



Living, Learning and Playing Together

A Guide for Parents of Preschool Children

with Updated Resources

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September 2008

Dear Parents:

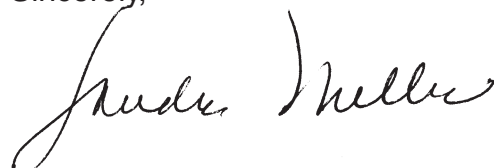
The past decade of research into young children's development and learning highlights that the early years of life are the most important. All children enter the world ready, wanting and needing to learn. As parents of young children, you play a vital role in providing experiences that lay the foundation for your child's future success.

To assist you with your important role of parenting and to offer you guidance, the Ohio Department of Education's Office of Early Learning and School Readiness is pleased to offer you this helpful handbook, *Living, Learning and Playing Together: A Guide for Parents of Preschool Children*.

This guide was written by parents in cooperation with ODE's Office of Early Learning and School Readiness staff and is organized to offer parents quick references to questions that may arise in the course of daily child rearing.

Early learning experiences can set the stage for lifelong learning. We hope this handbook will serve as a valuable resource as you and your young children play, grow and learn together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sandra" and last name "Miller" clearly distinguishable.

Sandra Miller, Director
Office of Early Learning and School Readiness



Living, Learning
and
Playing Together
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Introduction

This booklet provides parents whose children are experiencing developmental delays and disabilities with ideas to help make the most of the time they spend with their children. It also contains suggestions to help parents respond to challenging situations and behaviors. Rather than promoting teaching activities that require set-aside time, these pages will help parents identify ways to blend fun and enjoyable learning into everyday routines. By including some of these activities in daily routines, parents can support, encourage and respond to their children's abilities, providing their young ones with opportunities to see, hear, touch, taste and learn in the home environment.

Daily interactions with people at home and in the community help children develop good social



and communication skills. Watching, listening to and imitating others will teach children how to use materials and get things done. Regular encouragement and parental participation in children's play and social activities encourages growth, independence, security, happiness and healthy development. Calm and cool responses to difficult behaviors decrease tension and increase positive feelings for both parents and children.

The ideas included in this booklet are helpful, but not every idea will work with every child. Each child is unique and comes with his or her own set of abilities and challenges. We encourage all parents to try different activities, to add their own ideas and to have fun coming up with those things that work best for them, their child and their family.

A PARENT REFLECTS: The Most Important Thing!

When Amy was first diagnosed, my husband and I were devastated. For a year, we went to doctors, specialists and therapists. Test after test was done! We read books about her condition. We talked with anyone who might help us. We asked questions and more questions. We found no real answers. Finally, I was at the end of my rope. I did not feel I could go on. I was out of hope and out of energy. One day, my husband said, "We may never have answers to our questions, but she is our daughter and I am going to enjoy her!" That was so freeing! The pressure to have answers wasn't quite as heavy. The guilt of thoughts such as, "Why is she like she is? Was it something I did?" no longer drove me to get to the bottom of things. We could love and enjoy her for who she is, like we do the rest of our children.

This realization has not made our days any less busy, hectic or stressful. We still have good and "growing" days. We face new challenges as Amy grows and changes. Life is not often easy, but we do take time to enjoy each simple, small step of her accomplishments, the little breakthroughs and her smiles. We make time as a family - Amy, her three brothers, Dad and me, Mom - to have fun together! It makes a big difference.



Stages of development



A PARENT REFLECTS: Should I Worry?

I didn't know what to make of signs that my children might not be developing at the same rate as other children their ages. When my son Kent was 14 months old he still was not walking; most other children his age had walked by the time they were 1. My sister was bragging that her son, age 4, could count to 20. Kent, at the same age, was not interested at all in counting. My 3-year-old daughter was linking together no more than three words, and sometimes she didn't say words correctly; other children her age in her preschool were talking in complete sentences. She was the right height and weight for her size, but she was very picky about what she ate. My young niece, on the other hand, seemed to eat everything. Did I need to be worried?

As children grow, parents sometimes wonder if children are doing what they are supposed to be doing, when they are supposed to be doing it. Parents know that crawling, walking, talking and using the toilet are some of the important milestones for children to achieve. Friends and relatives sometimes give parents advice, and magazine articles say different things. But it is not easy to know when to be concerned about a child's development or when to relax as typical development unfolds. It is important to work and consult with professionals like pediatricians, teachers and service coordinators when concerns arise.

