

# Early Childhood Parents®

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EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER  
Penny Goldstein, Building Administrator

*make the difference!*



## Keep learning alive for your preschooler over the summer

**F**un, educational activities can keep your preschooler's mind engaged all summer long. Here are several to try:

- **Read rhyming books** and encourage your child to rhyme one-syllable words such as *cat* or *man*.
- **Play board games** and card games. "War" is an easy and fun game that teaches number skills. You and your child each lay down a card and the card with the highest number wins.
- **Look at pictures together** in books and magazines. Ask your child to tell you what is happening in each picture.
- **Help your child "write" letters** to a grandparent or other relative. Your child can draw a picture of something she has been doing each week. You can write a caption under it and mail it.
- **Experience the five senses.** Each week, focus on a different sense. See a new educational television show, listen to a new song, touch a new fabric, smell a new spice or taste a new fruit.
- **Classify.** Say to your child, "A car is something people can ride in. Can you think of anything else people ride in?"
- **Practice writing** in different ways. Have your child use chalk to write on the sidewalk. Give her a paint brush and water, and ask her to paint her name on the sidewalk. Gather a small amount of sand and have her use her finger to write in it.

## Experts agree on the basics of discipline



Discipline is one of the toughest challenges parents face. Most experts agree on some

basic guidelines that work. These methods boost success at home and at school:

- **Set limits.** Talk with your child about a few essential rules. Explain them briefly and clearly. Also explain the consequences for breaking the rules. Consequences should be related to the misbehavior and imposed consistently.
- **Use a team approach.** Don't think of discipline as you against your child. Instead, encourage cooperation. Offer choices. "Should we pick up your room now or after lunch?" Be creative, too. "Let's be silly for two minutes before we have to calm down."
- **React calmly.** Your child's behavior may be out of control sometimes, but yours shouldn't be. Make eye contact and use an even, respectful tone. Avoid yelling.

Source: N. Rones, "3 Golden Rules for Great Behavior," *Parents*, niswc.com/ec\_behavior.

## Summer reading activities can boost your preschooler's skills



Look around a preschool classroom and you're sure to see books and words everywhere! It's important for children to be surrounded by printed words in order to build reading readiness.

So be sure to make reading activities part of your preschooler's summer fun:

- **Continue having daily story time together.** Take advantage of the longer days by varying the places you read. Reading outside with a picnic can be a nice change. It also teaches your child that she can read anywhere!
- **Take your child to the library.** A weekly trip to the public library will give your child opportunities to bring home a variety of reading material.
- **Listen to books.** Are you traveling or commuting with your child this summer? Listening to audio books is a great way to make the time go

faster and to develop your child's language skills.

- **Build vocabulary daily.** As you go through each day with your child, make it a point to teach her at least one new word.
- **Read in your environment.** Can your child recognize the word *stop* on the stop sign? Look for other words she sees frequently and point them out.
- **Keep in touch with a classmate.** Can your child send letters or messages to a friend she doesn't get to see over the summer? Writing and reading these (with your help) is great practice—as well as a chance to keep up social contacts.

**“To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark.”**

— Victor Hugo

## It's important to limit your child's recreational screen time



If your preschooler will be spending most of his time this summer at home, he will likely have more access to the TV, a tablet and video games than during the school year. Limiting these may be a challenge, but it is key to making sure your child has enough time for more productive activities.

To set limits:

- **Create a schedule** and stick to it. For example, you can give your child 30 minutes of television in the morning. Allow one hour of electronic games in the afternoon
- and another 30 minutes of television in the evening.
- **Create a list of alternate activities.** Include things like reading, doing a puzzle, dusting furniture with a feather duster, blowing bubbles, and so on. When your preschooler complains “I'm bored,” help him pick an activity from the list to do *before* allowing him to turn on an electronic device.
  - **Set controls.** If all else fails, put a timer or other controls on the TV that limit when it can be turned on. Put a password on the computer. Hide portable devices.

## Are you teaching your child to think scientifically?



In our increasingly technological world, it's important to help children think scientifically. It's

also fun! Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you're encouraging scientific thinking:

\_\_\_ 1. **Do you take time to observe the world?** “Look at that bug. How many legs does it have?”

\_\_\_ 2. **Do you sort things** with your child, such as socks, toys, leaves and rocks? Notice colors, shapes, sizes and more.

\_\_\_ 3. **Do you ask your child to make predictions**, such as, “How much cake do you think will be left after your party?”

\_\_\_ 4. **Do you conduct experiments together?** Ask a librarian to help you find a book of kids' science projects.

\_\_\_ 5. **Do you draw conclusions** from your scientific thinking? Making charts can help with this.

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* answer means you and your child are thinking like scientists. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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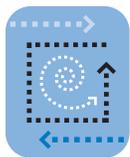
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# A summer schedule can help your preschooler stay on track



Following a routine over the summer will make going back to preschool in the fall easier for your child.

Here are five strategies to try:

1. **Keep the basics on track.** Your child may not have to get up for preschool. But she still needs about 11 hours of sleep each night. So if she usually gets up at 7 a.m., stick to an 8 p.m. bedtime. Try to have breakfast, lunch and dinner around the same time on most days.
2. **Do some kind of “work” during the day.** Have your child do daily age-appropriate chores, such as putting toys and clothes away.
3. **Have morning outdoor time.** The morning is a great time to play outside—especially if you live in a warm climate. The heat and the sun get more intense as the day goes on.
4. **Plan quiet time after lunch.** Read, do puzzles or engage in other quiet activities. Your child may no longer nap, but she can still have a brief rest time now.
5. **Keep a calendar.** Does your child participate in a summer program? Does she have visits with friends or relatives? Mark these on the calendar so that your child knows when they are coming up. Review the next day’s plans with your child each evening.

