

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

October 2020



KID BITS

Strengthen small fingers

What do a button and an old potato masher have in common? They can be play dough tools that will spark your youngster's creativity and build his finger muscles. Together, look around the house for options, then encourage him to use his tools to mash, mold, or stamp play dough.

Let's brush our teeth

Stand in front of the mirror with your child while the two of you brush your teeth. She'll watch you to learn the right technique—brushing in circles to clean all the surfaces of her teeth. *Idea:* Play a two-minute song so she brushes for the right amount of time.

Chain of kindness

Help your youngster make a "kindness chain." Each time he sees someone do a kind deed, he can write (or dictate to you) a description of it on a strip of colored paper. ("Dad made a playlist of Mom's favorite songs.") Have him tape the ends of the strip together to create a link, then add new links as he spots more acts of kindness.

Worth quoting

"Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present." *Bil Keane*

Just for fun

Q: Why do sharks live in salt water?

A: Because pepper makes them sneeze.



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Better behavior: Plan ahead

What's behind your child's behavior? Little ones cope with challenging situations in different ways, and one way is by acting out. Use these strategies to prevent misbehavior before it starts.

Know the cues

Your youngster might not tell you that she's tired, hungry, or worried. But she may show you how she's feeling by throwing a tantrum or starting an argument with her brother. Watch for triggers that cause her to act up. Prevention may be as simple as providing a nap, a snack, or a snuggle and some reassurance.

Keep her in the loop

Remember that your child *wants* to behave well. Set her up for success by explaining ahead of time what she's supposed to do. ("When we walk to the mailbox, you need to hold my hand the whole time.") Prepare her for changes in routine, too, as these can lead to misbehavior. ("We have to take the car for



repairs. Why don't you pick out books to read while we wait?")

Provide plenty of attention

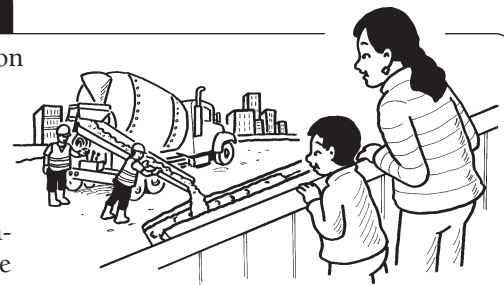
Kids have a knack for finding inconvenient times to act out, like when you're on a conference call or in the shower. Often, that behavior is a request for attention. When possible, give your youngster a "fill-up" of attention beforehand so she'll be less likely to misbehave. For example, you might color or sing songs before your call or shower. ♥

A passion for learning

Liam loves construction sites. Aaron is crazy about sea animals. Whatever your youngster is into, consider these tips for using his interests to help him learn.

● **Talk about it.** When you pass a construction site, ask your child to name vehicles he knows. Point out workers wearing *hard hats* or mixing *cement*. You'll boost his oral language and vocabulary.

● **Explore together.** Help him do research to learn about things he may not be able to see in person. For instance, check out books about coral reefs, observe sea turtles via online zoo cams, or let your youngster ask an out-of-town relative how she cares for the fish in her home aquarium. ♥



Time for a story

Your youngster's very first reading lessons take place while you read aloud to him. Here's what he learns from story time.

How books work. We read the words on the pages from left to right and top to bottom. Run your finger under the words or let your child point to them as you read. Soon, he will recognize words he sees frequently.



How reading sounds. Try to read at a comfortable pace and with expression so your little one gets a feel for what fluent reading sounds like. Add to the experience by giving each character a different voice.

How readers think. Encourage your youngster to be a thinking reader. Ask questions like "Why did the tortoise win the race?" Also, compare story events to your child's experiences. ("This reminds

me of when we saw that meteor shower.") And pause now and then to let him tell you what he likes best about the story and why.♥

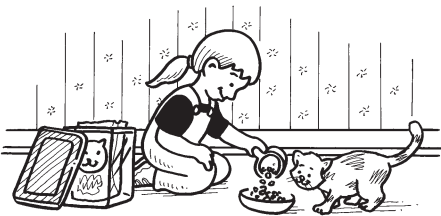
PARENT TO PARENT



Little helper

My daughter Janelle loves to help around the house, but she would often create more work for me. I didn't want her to feel like she wasn't capable, so I made a few adjustments to help her be successful.

When it was time for Janelle to set the table, I put out one place setting, and she used it as a guide for setting the other places. Then, I gave her a measuring cup for scooping up cat food so she knows how much to feed our kitty.



I also resist the urge to go behind Janelle for changes that don't really matter. It's not a big deal, for instance, if the towels and washcloths aren't folded into exact fourths. Janelle may not get everything perfect, but that's okay. My little helper is becoming a big help!♥

Q & A

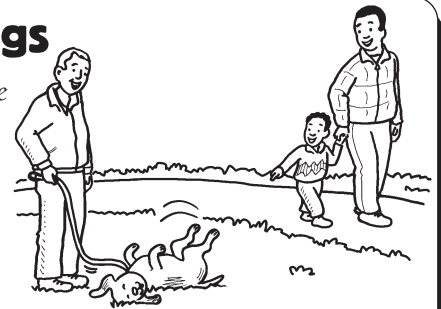
Talking about feelings

Q: How can I help my grandson be more considerate of other people's feelings?

A: Young children are still learning to recognize their own emotions, which is the first step toward feeling empathy for others. With a little guidance from you, he'll be on the right path.

When you take walks, mention how people or animals might feel. ("That dog is rolling around in the grass—he looks happy.") Or as you read or watch TV together, ask him to act out the characters' emotions. ("Piglet is sad. Can you pretend to be Piglet and show me how he feels?") Your grandson might hang his head and wipe away pretend tears. Then ask, "If you were Pooh, what would you do to make Piglet feel better?"

The more your grandson explores emotions, the better he'll understand his feelings and those of others—and that's where empathy starts.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Welcome to my apple orchard

If you can't get to an apple orchard, bring the orchard to you! This "tasty" activity lets your child practice writing and math.

Set it up

Help your youngster cut out red, yellow, and green paper apples, put them in containers, and label each "basket" with a price. She could even create pretend apple products—maybe she'll line a clear jar with yellow paper and label it "Allie's Applesauce. \$2.00."



Go shopping

Using real or pretend money, be your child's customer. Show her how to count out three quarters for your red apple or four dollar bills for your apple pie.

Count and taste

Add real apples to your youngster's orchard. Cut open two different varieties, and ask her to scoop out and count the seeds in each.

Which kind has more? Then, taste the apples—are they sweet? Tart? Which do each of you like best?♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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