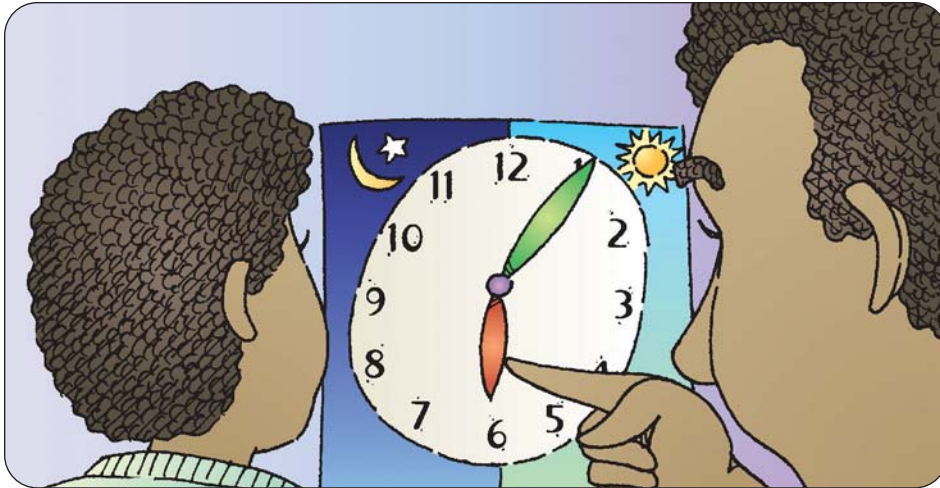


Early Childhood Parents[®]

February 2010
Vol. 14, No. 6

The Early Learning Coalition
of Northwest Florida

make the difference!



Teach your child how to tell time by starting with basics

Of course you want your child to be able to tell time. But he must first understand what *time* is before he can meaningfully look at a clock and inform you that it's 7:43.

Here are some guidelines for going through the process of telling time with your young child:

1. Begin by talking about the day.

Before telling time, your child should understand that *today* is now, *yesterday* is what happened until he went to sleep last night, and *tomorrow* is what it will be after he finishes the next sleep. Say, "Yesterday you went to school. Today we are at home. Tomorrow, after you get out of bed, we'll go to Grandma's."

2. Move on to broader times of day.

Morning is the time between waking up and lunch. *Afternoon* is

between lunch and dinner.

Evening is dinner and bath. *Night* is when it's dark. Discussing times of day in these terms will help your child understand them.

3. Use *before* and *after*.

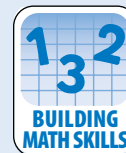
Say, "Before you brushed your teeth this morning, you ate breakfast. After you got dressed, we went shopping."

4. Introduce the clock

when your child is comfortable with the above concepts. Start with teaching your child the names of the hour hand (short hand) and minute hand (long hand). When he knows these, teach him times on the hour only for now. "See how the minute hand is on the 12, and the hour hand is on the 1? That means it's one o'clock."

Source: Jackie Silberg, *500 Five Minute Games*, ISBN: 0-87659-172-1 (Gryphon House, www.gryphonhouse.com).

Teach math, reading with building blocks



Children often have blocks with numbers and letters on them.

How can you help your child learn from them? There are lots of ways!

To build skills:

- **Remember** that preschoolers often confuse letters and numbers. With your child, sort the blocks, making separate lines of letters and numbers. Point out letters and numbers in other places, too, such as on signs and in books.
- **Build towers** by putting numbers and letters in order. Place the "1" and "A" blocks on the bottom. Start with one tower, saying each letter or number out loud. Then build the second tower the same way.
- **Try variations** when the towers fall down (or your child has fun knocking them down!). Build with all the blocks, and then call out letters or numbers for your child to find. Or make patterns, such as number, letter, letter, number, letter, letter.

Source: "Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/math/part_pg8.html#p8.

Consider your child's ability before trying new activities



By February, you and your child may feel a bit housebound. A new outside activity may be just what you need. Not only will it get you out of the

house, it can stimulate your preschooler's learning, too. Just remember the old saying: "Look before you leap."

Be sure to consider:

- **Ability.** Can your child lift a bowling ball? Can she make it through a hike? Avoid activities that may be beyond your child's developmental ability.
- **Temperament.** Veteran parents advise caution at the movies. Even some "G" rated films may leave your child in tears. Your active child may love the ice rink. But a quiet child may be happier with a

quick visit to a museum.