## Encourage quiet activities to build your child’s attention span



Preschoolers who pay attention and try hard are more likely to finish college, says an Oregon State University study.

If your child hasn’t developed these habits yet, don’t worry! Researchers say they can be taught.

To build your child’s attention span and concentration skills:

- **Keep his work areas free of clutter.** Most children find it easier to concentrate without too many objects around them.
- **Read with him.** Listening to and following a story is a building block of a child’s attention span.
- **Show him a lively picture** in a favorite book. Have him look at it for a minute or two. Then take it away. Ask him to tell you everything he can remember about the picture.
- **Give him activities** he can do on his own, with you nearby. Jigsaw puzzles are excellent. Start with four pieces. Work up as your child improves. Praise him for sticking with the task.
- **Use a timer for more structure.** Sit your child down with his puzzle, play dough or blocks. Set the timer for 10 minutes. Ask him to play quietly until it goes off. Praise him when he does. Help him work up to 15 or 20 minutes of independent play.
- **Limit the amount of time** he spends in front of a screen. Watching television is a passive activity and is not a way to build attention span.

**Source:** Oregon State University, “Preschool children who can pay attention more likely to finish college: Early reading and math not predictive of college completion,” Science Daily, [niscw.com/ec\\_attention](http://niscw.com/ec_attention).

**Q:** My son is going to start kindergarten in the fall. What are some things we can do this summer to make it the best transition possible for him?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** The move to kindergarten is an exciting step. As you note, though, it’s also a big transition. Here are some things to consider:

- **Sleep.** Half-day kindergarten programs are rapidly becoming a thing of the past—as is nap time. If your child is used to resting during the day, he will need to adjust. For most children, that means an early bedtime to make up for what will likely be an earlier wake-up time and the lack of a nap or a rest. Your child should have at least 11 hours of sleep.
- **Transportation.** If your child goes to preschool by car and will go to kindergarten the same way, he won’t experience much of a change. But if he’ll walk or ride a bus, get him familiar now with his new route. Walk to school together several times this summer, or take a bus ride if you can so he will know what it is like to ride a bus.
- **The building.** Elementary schools are usually bigger than preschools. Give your child every opportunity to see his new school. That includes attending the kindergarten orientations most schools have for students coming in the fall. Stop by the school office this summer to see if you and your child can take a tour, and attend open house before school starts so your child can meet his teachers and see his classroom.

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Help your child focus on learning over the summer



Ever wonder what's on your kindergartner's mind? A lot! At this age, cognitive development is exciting, thanks to new subjects at school and new abilities to explore and understand the world.

This summer, keep your child's focus on:

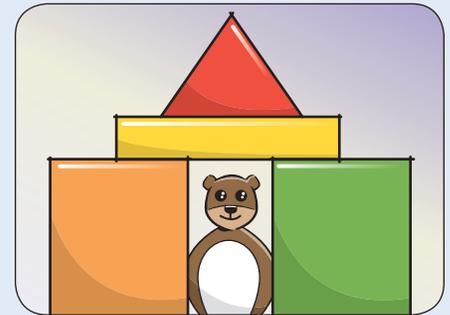
- **Language arts.** Your child may have already mastered the alphabet in many ways—singing, writing, recognizing and even reading. His comprehension is probably improving, too. To build your child's understanding, talk about each story's *beginning*, *middle* and *end*.
- **Math.** Kindergartners do more than count aloud. They count actual things. They also recognize basic shapes, such as triangles and squares. If your child has accomplished this, introduce more complex figures, such as cubes and cones. Look for patterns, too. "The pattern on that sheet goes pink, orange, pink, orange."
- **Concepts.** It's fun to talk about words like *above* and *below* and *under* and *over*. To make this a game, try naming and demonstrating opposites. "This cup has *less*. This cup has \_\_\_\_ (*more*)."
- **Games.** All kinds of games—make-believe, board games, Simon Says, etc.—are opportunities to teach. Join the fun and encourage your child's abilities.

## Keep your child motivated as the school year winds down

As summer approaches, it's tempting to relax about school responsibilities. But every day of kindergarten should count! Your child is building critical skills that will put her at ease in first grade and beyond.

To maintain motivation as the year winds down, focus on:

- **Interests.** Kids try hardest when they're fascinated by activities. If your child is practicing a math skill, pick an activity that's challenging—but not so hard that she wants to give up. Interest and success motivate kids to keep trying.
- **Freedom.** Give your child opportunities to solve problems independently. Simple toys, such as blocks and toy characters, help because they promote creativity.



- **Emotion.** Motivated kids have positive feelings about their work. While praise is valuable, genuine interest and success (rather than compliments) should encourage your child most. Sometimes it helps to ask, "How do you think you did?" Then agree with your child's positive assessment!

**Source:** "Motivating Learning in Young Children," NASP Center, National Association of School Psychologists, [niswc.com/ec\\_motivate](http://niswc.com/ec_motivate).

## Summer is the perfect time to celebrate kindergarten success



Finishing kindergarten is something special to celebrate! Summer is a great time to reminisce and prepare for more success. Make time to:

- **Talk to your child** about what went well this year. What school events did your family enjoy? What homework habits did your child develop? What friends did she make? What did she enjoy learning?
- **Set exciting goals.** What would your child like to accomplish in

first grade? Some goals can be academic (reading a book independently), and some can be personal (making new friends).

- **Prepare for learning.** Engage in activities that will make learning easier next year. Read, do simple science experiments, practice math skills and build social skills.
- **Explore the world.** Visit the library, museums, planetariums and historical sites, too. Take a daily walk and talk about the environment.