

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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## KID BITS

### Marble painting

Here's an art project that will strengthen your youngster's hand-eye coordination. Place a sheet of white paper in a shallow box lid. Let her squirt different colors of paint onto the paper and add a marble. Then, she can tilt the lid in different directions to roll the marble and create a work of art.

### Can you help, please?

Gently guide your child toward independence by encouraging him to help himself. If he says, "I don't have a bath towel," you could ask, "Do you remember where we keep the towels?" Or if he complains that the tip of his pencil broke, you might say, "Uh-oh. How can you fix it?"

### Keep germs at bay

What's one thing all kids will share without being asked? Germs! Shield your child from the "generosity" of others by having her wash her hands frequently and to avoid sharing things that come in contact with someone else's mouth or face (cups, silverware, pillows).

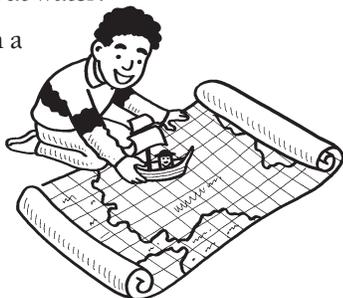
### Worth quoting

"For children, play is serious learning. Play really is the work of childhood."  
*Fred Rogers*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Where can you find an ocean without water?

**A:** On a map!



## Behavior tips that really work

A sense of playfulness comes in handy when you're a parent—especially for getting your little one to behave. Using make-believe or playing games can encourage cooperation and help you build stronger bonds. Consider these clever strategies that have worked for other parents.

### Use stuffed animals

"I found myself repeatedly asking my son Stephen to brush his teeth or put his plate in the dishwasher. One day, I picked up his stuffed dragon and made it say, 'I'm sad. I want to read our bedtime story, so please brush your teeth.' It worked! Now I frequently ask Stephen to choose a stuffed animal that will 'remind' him to follow directions."

### Be silly

"Sometimes when my daughter Emma misbehaves, I pretend she's been bitten by a 'bug.' If she won't share, for example, I'll say, 'Oh, no, the no-sharing bug got you!' Then, we pretend to swat away a bug. Often, that's enough to change Emma's

attitude so she's more open to sharing or doing whatever she's supposed to do."

### Hold a contest

"My son Ben loves contests and games. So when I'm struggling to get him to do something like put on his pajamas, I'll turn it into a game. I might say, 'I'm going to go put on my PJs. Let's see if you can get yours on first!' When Ben beats me, we're both winners."♥



## Talking with the teacher

Regular communication with your youngster's teacher now will make it easier to connect later if you have a concern. Need something to talk about? Try these ideas:

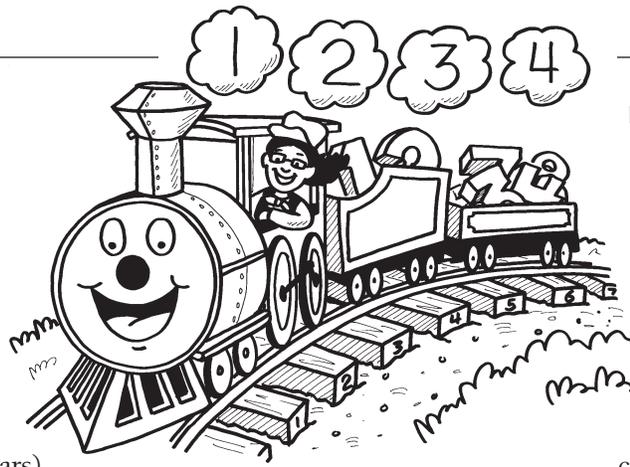
- Ask for reading recommendations. The teacher is sure to know some great books you can read aloud to your child.
- Find out what the class will study next, perhaps winter weather or fairy tales.
- Tell the teacher about activities you and your youngster do at home together like planting bulbs in the garden, coloring, or telling knock-knock jokes.♥



# All aboard the number train

*Choo-choo!* These train-themed activities let your child write and recognize numbers—and practice counting.

**Roll a railroad.** Each player draws a railroad track on her own paper. Take turns rolling a die and drawing that number of train cars on your track (roll a 2, draw 2 cars). Play until everyone has at least 10 cars, then number your cars in order. Now color and cut out your cars. Mix them up, and put them back in the correct sequence.



**Load passengers.** Form an imaginary train by lining up laundry baskets or empty boxes. Together, write numbers (1–10) on separate sticky notes, and have your child put one note on each car. She should use the numbers to determine how many passengers each car gets. She would fill the “4” car with 4 dolls, for example. Let her pretend she’s driving the train to the station to deliver the passengers. Then, rearrange the numbers, and have her reload for another “trip.”♥



## Q & A Asking to stay home

**Q:** My preschooler was excited about starting school, but now she sometimes asks to stay home with me. Her teacher said she seems to love school once she’s there. What should I do?

**A:** Since your child is happy in school, it sounds like she simply wants to be with you—which is perfectly normal. Try to set aside one-on-one time when you can, without distractions like siblings or electronics.

When your daughter asks to stay home, be matter of fact, and avoid giving in.



Instead, point out what she would miss, such as singing songs, playing in the sand and water table, and seeing her friends. Then, give her something to look forward to when she gets home. You might say, “You can help me bake banana bread for dessert” or “I can’t wait to snuggle up and hear all about your day.”

If the problem continues, follow up with her teacher.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### How to handle the news

My son Harry had nightmares after he saw news on TV about a volcanic eruption. I mentioned this to our pediatrician, and she said that while it’s important for kids to learn about their world, TV news isn’t designed for them.

She pointed out that young children believe what they see on TV is happening right here, right now. What’s more, if they see the same images repeatedly, they think the event is taking place over and over.

If Harry does view something upsetting, I can reassure him that he’s safe. So I told Harry that we live far away from the volcano. I pointed out our town and its location on a map. It’s been a week, and Harry’s bad dreams seem to be gone. And now I watch the news after he goes to bed.♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### I’ve got rhythm!

Your home is full of materials that can make music. Let your youngster create his own percussion instruments and experiment with rhythm and tempo.

#### Instruments

● **Maracas:** Have your child put dry rice or beans into clean, empty plastic bottles and replace the caps.

● **Drum:** Get an empty coffee canister with a lid. Your youngster could cover it with construction paper and draw designs. Suggest that he use two wooden spoons as drumsticks.

#### Activities

● **Rhythm:** Sing a familiar song, such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” Encourage your child to shake his maracas or beat his drum to the rhythm. Then, play your own rhythms for each other to copy.  
*Example:* Tap, tap-tap, tap, tap-tap.

● **Tempo:** Take turns playing various *tempos* (speeds) for one another to march to. Can your youngster make his feet match the beat of each tempo?♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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