Following is a brief outline of the milestones children may achieve in their preschool years. Five stages of development and their general characteristics are presented. Parents may use the general timeframes provided here to become familiar with what happens during particular developmental stages. However, because all children develop at their own rates, parents may find their child described in two or more stages at the same time. Children may accomplish some behaviors early, while progress in others may take a long time. Remember, learning is a step-by-step process. Each step builds upon the one before it, and each child's journey is unique.

Five stages of early development:

Depending on others (0 – 6 months)

Exploring (6 months – 1½ years)

I can do it myself (1½ – 3 years)

I think I am all grown up (3 – 4 years)

I know I am all grown up (4 – 5 years)

Depending on others (0 – 6 months)

Skills that children develop during this stage form the basis for all later development. A typical child at some point in this stage:

- Makes eye contact and follows a moving person or object with her eyes;
- Makes sounds, smiles and laughs;
- Begins imitating sounds and chatter;
- Reaches, explores, bangs, holds and shakes objects with his hands;
- Puts objects in her mouth;
- Responds to his name and turns his head toward sounds;
- Sits;
- Likes to be picked up;
- Is able to calm himself by sucking on his hand or a pacifier;

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- Plays alone for short periods of time;
- Prefers to be with people she knows well; and
- Naps often (hopefully!).

Exploring (6 months – 1½ years)

This is the time when children begin to do things for themselves. A typical child by the end of this stage may:

- Use single words or gestures to let others know what he wants;
- Follow simple directions;
- Understand more than she can say;
- Understand and say “no”;
- Feed himself with fingers, spoon and cup;
- Be able to remove some of her clothing;
- Get into everything and like to make things happen;
- Be very active – runs, climbs, pushes, pulls and pounds;
- Like to know what is happening (likes routines);
- Play beside other children his age or watch them play;
- Defend things that she thinks belong to her (sometimes adults think of this behavior as being selfish); and
- Join simple group activities for short periods of time.



I can do it myself (1½ – 3 years)

During this stage, children practice and improve skills learned earlier, which makes this a time of many changes. A typical child by the end of this stage may:

- Use sentences with one to three words to request or demand something;

- Know the names of most common objects and actions;
- Begin using “describing” words like “small” or “blue” to tell the size or color of objects;
- Help dress and undress himself;
- Begin using the toilet;
- Use silverware and a cup, but still makes a mess sometimes;
- Run, jump, climb, throw, catch, ride a tricycle;
- Like to be a helper, and seeks adult approval and attention;
- Seem more grown-up at times and baby-like at other times;
- Use her imagination, which means she might sometimes be afraid of the dark or animals;
- Begin to understand time concepts, such as today, tomorrow and yesterday;
- Begin playing with other children, and takes turns with some help;
- Generally cooperate when an adult asks him to do something;
- Stay with some activities longer, especially if it is something she likes to do; and
- Move frequently from one activity to another.

I think I am all grown up (3 – 4 years)

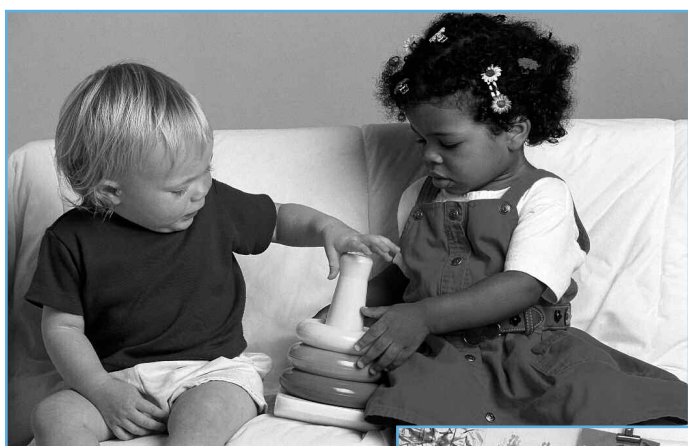
A typical child by the end of this stage:

- Asks questions, questions and more questions;
- Uses simple sentences;
- Takes care of eating, dressing and bathroom routines with little help;
- Shows an increased ability to balance;
- Improves hopping, skipping and other coordination;
- Begins drawing simple pictures;
- Recognizes things that are “the same as” and “different from” other things;
- Begins paying attention to things that go together, such as the fact that socks, pants and shirts are all clothing;
- Becomes more aware of other people’s feelings;
- May give up napping;
- Can wait for a short time and take turns;
- Likes to pretend, and may have an imaginary friend;
- Enjoys playing with other children, and may have special friends; and
- Likes to take some responsibility, such as running errands.

