Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2017

Kids' World - St. Mark UMC
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KID BITS

Practice fairness

Develop your youngster's sense of fair play with routines that encourage taking turns. To pick a board game, write family members' choices on separate slips of paper, shake in a paper bag, and draw one. Next time, draw another slip. Or assign each person a different day of the week to choose the bedtime story.

Make music together

Hold a family music night as an excuse to create a little noise together. You could play toy xylophones, tap oatmeal canisters with wooden spoons, or sing silly new words to favorite songs. You'll build memories while boosting your child's imagination and sense of rhythm.

Rub-a-dub

Bathing a doll or another washable toy is more than good clean fun. Soaping up a washcloth, rinsing out shampoo, and drying the doll will build skills your little one needs to bathe herself. Sneak in some bath-time safety, too. ("Check the water temperature to make sure it's not too hot before you put your doll in the tub.")

Worth quoting

"Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known." *Carl Sagan*

Just for fun

Q: What two things can you never eat for breakfast?

A: Lunch and dinner.

Trying new things

Some children are fearless in the face of new experiences. Others, not so much. When your youngster seems hesitant to step out of his comfort zone, consider these tips.

Rehearse first

Role-play to give your child a stress-free way to prepare for something new. Perhaps he's shy about meeting the youngster who just moved in next door. Together, practice what to do and say. He could walk up to you and say, "Hi, my name is Andy. Do you want to play?" This will also help him get comfortable introducing himself to new classmates or other children in after-school activities.

Take small steps

Use a familiar experience your child enjoys as a stepping-stone to try a new one. For example, if the big playground slide seems too scary, he could try the small slide first. Next, an older sibling may offer to slide down the big one before him. After that, you might stand by the bottom of the slide while he goes down on his own. Each small accomplishment will build his confidence.

Present choices

Your little one will be more inclined to embrace something different if he has options. Say you want him to try new vegetables or other foods. Tell him you're thinking of making either broccoli or kale with tonight's dinner—which would he prefer? Giving your youngster some control allows him to feel safe to make his own choices.♥

Paint-palooza!

Painting without a brush stretches your little artist's creativity and strengthens her hand muscles. Offer tools like these.

- **Plastic spoon.** She could dab finger paints on paper and swirl with the back of the spoon or paint with the handle.
- **Cotton swabs.** Have her use swabs with watercolors to paint in coloring books.
- **Eye dropper.** Mix food coloring in water, and let your child decorate an empty shoebox or egg carton, one drip at a time.
- **Sponges.** Cut sponges into shapes. Your youngster can dip them into paint and stamp onto poster board.
- **Spray bottle.** Fill a spray bottle with water, and head outside together to "spray paint" pictures on the side of your house or on a fence or sidewalk.♥

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Write your name (and mine, too)

"J-e-n-n-a, that's my name! How do you spell your name?" Learning to print names is an exciting early writing experience for your child—and an introduction to the idea that letters form words. Explore the names of people she knows with these activities.

Skywriting. Have your youngster pick a name to write—say, Abby for her big sister. As you call out each letter, she can "write" it in the air with her finger. Remind her to use a capital A for the first letter and lowercase letters for the others.

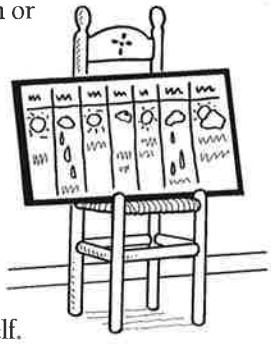
Name puzzles. Cut bookmark-sized strips of papers, and help your child print a different name on each strip. Have her cut the names into pieces to make personalized puzzles for her family members or friends to put together.

Photo book. Gather photos of friends and relatives. Let your youngster paste each one on a separate sheet of paper and write the person's name. Staple the pages together to make her own picture book of names. Then, she could read her "name book" to you.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Be a weather reporter

The changing season is a perfect time to introduce your youngster to *meteorology*—the study of weather.



Together, watch or read the weather report. Encourage him to notice the current temperature and conditions, as well as tomorrow's forecast. Then, have your child track the weather himself. On a sheet of paper or a whiteboard, help him make seven columns and write the days of the week on top.

Every morning, let him check the weather outside and record it. On a bright day, he might draw a sun and write "Sunny" underneath. On a rainy one, he can outline raindrops and write "Rain." As your youngster makes new weather charts each week, he'll get a sense of weather patterns—and he may even be able to predict tomorrow's weather!♥

Let me think...

Asking *how*, *what*, and *why* develops your child's ability to reason and think logically or creatively. Here are ways to use questions to help him put on his thinking cap.

Request advice. When you play or do projects together, ask your youngster for instructions. "How can we get this tent to stay up?" Pose follow-up questions, too. "What should we set up next at our campsite?"

Spark imagination. Inspire thinking—and a few giggles—with questions about silly scenarios. *Examples:* "Where would cats want to go if they could fly?" or "How would you get your teacher's attention if you were invisible?"

Seek explanations. Go beyond yes-and-no answers with questions that ask why. If your child names orange as his favorite color, encourage him to tell you why. Or if he says Joey is lucky because he's the big brother, ask, "But why are you lucky to be the little brother?"♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Encourage dads to volunteer

When I first started volunteering at my daughter Audrey's school, I noticed mostly moms in the classroom. I knew other fathers would enjoy spending time at school, too, so I invited Audrey's best friend's dad to volunteer with me. He was surprised by how great he felt helping out—and how excited his daughter was to see him there.

The word spread, and now more dads are making time to volunteer. We do things like read to the kids, lead games on the playground, or help out with crafts. Last month, one dad brought in his plumbing tools and demonstrated how he fixes leaky faucets at his job. And next month, I'm going to lead potato sack races at field day.

Audrey is proud to see me at her school, and her friends feel the same way when their dads—or moms—volunteer.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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