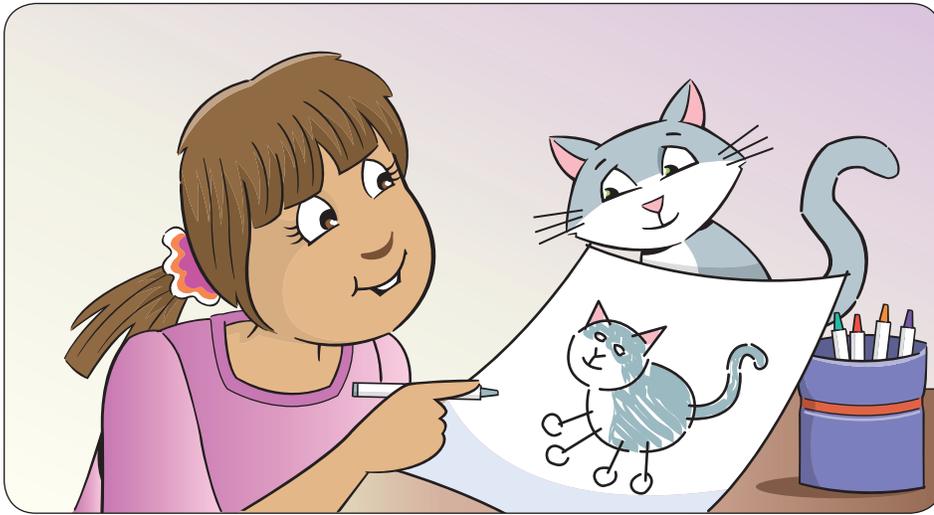


# Early Childhood Parents<sup>®</sup>

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EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER  
Penny Goldstein, Building Administrator

*make the difference!*



## Help your child explore all types of artistic expression

**Y**our preschooler learns so much through creating art. When she asks herself questions, such as, “What color should I make the dog?” she is practicing problem-solving. When she moves a crayon on the paper to make a mark, she is learning cause and effect. And when she draws pictures, she is learning new ways to express herself.

Children learn the most from art if you give them freedom to create and if you let them make decisions on their own. Remember: The process of creating is more important than your child’s final product.

To encourage your preschooler to explore her world through art:

- **Help her get started.** If your child wants to draw a cat, but doesn’t know where to begin, prompt her with questions: “What does a cat look like? What’s the biggest part of a cat’s body? How many legs does a cat have?”
- **Provide a variety of art supplies.** Look for things you have around the house—glue, fabric scraps, coffee filters, egg cartons, catalogs, paper towel tubes and yarn.
- **Give your child a chance to talk** about what she created. What is it? How did she do it? How does she feel about it?
- **Proudly display her work.** Put it on the wall or refrigerator. Send it to relatives.
- **Be patient and sensitive.** If she doesn’t want to get her hands dirty, don’t push her. Introduce materials slowly. Remember, art should be fun.

## Geography begins with simple maps



You may have seen the news story: A group of students is asked to find a certain country on a map. The majority are unable to do it. But your child does not have to end up in that category.

Studies show that children can and do get interested in geography. And a great way to foster that interest is to start when they are young and to focus first on the places that are meaningful to them.

Teach your child to draw a simple map of his house and street. It can be as basic as a square with a triangle on top for the house and a straight line underneath for the road. What matters is that your child is drawing a place that is meaningful to him.

Drawing simple maps helps your child think “geographically.” A child who draws a map of his house at the age of five may go on to draw the neighborhood at eight and the city at 12.

**Source:** D. Hutchison, “Drawing on Children’s ‘Sense of Place’—The Starting Point for Teaching Social Studies and Geography,” *The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat*, [nismc.com/ec\\_map](http://nismc.com/ec_map).

## Did you know that preschool sets the stage for a lifetime of success?



Preschool doesn't only prepare children for kindergarten. Studies show that preschool teaches lifelong skills.

In one study, scientists compared children who attended preschool to children who didn't. The preschool group grew up to have less sickness and trouble with the law—and better finances and employment!

