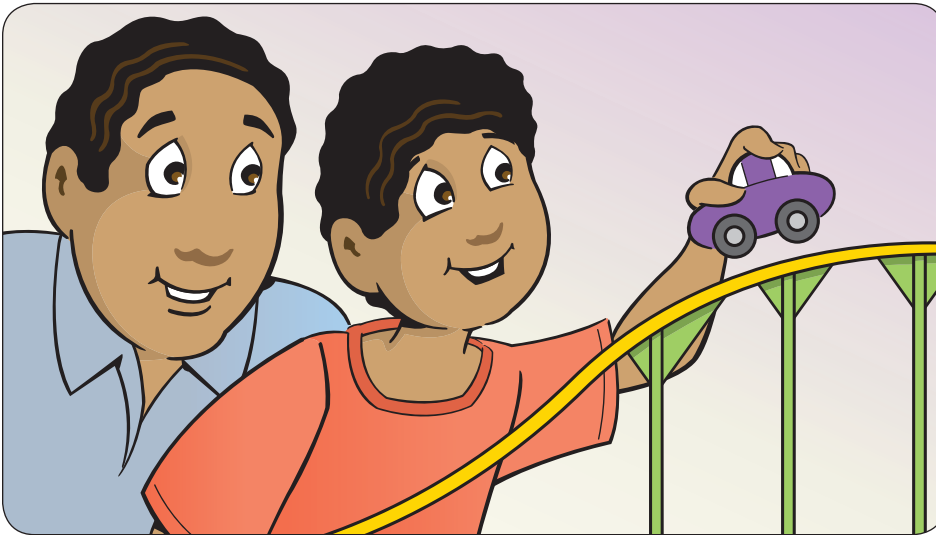


# Early Childhood Parents<sup>®</sup>

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EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER  
Penny Goldstein, Building Administrator

*make the difference!*



## Research shows preschoolers learn best through exploring

In today's society, many parents feel pressured to teach their children academics at younger and younger ages. They often use direct teaching tools, such as flashcards and worksheets. However, studies show that preschool children actually learn best when they are given opportunities to explore and discover things on their own.

According to research, you can motivate your preschooler to learn on his own if you:

- **Ask, don't tell.** When you reveal everything to your child, there is little for him to find out on his own. So instead of saying, "Put the cars at the top of the track and push them down," ask a question. "Where can we put these cars so they will go really fast?"

- **Set an example.** Your child is more likely to want to learn if he thinks *you* want to learn. Show him the box from a jigsaw puzzle, for example, and say, "Wow, did you know we can make this picture? That's so cool! Let's put a couple of pieces together."
- **Offer support.** Be excited when your child figures something out on his own. "I love the colors you made when you mixed the paints!" Tell him that his preschool teacher would also approve. "I bet Miss Stacey would love to see your picture!" Let your child know that the adults in his life want him to explore and learn on his own.

Source: A. Gopnik, "Why Preschool Shouldn't Be Like School," Slate.com, [nswc.com/preschool\\_learning](http://nswc.com/preschool_learning).

## Put your child's creativity to use this holiday



Creativity helps preschoolers become confident learners who are eager to try new

things. And the holiday season is the perfect time to give your child's creativity a boost.

Ask your preschooler to help you create:

- **Greeting cards.** Show your child how to fold paper in half to create a card. She can decorate the outside with drawings. Ask your child what she would like the card to say. Write her message inside the card and have her sign her name.
- **Wrapping paper.** Have your child decorate large sheets of craft or drawing paper. Use it to wrap your gifts.
- **Holiday decorations.** Use different sizes of paper plates to create snowmen. With your help, your child can cut out shapes and glue them on the plates to create the eyes, nose and mouth. Your child can also create snowflakes by arranging and gluing cotton swabs on pieces of paper.

# Help your child move towards responsibility one step at a time



A child who understands and accepts responsibility will do better in school and in life. Asking your preschooler to help out at home is a great way to teach responsibility.

