

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Special Projects Services
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KID BITS



Right or left?

Does your child understand *right* and *left*? You can give him practice by using the words in everyday conversations. For example, you might say, "Put the fork on the left side of the plate. The spoon goes on the right." Or give him practice with fun instructions, such as "Raise your right hand" or "Touch your left ear."

Borrowing etiquette

Teach your youngster to be a good borrower. If a friend lends her a DVD, remind her to keep it in a safe place so it won't get scratched or lost. Explain that she should care for it the way she would want her things cared for. Then her friend will be more likely to lend her something again.

Handwriting practice

Encourage your child to practice printing letters. Hang up several poster boards and use a ruler and pencil to make horizontal lines. Every day, have your youngster add a row of uppercase and lowercase letters for a different letter of the alphabet, starting with A. In 26 days, he'll have his own alphabet posters—and better handwriting.

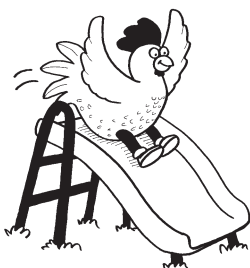
Worth quoting

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." *Mother Teresa*

Just for fun

Q: Why did the chicken cross the playground?

A: To get to the other slide.



Animal fun

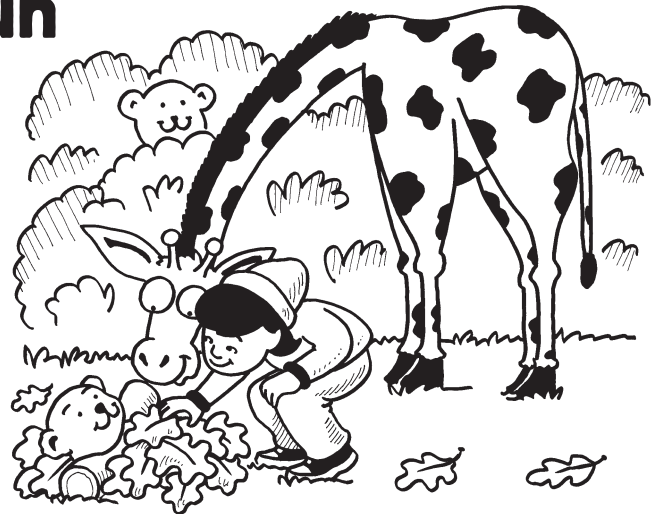
Squirrels, snakes, bunnies... favorite animals can bring out the scientist in your youngster. Together, try these hands-on activities so she can explore animal habits.

Camouflage

Hide two stuffed animals outside to show your child how camouflage works. Put a brown one by a tree and a brightly colored one in a bush. Which one does she spot more easily? Then, let her hide them for you to find. Explain that some animals protect themselves by blending in with their surroundings. For example, green or brown forest creatures hide among the trees, and polar bears blend in with the snow.

Movement

Can your youngster swim like a fish or fly like an eagle? Not really, but she can pretend! Animals move in different ways, depending on their homes and their bodies. Ask your child to tell you how her favorite animals get around.



Then have her try out the movements to see which one gets her across your living room the fastest. She might slither like a snake, hop like a rabbit, and gallop like a horse.

Tracks

Animals leave footprints in dirt, sand, and snow. Find a trail outside and search for tracks, or look at pictures in books or online (try *Big Tracks*, *Little Tracks* by Millicent Selsam or www.bear-tracker.com). Let your child use what she learns to make animal tracks in clay. She might create tiny chicken tracks with a toothpick or make bear paw prints with her palm and fingers. ♥

Household safety tips

It takes teamwork to keep everyone in your home safe. Here are some ways to get your child involved:

- Make checking the batteries in your smoke detectors a family routine. On the first day of each month, let your youngster turn the calendar to a new page, and then test the alarm.
- Show your child how to dial 911 in an emergency. If you don't have a home phone, always keep your cell phone in the same spot so he can find it easily.
- Teach your youngster to report safety hazards. If he sees a knife, pill, or lighter lying around, he should avoid touching it and let you know right away. ♥



Attention, please

Children who know how to pay attention will learn more and do better in school. Help build your youngster's attention span with these ideas.

Target interests. Notice what he is interested in. For instance, does he like to watch trucks at construction sites or pick out books about sports at the library? Then, use his interests to help him practice focusing for increasing amounts of time. You might



ask him to count trucks while you're in the car or to keep score at a community basketball game.

Use a timer. Setting a kitchen timer can help your child stay on task. For example, say, "Let's set the timer for 10 minutes and see what you can make with Legos." Or have him take out craft supplies and make a project in 20 minutes.

Play games. Get your child used to sitting for longer periods of time by playing card games together. Start with quick games like Fish, and build up to Gin Rummy or War. *Tip:* Be sure to play until the game is over. ♥

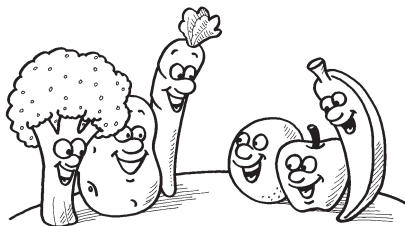
ACTIVITY CORNER Analogy action



Fill in the blank: *Carrot is to vegetable as apple is to ____.* (Answer: fruit)

Play the "analogy game" with your child, and you'll help sharpen her critical-thinking and word skills—and get her ready for standardized tests a few years from now.

To begin, explain that analogies are a way to compare words. Try opposites at first: *Light is to dark* the same way that *fast is to ____* (slow). Ask your youngster to think of two sets of opposites and give you an analogy to solve.



Next, play with objects and categories. She can think of two objects (doll, sweater) and the categories they belong in (toys, clothes). Then, she can give you the analogy: *Doll is to toy as sweater is to ____* (clothes).

Tip: This is a great game to play in the car or while waiting in line. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Parent-teacher conferences

Lately, my daughter Taylor had been crying and saying she didn't want to go to school. I wasn't sure how to mention this at her school conference without sounding like I was blaming the teacher.

My friend, who has four kids, told me to keep in mind that the teacher and I are a team. So I told Mrs. Kerr, "Taylor cries to stay home. What can we do?"

Mrs. Kerr thought Taylor was reluctant to leave me but said she's fine once she's busy at school. She encouraged me to visit the classroom to see for myself. Then, Mrs. Kerr suggested that each morning before school I remind Taylor of the fun activities I saw her doing.

It's working—my daughter seems happier about going to school. And I'm glad that her teacher and I could work together to solve this problem. ♥



Q & A

Ready to read

Q: My five-year-old son is just starting to read some words, but my five-year-old niece is reading entire books already. Should I be concerned?

A: Just as children walk at different ages, they learn to read at different rates, too. At this age, some youngsters are just learning the letters of the alphabet. Others can read a few words, and some can read whole stories.

The most important thing you can do is teach your son

to enjoy books. Keep books handy (in the living room, near his toys), and read aloud to him every day. Let him choose a story, and have him hold it and turn the pages. As you read, run your finger under the words so he'll see that the letters relate to the sounds.

Enjoying read-aloud time will help your son prepare for the day when he'll be reading all by himself. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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