

Early Childhood Parents®

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EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER
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make the difference!



Responsibility is essential for your child's school success

Teaching preschoolers how to be responsible can take great patience. After all, learning takes a lot of trial and error. But the more you support your child's efforts, the more he'll accomplish at home and at school. He'll see that hard work gets results—and that feels great!

To build your preschooler's sense of responsibility, it's essential to:

- **Set expectations.** Clearly outline the rules you expect your child to follow. Talk about what will happen if he doesn't follow them. And when he makes a poor choice, hold him accountable and help him take responsibility for it.
- **Be a role model.** Demonstrate responsibility. Be honest. Take care of duties. Be on time. Apologize for mistakes.
- **Give responsibility.** Let your child help with age-appropriate jobs, such as picking up toys and sorting laundry. Allow him to make some decisions, such as choosing between two shirts.
- **Embrace mistakes.** Allow your preschooler to face small challenges, such as pouring a drink. He may spill it, but relax. It's an opportunity to learn.
- **Develop empathy.** Encourage your child to imagine how others feel. Teach him to treat others as he wants to be treated.
- **Promote maturity.** As your child becomes more responsible, review your rules and expectations. Compliment his efforts!

Source: M. Purcell, "Building Responsible Kids," Psych Central, nswc.com/ec_responsibility.

Music boosts emerging literacy skills



Listening to music benefits your child in many ways. And listening to music with lyrics can build

her language skills—and help her unlock the code to reading.

Here are five ways listening to music boosts emerging literacy skills:

1. **Music teaches** your child to listen for sounds. Recognizing sounds is a huge step toward reading.
2. **Music exposes** your child to devices used in literature and poetry, such as rhyming and alliteration.
3. **Music introduces** your child to repetition, which improves fluency. When she hears song lines that repeat, she becomes familiar with them and can repeat them.
4. **Music boosts** your child's vocabulary. Songs are a gateway to learning new words.
5. **Music tells** your child a story. Listening to the lyrics of a song gives her practice with comprehension.

Source: C. Bollinger, "Using Music to Teach Early Reading Skills," Songs for Teaching, nswc.com/ec_music.

Take advantage of the learning opportunities this season offers



The new growth and changes that take place every spring are much like the growth and changes your child experiences every day. Foster her development even more by engaging in some fun learning activities together.

Here are some things to do and talk about with your preschooler this spring:

- **Notice the weather.** Talk about the weather with your child each morning before she goes to school. Look outside and discuss whether it is sunny, cloudy, windy or rainy. Open the door and feel the air. Is it warm? Is it chilly? Does it still feel cold?

Next, you and your child can talk about how to dress for the weather. Ask your child which of her clothes would keep her comfortable today. Talk about why it is important to dress appropriately for the weather.

- **Grow plants.** Plant a few flowers or herbs in pots with your preschooler. If you have more room, consider planting a small garden or flower bed.
- **Learn about baby animals.** Animals usually give birth in the spring. If you are lucky enough to live near a farm or a zoo, where your child can see baby animals, consider taking her there. If not, ask your librarian for books about animals and their babies.
- **Play outdoors.** Do you know your child's favorite outdoor game? Play it with her, even if it is just a quick game of tag. Teach her the importance of being a good sport—win or lose.

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

Compliments are most effective when they are specific & genuine



Compliments are an important part of discipline because they teach children what they're doing right.

But not all compliments are equal.

According to experts, the best compliments are:

- **Genuine.** Give a compliment only when you really mean it. And then be specific. “You practiced buttoning your shirt so many times. And now you can do it all by yourself! I'm so proud!” is more specific than, “Great job!”

- **Focused on effort.** Compliment your child's hard work, even if he doesn't reach an ultimate goal. Perseverance and improvement are accomplishments!
- **Chosen carefully.** When parents praise constantly and insincerely, children either tune out or feel too much pressure to perform. Instead, look for opportunities to praise special, new and important behaviors. Make your compliments really count.

Source: H. Hatfield, “The Right Way to Praise Your Kids,” WebMD, niswc.com/ec_compliment.

Does your child get enough sleep for school success?



Children need plenty of sleep to do their best in school. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are promoting positive sleep habits:

- ___ **1. Do you enforce** a consistent, reasonable bedtime—and usually stick to it, even on weekends?
- ___ **2. Have you established** relaxing bedtime routines, such as bathing, brushing teeth and reading?
- ___ **3. Do you make sure** your child gets the right amount of sleep? The National Sleep Foundation recommends 10 to 13 hours per night for preschoolers.
- ___ **4. Do you end** screen time at least 30 minutes before bedtime to prevent difficulty falling asleep? (Remember, this includes tablets and handheld electronic games.)
- ___ **5. Do you have** a comfortable place for your child to sleep away from the TV or other distractions?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you're promoting good sleep habits. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Make letters stand out with a tape and paint project



Children who know many letters when they start kindergarten tend to have an easier time learning to read. Your preschooler has probably practiced making letters out of lots of different materials—yarn, clay, pasta, dough, glitter glue and more. What's left? Tape!