Performing chores:

- **Encourages your child** to learn new skills and improve with practice.
- **Shows your child** that he can contribute to the family's success, and helps him realize how important he is.
- **Builds thinking skills**, such as your child's ability to plan ahead, solve problems and remember simple directions.
- **Helps your child** take responsibility for his actions. He learns that if he makes a mess, he'll have to clean it up.

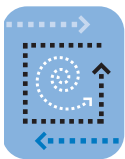
When assigning chores:

- **Make sure they are appropriate** for your child's age.
- **Do the job together first.** Break it down into easy-to-remember steps. When your child is ready, let him try it alone.
- **Encourage your child.** He won't do the job perfectly. But effort is important! If you must redo the job, do it when your child is not present.
- **Thank your child** for his work and be specific about how his efforts were helpful.

**"The greatest gifts you can give your children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence."**

—Denis Waitley

# Teaching your child concepts for school can be all fun and games!



Playing board games teaches your preschooler valuable skills he will need in school. And what better time to play them than when you are stuck inside on a winter day?

Your child will learn how to:

- **Take turns.** During a board game, everyone gets a turn—something that may not happen during casual play. Your child will learn to wait patiently while each player takes a turn.
- **Think strategically.** Your child will learn how to make decisions in the game that will be to his best advantage. This is an important

concept in making everyday decisions throughout life.

- **Play fair.** Remind your child that cheating is never fair—even when things don't go his way. How would he feel if you cheated in order to win? Playing fair teaches your child the importance of honesty—a concept that will help him in school.
- **Be a good sport.** Tell your child that it doesn't matter if he wins or loses. It only matters that he has fun. And don't forget, you can always decide to play again!

**Source:** D. Walstad, "5 Important concepts that board games teach children," [examiner.com/niswc.com/games\\_school](http://examiner.com/niswc.com/games_school).

# Are you helping your child build reading skills?



Reading with your preschooler is one of the best ways to prepare her for school and build her interest in reading. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you're making the most of your reading time together:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you read with your child** every day at a time when she is relaxed and interested, such as at bedtime?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you choose books** your child likes, even if you're tired of reading her favorites over and over?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you visit the library** often to check out books and attend children's activities?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you point out** common words to your child, such as *stop*, *go*, *the end* and her name?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you ask your child** questions about stories and let her ask you questions, too?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* answer means you're promoting your child's reading success. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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# Build curiosity and bring out the scientist in your preschooler



It's never too early to introduce your child to scientific concepts. Preschoolers are curious about the world around

them, which makes them natural scientists!

Here are two activities to try:

**1. Electrical attraction.** Show your child that he is “electric” by running a comb through his hair several times. His hair and the comb should be dry.

Now hold the comb next to a thin stream of water. The water should move toward the comb! Explain to your child that his hair put a special kind of electricity into the comb. That made the water want to come near the comb.

**2. Oil and water.** Tell your child you will bring the ocean to him. You'll need a jar with a lid, a small plastic toy animal, baby oil, and blue or green food coloring.

Fill the jar halfway with water and add a few drops of food coloring. Add baby oil until the jar is three-quarters full. Put the toy animal in, close the lid tightly and shake.

Explain to your child that oil and water don't mix together. When the water moves, it pushes the oil around, which makes shapes like waves for the toy to ride.

**Source:** “All Charged Up: Wiggly Water,” National Geographic Kids, [nswc.com/science\\_comb](http://nswc.com/science_comb) and “Create a Motion Ocean,” National Geographic Kids, [nswc.com/motion\\_ocean](http://nswc.com/motion_ocean).

**Q:** I have taught my daughter some basic safety rules, such as looking both ways and holding hands when crossing the street. But now that she is nearly five, I think it's time to work on some more advanced rules. Are there any that will help her next fall in kindergarten?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** It is great that you have been working on safety with your child. And you are correct: Five is a great age to emphasize safety, and it is usually part of a kindergarten curriculum as well.

