

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Playmates Learning Center
"Helping Children Learn Through Play Since 1988"

KID BITS



Wash your hands

Hand washing is one of the best ways to keep your child healthy. Help him write step-by-step instructions for washing his hands: 1. Wet hands. 2. Lather up with soap. 3. Scrub hands together while singing "Happy Birthday" twice. 4. Rinse with water. 5. Dry with a towel. He should draw a picture for each part and hang his poster near the sink.

The thank-you game

This activity lets your youngster practice thanking people graciously. Take turns handing each other random items from around the house (spoon, sock, pencil). No matter what the item is, thank each other, and say something you like about it. *Example:* "Thank you for the spoon. I love how shiny it is."

New baby

A new baby needs a lot of your attention, which might make your older child feel insecure. Let her feel important by giving her big-kid jobs. For example, it could be her responsibility to bring you clean diapers or to sing to the baby if he cries in the car.

Worth quoting

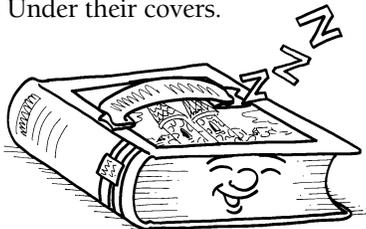
"Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt."

John Muir

Just for fun

Q: Where do library books sleep?

A: Under their covers.



The good behavior toolbox

The way you talk to your child can make a world of difference in how she behaves. Add these strategies to your parenting toolbox—and look forward to better all-around behavior.

Rephrase requests

You may get more cooperation and less arguing from your youngster if you phrase requests as statements rather than questions. Try "Please put on your jacket" instead of "Could you put on your jacket?" This shows her that wearing her jacket isn't optional.

Keep it positive

Putting an upbeat spin on what you say may motivate your child to listen. For example, "After you put your plate in the sink, we'll go play outside" is more positive than "If you don't clean up, we won't go outside."

Speak calmly

When you need to correct your youngster, speak in a calm voice—and expect



the same from her. If she yells when she's angry, ask her to try again. "I know you're mad. If you speak calmly, I will listen." Then, follow through by listening only after she has settled down.

Notice the good

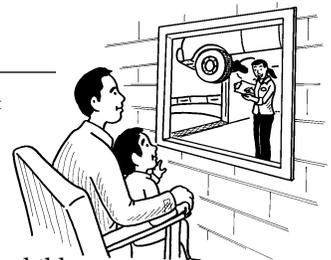
Pay attention to good things your child does, and give specific praise. Rather than "Nice work," you could say, "You found your brother's truck. Thank you for being so helpful." You'll make it easy for her to know exactly what she did right—and to repeat it later. ♥

"I know about that!"

Being exposed to new things builds the knowledge stored in your youngster's brain. Here are places to develop background knowledge that will make the world more interesting for him—and help him soak up more information in school.

- Auto shop. While you wait for an oil change, let your child watch the mechanics through the shop window and describe what they're doing.
- Garden center. Name the plants, and point out different types of seeds.
- Aquarium. Help him read the signs to learn what electric eels eat or where anemones are found.
- Art museum. Your youngster may see various styles of painting and sculpture, such as pointillism, impressionism, or mobiles.

Idea: Follow up a new outing by reading a related nonfiction book. ♥



Push-pull science

Did you know your youngster is learning about science each time he pushes a car or pulls a wagon? Try these *force and motion* activities together.

Push a car. Have your child put two pieces of tape on the floor—a start line and a finish line. Then, ask him to send a toy car from start to finish with one push. Move the finish line farther away, and let him try again. He will see that he has to push with more force to make the car go farther. Next, he could push



two cars at once—what happens if they collide? (They will change the directions they're traveling.)

Pull a wagon. Give your youngster a shallow cardboard box to make a wagon—he can take a stuffed animal for a ride! Cut one hole in the front, and let him thread a jump rope through for pulling the wagon. Also put a hole in each side so he can add a string “seat belt” to keep his animal from falling out. Then, have him pull the wagon around the house. Tell him to predict what will happen if he stops suddenly. (The wagon keeps moving.) If he repeats the experiment but runs this time, what happens? (The wagon travels farther before stopping because it was moving faster.)♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

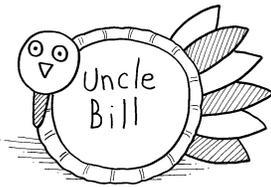


Turkey place cards

Let your little artist create a flock of turkey place cards for your Thanksgiving table. She'll take pride in playing a role in your family's holiday preparations, and she'll also practice writing and patterns.

Materials: construction paper, scissors, small paper plates, glue stick, crayons

For each turkey, help your youngster cut feathers from different colors of paper. Then, she can glue the feathers into patterns along one side of each paper plate to make tails. One tail might alternate yellow and red feathers, while another could repeat pink, blue, and green. Next, ask her to cut out a head and neck for each turkey and glue them to the opposite edge of the plate.



With crayons, she should decorate her turkeys and write a guest's name on each one. When the time for your feast comes, have her help you set the table by putting a turkey at each person's place.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Solve problems with stories

My daughter Grace was upset about an argument with her best friend, so I told her a story about a time I felt the same way. When I was Grace's age, I had an argument with my friend Ruth, and I made up with her by writing her a letter of apology.

I had Grace tell me the story of the argument with an ending where they made up. The way she told the story, Grace apologized to Ava and offered to play with toy ponies together since Ava loves horses. So I set up a play date for the girls, and Grace did just that—apologized and shared her ponies.

Now when Grace has a problem, I ask her to tell me a story about solving it. She still needs my help to work out some of the tougher things, but sharing my story gave her a new way to think about problems and find solutions.♥



The ABCs of conferences

Meeting and working with your child's teacher is as easy as A-B-C with these tips for parent-teacher conferences.

Arrive early. Teachers usually schedule conferences back-to-back, so being ready when it's your turn means you'll get more time to discuss your youngster.

Be prepared. Jot down notes and questions in advance. For example, you could ask your child what he likes best about school and share that with his

teacher. Also write down information about your family that could affect your youngster's learning, such as a recent move or a death. And include questions like “Which learning centers does my child like best?” or “How does he get along with the other kids?”

Come up with a plan. Parent-teacher teamwork isn't a one-time thing. Talk about ways you can stay in touch and work together throughout the year.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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