

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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## KID BITS

### Trash to treasure

Stretch your little one's thinking while encouraging her to respect the environment. Ask her to brainstorm ways to reuse things instead of throwing them away. For instance, the plastic bag from a loaf of bread could hold damp swimsuits on the way home from the pool. Or a stained shirt may make a good dust rag.

### Hello! How's it going?

Making pretend calls with toy phones builds your youngster's speaking and listening skills. Invite him to "call" you to talk about his day, his favorite dinosaur, or what he wants to be when he grows up. You'll get to hear his thoughts and ideas, and he'll practice taking turns talking and listening.

### Getting enough sleep

Longer daylight hours make it tempting to let your child stay up late. But a regular bedtime makes it easier for your youngster to wake up if she goes to day care or camp—and for school when it begins in the fall. Plus, she'll be in a better mood and have more energy to play if she's well rested.

### Worth quoting

"Laughter is an instant vacation."  
Milton Berle

### Just for fun

**Grandpa:** Wow! You've grown a foot!

**Roger:** Nope, I just have the two I was born with.



## Perform, create, and celebrate

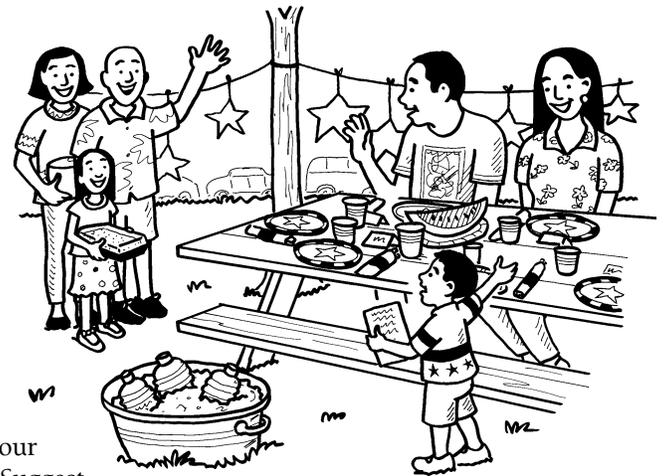
During the summer, children tend to forget some of what they learned during the school year. Help prevent "summer slide" by filling your youngster's days with activities that encourage him to be creative—and to keep learning. Try these ideas.

### Backyard theater

Performing for friends and family members lets your child use his imagination. Suggest that he put on puppet shows based on favorite books or recite and act out nursery rhymes. Have him gather props, design scenery, or make sock puppets. Creating programs, posters, and tickets is a fun way to work on writing, too.

### Crafts

Do craft projects that strengthen fine-motor skills. Your youngster might slide beads onto a pipe cleaner to make bracelets. Or he could layer colorful sand in a clear jar. Another idea is to have him tear tissue paper into tiny pieces and glue them on white paper to design a mosaic.



*Idea:* Put out more supplies like craft sticks, pompoms, glitter, and fabric scraps. What can he create?

### Celebrations

Look for reasons to celebrate (Father's Day, Independence Day, a birthday), and put your child in charge of the preparations. He'll build leadership and planning skills. For the Fourth of July, he could browse a kids' cookbook for red, white, and blue picnic recipes. He might also make paper flag decorations and write invitations.♥

## I ♥ my teacher

What did your child's teacher do to make this year special? Encourage your youngster to thank her teacher by making a card that shares her favorite memories.

First, have her fold a piece of construction paper in half. On the front, help her list things she loved about the school year. ("I loved singing songs with you." "I loved learning about frogs.") Suggest that she draw a picture to illustrate each item.

Next, let her write a thank-you message inside (or dictate one to you). *Example:* "Thank you for being a great teacher." She can sign her name and deliver the card to the teacher—along with a big smile.♥



# Plan ahead for better behavior

Sometimes all it takes to motivate your child to behave well is a little communication and attention. Consider these tips.

**Team up for errands.** Your youngster will be more apt to cooperate during errands if you assign her a special role ahead of time. Before a trip to the farmers' market, you might say, "We need cucumbers. Can you help me find a stall that sells them?" Or if you're headed to the post office, tell her she's going to be your envelope stamper.



**Tell her about changes.** Children behave better when they know what to expect. Each morning, give your youngster a "news flash" about any changes. Say you normally get her from day care, but today you have to work late. You could say, "Daddy will pick you up today. You two can walk the dog and then make dinner until I get home."

**Have one-on-one time.** If you have more than one child, spending time alone with each may make them less apt to compete for your attention the rest of the day. You might play a board game with your older child while a younger one naps. Or take your little one to a playground while her big sibling is at soccer practice.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

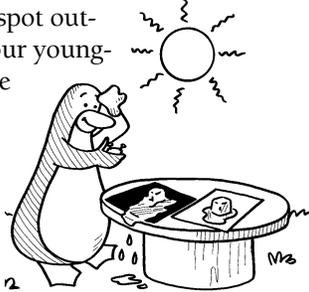


### Melt an ice cube

Here's a chilly science experiment for a hot day.

**Materials:** black paper, white paper, two ice cubes, stopwatch or a watch with a second hand, pencil, notepaper

In a sunny spot outdoors, have your youngster put one ice cube on each sheet of paper. Ask him to predict which cube will melt first. Then, help him time how long each one takes to melt. He can check back every few minutes and record the results.



**What happens?** The ice cube on black paper will melt faster. That's because dark colors absorb heat, and heat melts the ice. Does this give him any ideas about what he should wear to stay cool on hot days? (Lighter colors, since dark ones would absorb heat and make him feel hotter.)♥

## Q & A

### Building social skills

**Q:** This summer, my mom is going to watch my son while I work. We'd like to find ways he can spend time with other kids. Any suggestions?

**A:** It's a good idea for children to practice social skills in the summer so they'll be ready to get along with other kids when school starts. Luckily, many places in your community probably offer classes and activities like art, sports, or music where your son can participate in a group, share materials, and play with children his age.

Start by checking with your school system or at the parks and recreation department. You might also see what's available at zoos, nature centers, science museums, or the YMCA. Talk to your mom, and find ones that will work with their daily schedule.

Ask your child to tell you about his activities—and about the kids he meets. Perhaps he'll even make a friend or two to invite home or to meet at a neighborhood playground.♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Nonfiction for little ones

My preschooler, Sonya, is full of questions like "Why is the ocean blue?" and "Why can't I keep my eyes open when I sneeze?" When I mentioned Sonya's curiosity to her teacher, she suggested that we read children's nonfiction books to answer her questions.

We found colorful picture books about the ocean and the human body at the library. As we were reading the first book, Sonya asked why some

words stood out. I explained that the boldface words were extra important, and I showed her how to look up their meanings in the book's glossary.

Now Sonya asks for "real stories" when we visit the library, and we always find books that satisfy her curiosity. She knows that reading nonfiction is a great way to find answers to questions!♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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