Focus on three basic safety rules to get started. Teach your preschooler how to:

- 1. Say her first and last name.** She should also work on learning the first and last names of her parents. “You call me Mom. But what is my name?” Give your full name and have her repeat it back to you. If you practice this daily, she will soon remember it.
- 2. Recite her home address and your telephone number.** Try to make up a little rhyme or song that includes this information. Research shows that many children learn well through music.
- 3. Dial 911** in the event of an emergency. Teach your child how to use the phone if she doesn't already know how. Then teach her to dial this number *only* in an emergency. An emergency can be hard to explain to a young child. So tell her that she should dial the number anytime you tell her to, in the event of a fire and anytime she is talking to you and you are physically unable to talk back to her.

# Discipline strategies used by teachers can also work for you



Parents sometimes fall into a “discipline trap” with their preschoolers—always using the same approach, even when it

no longer seems to be working. It may be saying *no* over and over. It may be raising your voice more than you would like.

If this sounds familiar, here are some strategies that many preschool teachers use with great success:

- **Focus more attention** on appropriate behavior. Teachers know that students sometimes misbehave just to be noticed. So rather than focusing on what your child does wrong, focus on what she does right and follow up with a big hug. Your child will soon figure out that she gets more attention by behaving well than she does for behaving poorly.
- **Try a change of scenery.** Teachers sometimes move a student who is misbehaving to another room to help her calm down. Try this same technique at home. A 10-minute walk outside with you might do more to improve your child's behavior than a scolding would.
- **Offer reminders.** Teachers help students make better decisions by reminding them of appropriate behavior. For example, you've told your child many times not to put her hand in the fish bowl, but she still does it. The fish bowl may be tempting enough to make her forget your warnings. She needs you to step in *before* she gets to the fish bowl, not *after*. Say, “Remember Holly, we can use our eyes to see the fish, but not our hands to touch.”

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Continue to promote good attendance



When students miss too much kindergarten, research shows they're more likely to have problems later with attendance, reading, math and general knowledge.

To continue to promote regular attendance:

- **Schedule family trips** when school is not in session. It's tempting to add a few extra days to a holiday vacation. But when your child is absent from school, he misses opportunities to learn. In addition, teachers have to use class time to make up lessons unnecessarily.
- **Protect against illness.** Effective hand washing is one of the best ways to do this. Teach your child to lather up and scrub for 20 seconds (about how long it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). End with a good rinse and clean dry-off.
- **Check the school calendar** when making doctor, dentist and other appointments. With enough notice, routine visits can often be scheduled on days off or after school ends for the day.
- **Commit to being prompt.** Tardiness is a lot like being absent because it results in class disruption and lost learning. Continue helpful habits, such as packing school supplies at night and enforcing a consistent, reasonable sleep schedule.

**Source:** "Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data," National Center for Education Statistics, [niscw.com/kindergarten\\_attend](http://niscw.com/kindergarten_attend).

## Reinforce your kindergartner's number sense and math skills

**W**hen you show your child that the things she is learning in kindergarten are also important in the real world, she will be even more motivated to learn.

This is especially true when it comes to math. With your child:

- **Cook or bake something.** Show your child how to measure an ingredient. Point out the number on the measuring cup. Or count as you cook—the number of teaspoons of an ingredient, the number of pots and pans.
- **Use the calendar.** Show your child today's date. Each day, count down together to a day she is looking forward to, such as her favorite holiday or a visit from a friend or relative.
- **Play a simple card game,** such as a modified version of "War." Take the face cards and jokers



out of a deck and divide the remaining cards, face down, between you and your child. Take the first card from your pile and turn it face up, and have your child do the same. Can she tell you which number is bigger?

## Excitement can improve your kindergartner's writing skills



How can you support your kindergartner as he is learning to write? Create a sense of excitement! The desire to write leads to practice and improvement.

To build your child's interest in writing:

- **Invite him to help** with "grown up" tasks. Have fun making grocery lists, writing letters and labeling things around the house. Don't worry about spelling or neatness.
- **Exchange notes.** Create a family mailbox for sending and receiving messages. If your child doesn't write yet, he can send pictures and let you add the words. When your child writes to someone, encourage them to respond!
- **Read every day.** Talk about the books your child loves. Who wrote them? Read the "about the author" section. What would it be like to write a book? If your child were going to write a book, what would it be about?