To make tape letter art:

1. **Collect supplies**, including paper, paint, a paintbrush and tape that can be removed from paper. Try masking tape, drafting tape (from an office supply store) or transparent tape that pulls up easily.
2. **Have your child use the tape** to “spell” his name on paper. Help him cut or tear the right-sized pieces. The letter “A” will need two long pieces and one short one. Curvy letters, such as “S” and “P” may look boxy or pointy, but that’s OK.
3. **Let your child paint** a design around the tape, keeping in mind that the tape will be removed. The more paint he puts on the page, the better! Then help him carefully lift the tape and watch his name stand out!
4. **Think of other ways** to use this technique. Your child could spell other words or use tape to make designs, such as a fence in front of a flower garden. When the tape is pulled up, the picture’s background becomes the focus.

Teach your child the importance of careful & respectful listening



Parents often focus on helping children learn to speak. But children must also learn how to listen.

To be successful in school, they must pay attention to what the teacher says, then act on what they hear. You can help your child develop good listening skills.

First, be a good role model. Set an example by listening to your child when he speaks. Make eye contact. Smile and nod. Restate what he says to show you’ve heard and understood him.

Talk to your child about the importance of listening respectfully. Explain why it’s not acceptable to talk while others are talking. He also shouldn’t make sounds or jump around.

Here are a few more ways to boost your child’s listening skills:

- **Give him multi-step instructions.** “Please go to your room, get your shoes, bring them here and let me help you tie them.”
- **Go to storytelling hours.** Many libraries offer these.
- **Combine words and actions.** Talk about what you’re doing as you do it.
- **Listen to audio books.**
- **Begin to tell longer** and longer stories once your child shows an interest.
- **Speak in a voice** that helps your child listen. Don’t speak too fast or too softly.
- **Play listening games.** Have your child go outside and close his eyes. What sounds does he hear?

Q: In preschool, my daughter was happy-go-lucky. But since she has started kindergarten this year, she is turning into a perfectionist. She says her writing is “sloppy” and her somersaults in P.E. are “the worst in the class.” I’m worried about her self-confidence. What is going on?

Questions & Answers

A: When children begin their formal education, many start comparing themselves to others. Until this year, your daughter likely never thought about her writing or her somersaults. But now she can see what everyone else is doing, every day. And like most other children her age, she wonders if she is falling short.

To reassure your child:

- **Emphasize effort.** Research shows that it is *effort*, rather than *ability*, that ultimately leads to success. Say things like, “Look how hard you worked on that!” Or, “You always try your best.”
- **Celebrate mistakes.** Let your child know that people learn through their mistakes. Say, “Sometimes things don’t work out. This is a great opportunity for us to think about what you could you do differently next time!”
- **Don’t judge.** Words like *best* and *worst* just add fuel to a perfectionist’s fire. Your child looks to you as a model. If you try not to compare, she may stop doing it, too.
- **Just have fun.** Every day, do something with your child that is pleasurable for the two of you. Read, sing a song, go for a walk. Children need time away from work, just like adults do.

The Kindergarten Experience

Explore the solar system with your kindergartner



Your kindergartner probably knows about the sun and the moon. But what about the rest of our solar system?

Chances are it will fascinate him—and you, too! Consider taking a week to focus on solar system activities. Plan one for each school day. You and your child might:

- **Do research.** Visit the library and check out books. In the book *There's No Place Like Space*, for example, the Cat in the Hat tours our solar system! Go online, too. You'll find amazing pictures at www.NASA.gov.
- **Draw or print a picture** of each planet. Refer to books or websites before coloring them in. What is known about how each planet *really* looks? But let your child color the planets however he likes.
- **Make a book.** Combine your research and drawings. Your child can add a caption to each page. He might write the planets' names—or dictate details for you to write.
- **Make a model.** Think of some creative ways to represent the planets. Use items, such as fruit, sports balls and more. Line up the “planets” in the order they appear in the solar system.
- **Bake planets.** Find a cookie recipe and let your child shape the dough into “planets.” Decorate each cookie with details that emphasize what you've learned.

National DEAR Day is a time to celebrate reading together!

Each year on April 12 (the birthday of children's author Beverly Cleary) teachers, parents, children and librarians celebrate National DEAR Day. DEAR stands for the phrase “Drop Everything And Read.”

Here's a fun way to celebrate it with your child:

1. **Collect reading material.** Ask your child to gather some of her favorite books. Find some reading material for yourself.
2. **Tell your child** you are going to “Drop Everything and Read” for 30 minutes.
3. **Set a timer for 15 minutes** and read your child's favorite books aloud to her.
4. **Set the timer** for an additional 15 minutes and tell your child that you will now each read on your own. Encourage your



child to spend this time looking at her books. Looking at books independently is an important step toward reading.

5. **Talk about what you read** once the timer goes off. Tell your child how much you love reading.

Source: “Celebrate ‘Drop Everything and Read’ with Beverly Cleary,” HarperCollins Publishers, niswc.com/ec_dear.

Keep up attendance by helping your child love kindergarten



It's only natural that when your child loves an activity, he wants to participate in it. So if your child loves school and feels connected to it, he'll want to attend.

Of course, you can't *force* a child to love school. But you can help him feel more connected. Here's how:

- **Talk about school every day.** Ask your child what he likes best about it. It's OK if he says,

“recess.” What matters is that he has happy times at school.

- **Talk about your child's teachers.** Encourage your child to bond with them by reminding him that they care for him and want him to learn. Suggest your child make cards or draw special pictures for his teachers.
- **Encourage your child** to get to know school friends better. Invite a classmate over after school or include a friend in a family activity.