I know I am all grown up (4 - 5 years)

A typical child by the end of this stage:

- Uses full sentences;
- Has conversations that include telling stories, talking about things that have happened or will happen, and using some humor (for example, “knock-knock” jokes);
- Follows directions that include several steps;
- Remembers things about experiences and about stories that have been read;
- Uses pencils, scissors and paints with purpose and meaning;
- Has a longer attention span;
- Sorts objects by size, shape, color or function;
- Begins counting and showing an interest in numbers and letters;
- Plays games with other children, including simple table games and games with simple rules; and
- Plays house, school, doctor, post office or “super heroes.”





Creating a good learning environment

When considering ways to help a child learn during the routines of a typical day, keep these things in mind.

Safety

Avoid toys with small parts that can be swallowed. Cover electrical sockets. Keep things that are poisonous and breakable out of reach. Prevention is the key to safety.

To prevent injuries:

I Can

- Know where the child is at all times;
- Stay close enough to intervene when needed, but give enough space for the child to explore;
- Organize the home and outside area to prevent accidents such as falls, burns, drowning, choking or poisoning;
- Anticipate where these accidents might happen and make plans to prevent them;
- Have the child wear ear plugs at loud events;
- Have the child wear appropriate life vests and flotation devices when in the water;
- Have the child wear a helmet when using riding toys such as bicycles or during other activities where there is danger of head injury;
- Use seat restraints recommended for the child's age and size when riding in a vehicle;
- Have the car seat installation inspected by a qualified official (check with the local health department);
- Prepare for emergencies by having first-aid supplies and emergency phone numbers posted where they can be found quickly;
- Stay calm during emergencies;
- Leave emergency contact information where other family members or child-care providers can easily find it;
- Keep a copy of the contact list in the diaper bag or in the child's backpack for easy access;



- Carry a list of the child's medications, possible side effects, and contact information for the child's doctor(s) and/or hospital; and
- Keep a copy of the child's medication list in a place where family members or child-care providers can find it.

Health

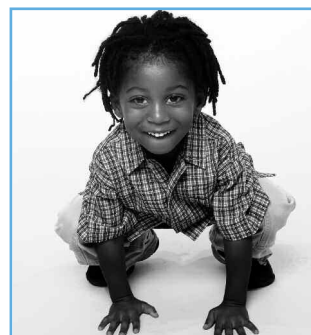
Most children get colds, flu and other common childhood diseases. However, staying active and preventing germs from spreading are good ways to ensure that children have the energy and strength they need to learn and grow.

Stay active

To help children actively use their muscles to stay healthy:

I Can

- Invite other children over to play;
- Encourage exploration – let the child crawl, roll, scoot and walk around the house and play areas;
- Place a desired toy or other object out of reach, so the child has to move to get it;
- Assist the child, but remember to let her try by herself as much as possible;
- Clap, smile and give lots of verbal praise, even for small movements or attempts;
- Play on the floor with the child: imitate what he is doing, and play at wrestling;
- Play games like Simon Says and Follow the Leader;
- Set up an obstacle course inside or outside, using furniture or household items;
- Try some balancing exercises, such as balancing on one foot with bean bags on different body parts or walking heel-to-toe on a line of masking tape;



- Use a hula hoop for the child to crawl through, and make up games for two children to play together using a hula hoop;
- Do activities that use both hands, such as keeping a balloon or beach ball in the air;



- Exercise with the child, giving verbal directions and counting with arm and leg movements;
- Play CDs or DVDs that encourage movement to make exercise times more fun;
- Engage the child with dance videos or DVDs featuring favorite characters;
- Visit playgrounds at restaurants, parks, schools or churches;
- Go swimming;
- Encourage water play in the bathtub by using toys and bubbles;
- Use riding toys;
- Encourage running outdoors;
- Take music outside and dance;
- Take a walk;
- Play running and jumping games such as hopscotch, kickball and jump rope;
- Make a plan to have active experiences throughout the day and every day; and
- Join a “Mommy and Me” group, or sign up for dance, gymnastics or sports classes.