What makes preschool so special? It builds abilities that are easier to learn at a young age, such as:

- **How to share.** Adults have to share with family, coworkers, neighbors and others. In preschool, students are taught the Golden Rule: "Treat others the way you want to be treated."
- **How to disagree politely.** It's healthy—and helpful—to have different views. It's not okay to express them in destructive

ways. Preschool helps young children learn the basics, including how to use polite words instead of aggressive actions.

- **How to make up.** Everyone makes mistakes. Preschoolers practice apologizing and forgiving. With assistance from teachers, they also learn from their mistakes and improve themselves.

Source: A. Blumberg, "Preschool: The Best Job-Training Program," NPR, [npr.com/ec\\_preschool](http://npr.com/ec_preschool).

**"The more you can show children the purpose of the skills they're learning, the more they're going to see the power that the skills can provide."**

—Diane Levin, Ph.D.

## Props can strengthen your child's vocabulary and language skills



For most preschoolers, learning is exciting! Take advantage of your child's enthusiasm for learning by playing games that build his vocabulary and strengthen his language skills.

Use your imagination to set a scene. Then add props such as:

- **Menus.** Pretend you're visiting a restaurant. Make menus or use an old take-out menu from a restaurant. Take turns playing the customer and the waiter or waitress.
- **Books.** Imagine you're going to the library to find books. What would you like to read? Set out books you have at home. Then take turns "checking them out."
- **Signs.** Make your home a "construction zone." What signs would you see? Make signs that say *stop*, *go*, *slow* and more. Then let your child direct traffic!
- **Telephones.** Make a pretend phone call to your child and ask him questions about his day. Discuss the importance of speaking loudly and clearly when talking on the phone.
- **Stuffed animals.** Line up a few stuffed animals and pretend you are in a classroom. Take turns being the teacher and a student.

## Are you building your child's early spelling skills?



Preschoolers aren't too young to learn about spelling, as long as the activities are enjoyable. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're building early spelling skills:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you provide** toys with letters on them, such as kid-safe refrigerator magnets or alphabet blocks?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you put** your child's name on belongings and encourage her to write (or scribble) it, too?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you label** things your child uses often, such as books, crayons, paper, shoes and toys?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you talk** about the words you see throughout the day, such as *stop*, *sale* and *bus*?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you play** word games with your child, such as matching pictures of items with their names or thinking of words that start with the same letter?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're teaching about spelling. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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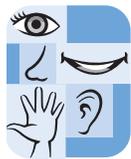
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## Have fun with science by turning your bathtub into a science lab!



Most preschoolers love to splish and splash in the bathtub. While they're there, they can learn some important science concepts.

To turn your tub into a science lab, gather together some of these "science" tools: sponges, plastic boats, empty plastic bottles, a small rock, a spoon, plastic tubes and straws, plastic pitchers, a large plastic bowl, bubble bath solution and rubber animals.

For your science activities, encourage your child to:

- **See which items** sink and float.
- **Use the pitchers** to pour and measure. Discuss the meaning of *full*, *half full* and *empty*.
- **Pour water** into plastic bottles. Ask, "Which has more water?" "Which has less?" Have your child pour each bottle's water into a bowl to verify her predictions.
- **Fill one container** with water and another with soap bubbles. Discuss the concepts of *heavy* and *light*.
- **Float a large bowl** on the water. Help your child count how many rubber animals she can put into her "boat" before it sinks.
- **Pour a small amount** of bubble bath solution into the plastic bowl and add water. Help your child use the straw to blow into the soapy water. How big can she make the bubbles? Talk about what causes the bubbles to form.

## March is the perfect month to investigate the wind together!



March can be a windy month. It's a great time to fly a kite or watch the tops of trees blow in the breeze.

It's also a great time to teach your child about the weather. The wind is a part of the weather young children can easily understand because they can feel it, hear it and see its effects.

Does your child know that there is more than just air blowing in the wind? To help her find out what else is blowing, do an experiment together. Gather some plastic lids, string and petroleum jelly. Then, on a windy day:

1. **Punch a hole** near the edge of each lid (a paper punch is good for this). Pull the string through the hole and tie it. Make a loop on the other end of the string big enough to hang from a branch.
2. **Rub petroleum jelly** on one side of each lid. Repeat with as many lids as you have. Then go outdoors and hang the lids from different tree branches.
3. **Wait 30 minutes.** Then go back outside and check the lids. What did the wind blow into the lids? Help your child use a magnifying glass to investigate. She may find bits of leaves, dirt, paper and even insects stuck in the petroleum jelly. Ask your child why she thinks these things are in the wind. Explain to her that the wind is strong enough to pick them up and carry them along.