- **Cost.** Even if you can afford them, expensive activities for young children may end in frustration. Attention spans and behavior vary widely at this age. Many parents report having to leave places before they "got their money's worth." So, check your local paper or a community website for free or low-cost activities for families.

Source: Carol Baicker-McKee, *Fussbusters on the go: Strategies and games for stress-free outings, errands and vacations with your preschooler*, ISBN: 1-56145-263-7 (Peachtree Publishers, www.peachtree-online.com).

"Who dares to teach must never cease to learn."

—John Cotton Dana

Create a well-stocked writing center to build your child's skills



The winter months often mean spending a little more time indoors. What a perfect time for your preschooler to explore the wonderful world of writing!

Your child will be more likely to work on writing if there is a ready-made place for him to do it. All you need is a corner of a table or desk, a chair and a few materials.

Offer your child:

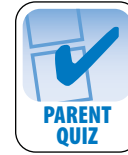
- **Different kinds of paper.** Your child can use blank or colored paper to draw a picture and "write" underneath it—even if he's still scribbling. You can print his description of the picture at the bottom of the page and read it to him. Lined paper (look for paper

with plenty of space between the lines) is great for encouraging your child to print his name.

- **Pencils, markers and crayons.** Remember that some young children prefer thick pencils and markers. Others realize that older children don't use these and so do not want them either.
- **Craft supplies.** Consider adding things such as glue, modeling dough and string to the writing center. You can form letters and words from these and your child can trace them with his finger. This helps him use the sense of touch to learn letters.

Source: Dianne Nielsen, *Teaching Young Children*, ISBN: 0-86653-911-5 (Fearon Teacher Aids, out of print).

Do you know the basics of effective discipline?



Disciplining—or teaching—children is one of parents' toughest jobs. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if

you're focusing on the essentials:

___ **1. Do you choose** just a few important rules—and explain them in simple words your child understands?

___ **2. Do you enforce** rules consistently so your child always knows what's expected of her?

___ **3. Do you set** expectations that are appropriate for your child's age? This prevents rules from being too lenient or too tough.

___ **4. Do you react** calmly and carefully when your child misbehaves, providing her with a good behavior role model?

___ **5. Do you celebrate** your child's good behavior much more often than you notice her mistakes?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're using a good discipline method. 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 our website: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2010 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Maria Koklanaris & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Understand your preschooler's language development



In a fast-paced society with lots of “educational” products, it’s natural to worry, “Is my child keeping up?” The truth is that every child is unique. Your child may talk differently from a playmate the same age, for example, yet both may be “normal.”

When evaluating your child, consult your doctor and use established general guidelines, such as:

- **Two-year-olds** can usually put two words together and be understood by parents about half the time. They often know about 50 words, including a few adjectives, such as *happy*.
- **Three-year-olds** are likely to name lots of familiar objects. They can

answer simple questions, such as, “What’s your name?” and “How old are you?” They use pronouns, including *I, you* and *we*.

- **Four-year-olds** go beyond naming things to explaining what they do. For example, “That car was driving really fast!” When they talk and tell stories, most adults will understand what they say.
- **Five-year-olds** speak in complex sentences that include the future tense. “I’m going to go to Grandpa’s house tomorrow, and we’re going to make hot chocolate!” Five-year-olds can also learn to rhyme and recite their address.

Source: “Child development chart: Preschool milestones,” Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.com/health/child-development/MY00136.

Teach your child the importance of trying to ‘do the right thing’



As toddlers and preschoolers, children behave to earn parents’ approval and to avoid a negative consequence. As they get older, they slowly learn good behavior for its own sake—simply because it’s the right thing to do.

There are many ways parents can help preschoolers develop good character and the desire to do what’s right. Here are a few guidelines for seeing your preschooler on this life-long path:

- **Give your child unconditional love.** Children who are secure in their parents’ love almost always behave better than those who are not. The reason is quite simple—these children grow to see that this is how everyone should be treated.

- **Be a role model.** Your child is watching you all the time. If he overhears you telling lies, he will, too. If you always tell the truth, chances are, he will, too.
- **Correct your child for disrespect.** “In our family, we use kind words.” And here’s the “model” concept again—use those same kind words when you talk to your child and other family members.
- **Cue your child to think of others.** Example: Someone in the family sneezes and the tissue box is on the counter. Say to your child, “Look on the counter. Do you see something there that Katie needs?” Praise your child for following through.

