior



Misbehavior certainly isn't pleasant, but it is normal for preschoolers. It's one of the ways they figure out exactly what

is expected of them.

To help your child learn how to behave properly:

1. **Create family rules together.** Talk about the importance of having rules. Involve your child in creating a short list of rules your family should follow. Consider your child's views, but remember that you make the final decision.
2. **Be firm, fair and consistent.** Once you decide which rules are most important, stick to them. When disciplining your child, always remember to do it in a respectful and loving way.
3. **Use consequences.** Natural and logical outcomes help children learn from mistakes. If your child leaves a toy outside and it gets damaged in the rain, don't rush out to replace it.
4. **Offer choices.** Ask, "Would you like green beans or broccoli with dinner tonight?" instead of saying, "You have to eat vegetables tonight." Stick to options that are all OK with you.
5. **Reward positive behavior** with praise and time together. Your preschooler will soon realize that positive behavior results in more attention than misbehavior.

Are you helping your child learn during playtime



Playtime provides an opportunity for young children to explore, think creatively and learn new skills. Answer *yes* or *no*

to the questions below to see if you are helping your preschooler learn through play:

- ___ 1. **Do you talk** and listen to your child during playtime?
- ___ 2. **Do you encourage** creative play, such as making up stories and doing art projects?
- ___ 3. **Do you build** your child's large and small muscles with activities such as running, jumping, coloring and putting together puzzles?
- ___ 4. **Do you help** your child practice social skills like sharing, taking turns and using phrases such as *please* and *thank you*?
- ___ 5. **Do you make** time to read every day, choosing books that your child wants to read again and again?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are filling playtime with learning opportunities. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

Early Childhood
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to Help Their Children.

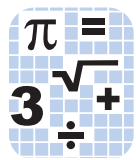
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Show your preschooler that math is a natural part of life



Early childhood is a great time to show your child that math is not only fun, it's a natural part of daily life, too. Nearly everything we do involves math. Each time we get dressed, for example, we follow a sequence. That's a basic math skill.

Here are some other ways to help your child become aware of the math that's all around:

- **Look for numbers everywhere.** Search together for numbers your child knows. If your child doesn't recognize numbers yet, point them out. "That big sign has a number 2 and a number 5 on it!"
- **Estimate.** Say to your child, "I think you can finish your sandwich in 10

bites. Let's see." Then help count the bites as your child takes them.

- **Look for patterns.** Help your child find patterns on sheets, curtains and clothing. "Your shirt has a red stripe, then a yellow stripe, then a red stripe, then a yellow stripe. That's a pattern."
- **Have a "shape of the day."** In the morning, show your child a shape, such as a circle. All day long, point out circles you see. Offer praise when your child points one out.
- **Follow sequences.** Preschoolers love routines and knowing what's going to happen next. Talk about the course of the day. "First, I'll drop you off at preschool. After school is over, Grandma will pick you up. Then, you will go back to her house to play."

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. 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:

- **Explain to your child** that there are many different people in the world. They have their own thoughts, feelings and needs.
- **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.
- **Point out others' feelings.** "Joe is sad. What do you think will make him feel better?"
- **Talk about differences.** People from different cultures, and

children with different likes and dislikes make life more interesting.

- **Show respect** for people in your daily interactions.
- **Promote patience.** If your child interrupts you while you are in the middle of a conversation, say, "Please wait. I'm on the phone."
- **Practice taking turns** when playing or talking.
- **Role-play kind ways** of saying *no* to playmates.
- **Provide perspective.** It's important for kids to know they are not the center of the universe. Other people's wants and needs important, too.
- **Notice and offer praise** when your preschooler considers others' feelings.

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

Q: Later this month, I must decide if I will register my child for kindergarten or for another year of preschool. I'm just not sure my child will be ready for kindergarten. What should I consider as I make this decision?

Questions & Answers

A: You are not alone. Many parents wonder if their children have the maturity needed for a successful year in kindergarten. One reason may be an undue focus on academics.

Academic skills are only part of what children need to enter kindergarten. So what else do they need? Three key elements of kindergarten success are:

1. **Self-control.**
 2. **Social skills.**
 3. **Enthusiasm for learning.**
- Children who have these characteristics, or are making progress toward them, should be able to:
- **Wait their turn.**
 - **Follow** directions from the preschool teacher and other adults.
 - **Manage strong emotions** by counting to 10 or taking five deep breaths.
 - **Get along** with classmates and friends.
 - **Work** alone on class projects under the teacher's direction.
 - **Concentrate** on a task for a few minutes at a time.
 - **Manage** basic personal needs, such as hanging up coats and using the bathroom.
 - **Sit** still and enjoy listening to an adult read a short story.

If you are still unsure if your child will be ready for kindergarten, or if you have concerns about development, make an appointment to talk with the preschool teacher or your pediatrician.

The Kindergarten Experience

Activities can build valuable listening skills



Students who have strong listening skills tend to be better at speaking, socializing, and communicating

with others.

To strengthen your kindergartner's listening skills, offer opportunities to practice in engaging ways. Encourage your child to:

- **Help out around the house.** Choose tasks that interest your child. Maybe your child likes setting the table or watering plants. Then give specific directions to follow. "Fill the watering can. Touch the plant's soil. If it feels dry, water the plant."
- **Tell stories.** Read or tell your child a detailed story several times. Then, pretend you can't remember a part of it. Can your child complete the story for you? You may be surprised at how well your child listened and remembered!
- **Play Simon Says.** Building listening skills is always fun with this classic game! Children love listening to "Simon's" instructions ("Simon says raise your right hand") and doing what he says. When Simon's name is not in the order ("Raise your left hand")—kids should ignore the instruction.
- **Learn new board games.** Board games have rules that often need repeating. But that's OK—this gives your child opportunities to listen. Just make sure your child is enjoying the game, too.

Support school attendance by focusing on your child's health

Winter is the season when many children contract colds, flu, COVID and a host of other ailments. Of course, this results in missed days of school and learning.

While it is impossible to keep your child from *ever* getting sick, you can take steps that offer the best chance of staying healthy—and attending school. In addition to following COVID protocols, be sure to:

- **Keep your child** up to date on medical visits.
- **Make sure your child** wears proper protective clothing in cold weather. A lot of body heat escapes through the head, so wearing a hat is a great idea on a cold day.
- **Have your child** wash hands regularly, such as before meals,



after using the restroom and after arriving home from school. This can prevent the spread of many diseases.

- **Avoid exposing your child** to people who are already sick. Sick family members should limit contact.

Teach your kindergartner how to resolve conflicts peacefully



The ability to resolve conflicts peacefully is a social skill that improves the school learning environment for everyone.

To help your kindergartner learn:

- **Do not allow physical fighting.** If your child hits, or another child does, separate them immediately. Say, "We do not hit."
- **Give examples of peaceful words** to use instead of hitting or fighting. "It's my turn now, please."
- **Teach your child to say "Stop!"** when being provoked by another

child. If the other child won't stop, your child should tell an adult.

- **Suggest alternatives** when your child is upset and needs to do something to cool off. Outdoor alternatives to hitting and fighting include running, jumping or even a loud yell. Indoor choices could include drawing an "angry picture" or punching a pillow. You can even make a rule that "Hitting is for pillows only."

Source: J.L. Roehlkepartain and N. Leffert, Ph.D., *What Young Children Need to Succeed: Working Together to Build Assets From Birth to Age 11*, Free Spirit Publishing.