Source: "What's in the wind," WeatherWizKids, [nswc.com/ec\\_wind](http://nswc.com/ec_wind).

**Q:** My five-year-old son is not the "outdoorsy" type. I worry that he just doesn't get enough exercise. I also worry about his gross motor skills. The weather is starting to improve a little where we live. I'd love some suggestions on improving my child's fitness without making him too unhappy.

### Questions & Answers

**A:** Fitness plays an important role in school success. The large muscles involved in gross motor activities—walking, running and jumping—support your child as he moves through his day and help give him the energy he needs in order to learn.

Here are ways to get your child moving:

- **Emphasize spending time** with him rather than playing outside. Say things like, "I just love being with you. Won't you come on a short walk with me?" Or, "I decided to get my bike out and go for a ride. But I need a little company. Please come along!"
- **Build in "sneaky" exercise.** If you go on an errand by car, don't park right next to the store. Park somewhere that means you will have to take a little walk to get to where you are going. Bypass the elevator in buildings when you can. Walking up a few flights of stairs is a good workout.
- **Play games** that encourage your child to move. The old classic "Simon Says" is perfect. Take turns giving each other directions such as "Simon Says jump up and down five times." This game has the added benefit of sharpening listening skills.

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Improve your kindergartner's reading skills



Kindergarten has been underway for months and you may be wondering, "When will my child learn to read?" Many kindergartners read simple books by the end of the year. But every child is different, and that's OK!

No matter what stage of reading your kindergartner is in, it's important for you to:

- **Use new words** in ways that show what they mean. "Clifford is the biggest dog I've ever seen! He's *gigantic!*" This builds your child's vocabulary. The more she hears new words, the more likely she is to recognize them when she reads.
- **Read a variety of materials.** Eventually your child will read all kinds of things, such as poems, instructions, biographies and more. If you've exposed her to many printed materials, she'll be more comfortable with them.
- **Encourage participation.** Many kids memorize their favorite books. When you're reading aloud, let your child chime in and "read," too. If she can't figure out a word, let her give it a good try before sounding it out together.
- **Play with letters.** Practice making words out of letters, such as child-safe refrigerator magnets. You can also cut letters out of paper and arrange them into words together.

**Source:** "Kindergartner Language Development Milestones: Discovering the Written Word," PBS Parents, [niscw.com/ec\\_read](http://niscw.com/ec_read).

## Self-confidence can boost your child's success in kindergarten

**A** confident child has a head start on success. A confident child believes he can learn, believes he can make friends and believes he can be a success. And he sets out to do so.

Look for and encourage these signs of self-confidence in your kindergartner:

- **Your child likes himself.** He seems comfortable with himself and is happy, most of the time, at home and at school. He rarely puts himself down.
- **Your child is optimistic.** He has a positive attitude and usually says things like, "I can do this!" and "This will be fun!"
- **Your child has friends.** He believes that his friends like



him and that they will have a nice time playing together.

- **Your child feels secure** around the adults in his life. He knows you love him unconditionally. He knows his teacher wants to help him learn.

## What should you do if your child gets into trouble at school?



Receiving a phone call or email from a teacher to say your child is misbehaving is never pleasant. But if you take quick action, you can almost always nip the problem in the bud.

Here's what to do:

- **Listen to the teacher.** Contrary to some parents' belief, teachers don't like calling parents to report a problem with a student. The teacher wants your child to do well. So if she is calling you, something is going on that is stopping your child from learning. Hear her out.
- **Work with the teacher.** It's likely she has seen a similar problem before. What does she recommend? What can you do at home to help? Form a plan as partners.
- **Talk with your child.** Assure your child that you love him and that his teacher cares about him. That is why you are both trying to help him. Review school rules together. Explain that following rules is not always easy, but it is something that everyone must do so the classroom can be a happy place where everyone is learning.