Source: Peg Rosen, “How to Raise a Really Good Kid,” *Parents*, March 2006 (Meredith Corporation, www.parents.com).

Q: My daughter’s kindergarten teacher sends parents a monthly note. This month she remarked that the school year is more than half over and she would like to see the children assuming more responsibility. I would like to help my child. Can you give any tips about the responsibilities appropriate for a kindergartner?

Questions & Answers

A: There is a big jump in expectations between the kindergarten and first-grade years. That is why your daughter’s teacher is stressing responsibility.

Some responsibilities your daughter should work on:

- **Self.** A six-year-old still needs lots of supervision. But with that support, she can do a lot for herself. She can dress herself and take care of her hair and teeth. She can bathe with you nearby. She can tie shoes. (If not, work actively on this goal.)
- **Safety.** By first grade, children should be firmly aware of (and sticking to) several important safety rules. Wait for an adult before crossing the street. Keep hands to self, especially on playground equipment. Walk (don’t run) in the hallways. Eat your own food in the lunchroom.
- **Schoolwork.** Your daughter’s first-grade teacher will expect her to work more independently. She may have to complete a worksheet at her seat after the teacher explains the assignment. She will be expected to follow directions. At home, she should be in charge of her school things. She can find a place to keep her backpack and help make her own lunch.

—Maria Koklanaris,
The Parent Institute

The Kindergarten Experience

Support your kindergartner's reading lessons



One of the biggest accomplishments in kindergarten is preparing to read. By the end of the year, some students read all by themselves.

To help your child make the most of kindergarten reading lessons:

- **Enjoy conversations.** Many kindergartners talk a lot. Use this as an opportunity to introduce new words. "Wow. That building is so tall! It's a *skyscraper!*" The bigger your child's vocabulary, the better!
- **Play with letters.** In addition to pointing out letters on signs and elsewhere, keep some around for fun. Children enjoy letter puzzles, stickers, magnets, cookie cutters and more.
- **Do "creative" writing.** Use lots of writing utensils, including markers, crayons, paintbrushes and finger paints to make words and letters. Staple pages together to make a "book."
- **Visit the library.** Keep a variety of books and other reading materials around the house. Read them together. Your kindergartner may not be reading chapter books yet, but you can build his interest by reading them aloud.
- **Be a reading role model.** Read books, newspapers or magazines yourself, and make enthusiastic comments like, "That book was great!"

Source: "Reading and Language," PBS Parents, www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/articles/literatehome/ychild_kgartner-lit.html.

Help your kindergartner learn how to listen & speak in turn

Listening to others and waiting your turn to speak are essential skills for school. Children could never learn if 25 students were always talking at once!

If polite talking and listening skills happen at home, your child will be more likely to use them at school, too. Practice these skills:

- **At meals.** You have probably heard about the importance of family meals. One reason is that they are a time for children to learn talking and listening. Give each family member a chance to tell something about her day. Do not allow others to speak while someone else is talking.
- **At story time.** You know it's important to read with your child. It encourages her to learn to read. But it also teaches her to listen and pay attention to another voice. Ask questions



about the story. "Tell me something you really liked about the story."

- **At play.** Games such as "Simon Says" have been around forever because they are fun and they teach listening. Board games also encourage talking and listening.

Source: Carol Wright, *A Parent's Guide to Home and School Success: Kindergarten*, ISBN: 1-55254-169-X (Brighter Vision Publications, www.brightervision.com).

Stay involved with your child's school throughout the year



Kindergarten is an exciting time to work with the school. The following guidelines will help you stay involved throughout the year:

- **Read everything that's sent home.** Many opportunities are found in the school newsletter. PTAs and PTOs always need volunteers.
- **Ask how you can help.** If the teacher doesn't need volunteers in the classroom, there are other

ways to contribute. You might prepare class materials at home, play educational games with your child or chaperone a trip.

- **Voice your concerns.** Sometimes there are obstacles to parent involvement, such as language differences and busy work schedules. Speak up about them. For example, "How can I get a translator for my parent conference?" Or "My work calendar fills up quickly. Are there any class events I can help with now?"