

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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KID BITS

Tic-tac-ABCs

Play this twist on tic-tac-toe. Instead of choosing X or O, each person picks a different letter to use. Before writing your letter on the game board, you must find an object that starts with that letter. If your youngster's letter is *m*, she might spot a *mat*.
Tip: Use letters your child tends to confuse, perhaps *b* and *d*.

Join the club

Do you have ideas for making your child's school a better place for him to learn and play? A parent-teacher group (PTA, PTO, steering committee) lets you share your thoughts and support the school. Watch newsletters or the school website for meeting dates, and plan to attend or log in.

If vs. when

Changing just a few words may make your youngster more likely to cooperate without a fuss. Rather than saying, "If you pick up your toys, we'll play a game," try, "When you pick up your toys, we'll have room to play a game." You'll give her a logical reason to cooperate.

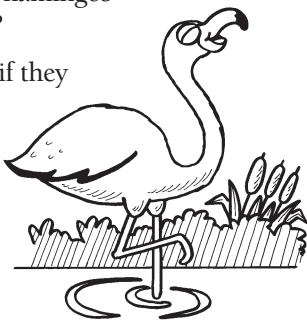
Worth quoting

"Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me." *Fred Rogers*

Just for fun

Q: Why do flamingos lift one leg?

A: Because if they lifted both, they'd fall down.



Citizenship at home

When your child shares, works with others, or helps to make decisions at home, he's being a good citizen. Consider these suggestions to teach him about citizenship.

Share property

Take turns naming items in your house that your family shares. Your youngster might say the couch, board games, and the TV. Then, talk about how life would be different if you didn't share those things. For instance, it's no fun to play a board game by yourself! Now can your child name things everyone in your community shares? He may think of library books, playgrounds, schools, and streets.

Do your part

Show your youngster that big jobs are easier—and more fun—when everyone helps out. Pick a project, like cleaning out the garage or doing yard work and give each family member a task. He might organize outdoor toys while you put away tools. *Idea:* Take a walk to look for people working



together. He might see construction workers building a house or delivery people unloading packages.

Cast a vote

Should you have tacos or pasta for dinner? Which movie will your family watch this weekend? Take a vote so your child sees how group decisions are made. He could set up a "voting booth" by covering an empty tissue box with wrapping paper and putting a pencil and slips of paper beside it. Have him count the votes and announce the winner. ("Taco night won by 1 vote!")♥

Follow their lead

Letting your youngster take the lead while you play a supporting role can boost her learning. Try these strategies:

- Set out learning supplies like Scrabble tiles or colorful beads. Then, let your child decide what to do with them. Perhaps she'll spell her name with the tiles. Or maybe she will count the beads, sort them by color, or arrange them into a rainbow.
- Maximize learning by encouraging your youngster to explain what she's doing. You might ask, "Which letters did you use to spell your name?" or "Which color bead do you have the most of?"♥



Engineers solve problems

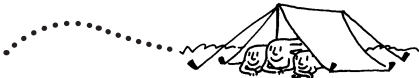
“How can I build a bird’s nest?”
 “What could I use to make a crown?”
 At its heart, engineering is all about solving problems. Encourage your child to think like an engineer with these ideas.

Read, then build. Let your youngster use household materials to create items inspired by books. After reading about birds, she could build a nest out of craft



sticks and tape. What other materials will help her hold the nest together? Or if she reads a fairy tale, she might make a crown like kings and queens wear, using cardboard and tape—how can she keep it from falling off her head?

Create playthings. Suggest that your child design her own versions of toys and games. Maybe she’ll engineer a boat that will float. Or perhaps she’ll set up a miniature golf course with pool noodles. How could she arrange them so a ball bounces off and goes into a hole?♥



Q & A Ways to handle frustration

Q: *Our daughter gets upset easily. Yesterday she burst into tears because she couldn’t cross the monkey bars. What can I do to help her?*

A: Some children are extra-sensitive at times. The upside is that sensitive youngsters tend to show empathy for others. But they may also become frustrated easily.



When your child gets upset (say, when her drawing doesn’t come out the way she wanted), ask, “What could you do now?” (Get a new piece of paper and start again.) Also, try to praise her when she soothes herself without getting upset: “You worked really hard to put your train track back together.”

Finally, acknowledge your youngster’s frustration: “I know you’re disappointed that you got paint on your new shirt. Let’s go wash it.”♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Raising kids who love the outdoors

Our family spent a lot of time outside over the past year as we looked for ways to get out of the house *and* stay safe. It has been wonderful to see our son Milo develop a love of the outdoors.

In the fall, we camped in the backyard. We showed Milo how we pitch a tent and let him put the stakes in the ground. He watched while I started a campfire, and my husband helped him cook a hot dog over the flames. And we all enjoyed listening to nighttime nature sounds as we fell asleep.

This winter, we explored local nature trails. To keep Milo interested longer, we taught him to skip rocks across a stream and gave him specific things to spot, like red berries. And now that spring is coming, we plan to hike in the mountains. Milo is excited to pack his backpack with his water bottle and a snack—and use binoculars for the first time.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

The survey says ...

Taking a family survey is a fun way for your little one to practice writing and math while connecting with relatives. Here’s how.

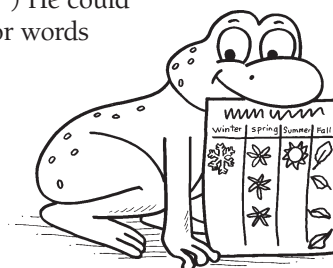
1. Pick a question. Encourage your child to think of a question for you to write at the top of a sheet of paper. (“What is your favorite season?”) He could help by writing letters or words he knows.

2. Set up a graph. Have your youngster draw lines to divide the paper into four columns, each labeled with a season.

3. Call relatives. Your child can ask each person his question. To make a picture graph, he will draw symbols representing their answers in the correct columns.

Examples: snowflakes in the winter column, flowers for spring, suns for summer, leaves for fall.

4. Share results. When your youngster has all his data, help him mail copies of his graph to relatives. Or he might have a call or video chat to share his findings—and reveal which season is his family’s favorite!♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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