

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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KID BITS

Writing with salt

While you cook dinner, your youngster can practice forming letters and numbers. Cover the bottom of a shallow baking pan with a layer of salt, and call out letters or numbers for him to write in the salt with his finger. *Idea:* Try more challenging requests like “Make the first letter in *spaghetti*” or “Write the number of people in our family.”

History comes alive

Are you visiting older friends or relatives soon? Ask them to show your child some of their treasures from long ago. *Examples:* a photograph, a typewriter, a baseball glove, an old piece of furniture. Then, they can tell her the stories behind those items.

Sharing toys

Giving your youngster a little control may help him share. Before a play date, let him choose one toy he would prefer not to share, and put it away for safe-keeping. Remind him that he needs to share his other toys. He can take the special item out when his friend leaves.

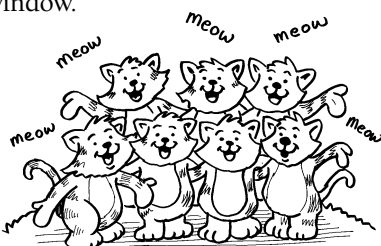
Worth quoting

“Life is like a trumpet. If you don’t put anything into it, you don’t get anything out of it.” *W. C. Handy*

Just for fun

Q: What’s louder than a cat meowing outside your window?

A: Seven cats meowing outside your window.



Let’s chat

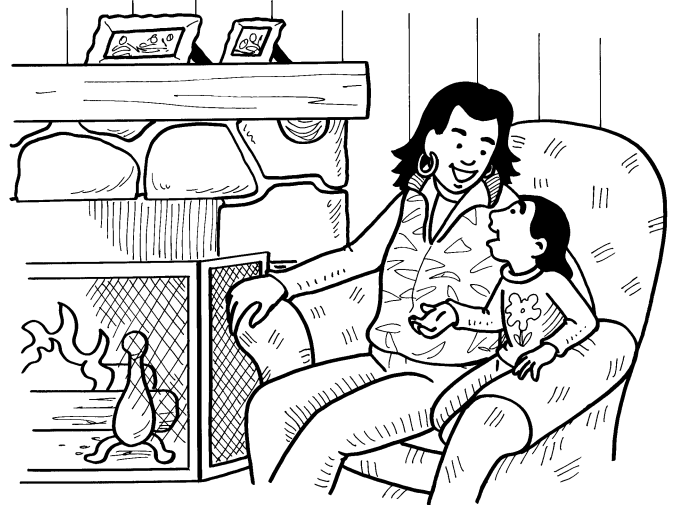
Did you know you can improve your child’s ability to read and write by talking with her? Here are ways to build her language skills during everyday conversations.

Get her input

Encourage your youngster to share her opinions and put her thoughts into words—skills she’ll use when she writes. During a conversation, you might prompt her by saying, “I like swinging on the front porch at Grandma’s house. What’s your favorite thing to do when we visit Grandma?”

Talk “up”

The more different words your child hears, the larger her vocabulary will be. Try to sprinkle interesting words into your discussions. You might tell her you’re going to *register* her for tumbling



class rather than *sign up*, or describe her favorite dress as *gorgeous* instead of *pretty*.

Listen patiently

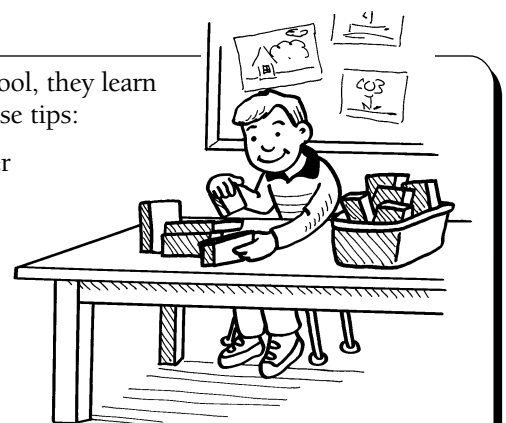
It can be tempting to speed up a conversation by talking for your youngster, especially if it’s taking her a while to respond. It’s better if you let her think about what she wants to say and put it in her own words. Your patience will give her confidence when speaking. Plus, you’ll show her how to be a good listener.♥

Good classroom behavior

When youngsters behave well in school, they learn more. If your child is acting out, try these tips:

- Exchange information. Ask his teacher for updates so you can give him a high five on good days. Also, let her know about things that could affect your youngster’s behavior, like a new sibling or the loss of a pet.

- Try to visit his classroom. You may spot things to work on at home. Say he throws a tantrum when he’s upset. After school, you might role-play ways he can ask for help instead. (“I spilled my milk. May I please have a paper towel?”)♥



Raise an independent child

Your youngster can gain a sense of pride and accomplishment by doing things for himself. Use these three strategies to give him a can-do attitude and help him become more independent.

1. Suggest. When he struggles with something, offer advice so he can do it on his own. *Example:* “Try putting the bigger blocks on the bottom, and see if your tower will stay standing.”



2. Demonstrate. Let your child watch you do something, and then have him repeat it. Say you're teaching him to set the table. You could do one place setting, and he can follow your example to do the others. That way, he'll be able to see where everything belongs and make sure that his settings match yours.

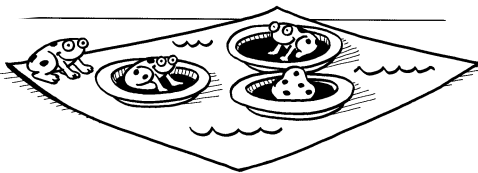
3. Help. If he's working on a more difficult task, let him do a single step while you help him with the rest. When he masters that step, he could add another one. For instance, if he's learning to wash his hair, he might rub in the shampoo by himself, and then you can rinse it out.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



What's in a habitat?

Making habitats for toy animals is a fun way for your youngster to learn about the homes of real animals.



Together, talk about what animals need to live (food, water, shelter). Next, she can choose a favorite toy animal and set up a habitat in a corner of her room. For example, she could create a pond habitat for plastic frogs by putting blue poster board (water) on the floor with green paper plates (lily pads). Or she could design a savanna habitat for a stuffed giraffe with construction paper grass and paper towel-tube trees.

If she's not sure where the animal lives, look it up together in a book or online. Or visit your local zoo. She'll get to see habitats, and you can help her read signs that describe the animals' homes in the wild.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Conferences: How to prepare

My first parent-teacher conference is coming up. I'm a little nervous, so I got advice from a friend who has older children.

She said it's helpful to write down questions in advance. When I told her I had no clue what to ask, she suggested I get ideas by looking over schoolwork that my daughter, Ava, brings home. That way, I can inquire about the units the class is doing or find out whether Ava is making progress in certain areas. Finally, my friend encouraged me to see if there's anything I can do at home to help my daughter.

I listed my questions, leaving room to take notes as the teacher talks. Now I feel prepared, and I'm looking forward to finding out how Ava is doing.♥



Q & A

Learning with traditions

Q: How can I help my son keep learning during the holiday season?

A: You can easily fit learning into many of your family traditions. For example, if you usually say what you're thankful for at Thanksgiving, you could have your son write his list ahead of time and read it aloud.

Or if you do craft projects, let him help. Making gingerbread houses is a

fun way for him to practice a variety of skills. For example, ask him to count the candies you're using as decorations. He could even measure his house—you might ask him how many peppermints long a graham cracker wall is, for instance.

Your son might not realize how much he's learning with these activities—he'll just know he's having fun with his family!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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