Prevent sickness

To prevent unwanted germs from spreading among family members:



- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently;
- Remind children to wash their hands before meals and snacks;
- Wash children’s hands after playing with toys at the doctor’s office;
- Use antibacterial hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available;

- Wash hands thoroughly after changing a child’s diaper or helping him use the toilet;
- Help children wash their hands after using the toilet;



- Use a sanitizing solution of one tablespoon of bleach to one quart of water for wiping surfaces where children eat, play or use the toilet;
- Clean and sanitize cooking surfaces; and
- Regularly use a spray solution of 1½ teaspoons of bleach to one pint of water on toys.

Routines

Children who have an idea of what to expect don’t have to wonder what will happen next. When setting up a routine, include times throughout the day when the child decides what will happen. Create a “picture schedule” of things that happen during the day to help children learn daily routines without having to ask. For more information about routines of daily living, see page 12.



Structure and Positive Experiences

A PARENT REFLECTS:

A Day in the Life...

Much of our day, in fact our lives, is determined by our son Zach. For example, Zach does not sleep late, so there is no sleeping late for us. If Zach is up, we must get up. One expects this for a certain period of time from a child, but Zach is 10 years old, and there is no end in sight.

Zach is curious, creative, determined and large. We've learned the hard way the damage Zach can do to our home and possessions — with no ill intent on his part — when he is allowed to roam unattended. Imagine what a 2-year-old can do and multiply it by five. Many people don't realize that this can continue at any age. Others who know might consider us smothering parents who won't allow their child to gain autonomy. But they haven't had to live with the consequences.

- Give the child attention when she shows self-control. Children who can count on getting positive attention have less need to do negative things;
- Avoid power struggles; decide what things are important to pay attention to and what can slide;
- Keep an eye on what is happening and intervene before the problem gets bigger;
- Give the child choices instead of commands or demands; and
- Remember, children learn to handle situations by observing their parents and other adults.

When children are afraid of certain household noises:



- Make a tape of different sounds, including bus noises or vacuum cleaner sounds, and have the child guess what is making the sound;
- Warn the child before the noise begins;
- Have a toy appliance for the child to use at the same time the real appliance is being used;
- Let the child wear earplugs or earphones;
- Start the noise in a room away from the child, and gradually bring it closer;
- Keep musical instruments in the house for the child to use; and
- Use books or toys with sounds when playing with the child.

To help children work and play at home:



- Make the home a comfortable place for the child;
- Have a space where the child can spread out and be active without being in the way;
- Remove objects or rearrange spaces to help the child stay out of trouble;
- Show the child ways of behaving by using words to solve problems, expressing feelings without being aggressive, and taking time to think before reacting or overreacting;
- Set reasonable limits and expectations that match the child's age, interests, abilities and attention span;
- Give the child enough time to respond to a request to complete an activity;
- Explain rules in language the child can understand (for some children, pictures work best);
- Establish a routine, so the child has some idea of what will be happening each day (a daily picture schedule can help);

Fun and Enjoyment



Fun activities can happen throughout the day, not just when a child is playing. They can happen during bath time, mealtime or while in the car. Imitate the child's actions. Use words to describe what you see him doing. Sing songs while doing chores, or turn a routine task into a game. Each day is full of things that must be done, such as dressing, eating and cleaning. If the only time we talk to children is when we are telling them to do something, we miss many chances to encourage learning and have fun.

A PARENT REFLECTS: This Too Shall Pass

Years ago, when my autistic son Sean was a toddler, I remember all the questions I had. Was I being a good mother? Was I providing the correct amount of “quality time” with my child? Did I make sure his activities were appropriate and at his level? After time, I realized that the most important thing was to love Sean as a child. I needed to enjoy the little things as well as the big things. I learned that I didn’t have to spend all of my time trying to enrich every moment of his life. If he got something, even a smile, out of an activity, then that activity was valuable to him. I needed to relax and let him be a kid. At some point, Sean required a variety of people and experiences to enrich his life. Some days, I wanted a break, and sometimes he needed a world that didn’t include me. I had to learn to let go, and the more I did, the easier and better it became. His brother, grandparents, friends and teachers were superstars in his eyes. Now that Sean is a teenager, I can hardly believe that he can read more than 350 words and dress himself. His development is still a concern, but I know that I need to love him, be there for him and value his abilities, no matter where he is developmentally. I surround my son, as well as myself, with people who have positive influences on our lives. This makes our lives as full and as enjoyable as we allow them to be. All parents know that the future is just around the corner. Let it come. You’re ready for it – just wait and see.



Language Development

It is important to speak to and listen to children, to encourage their ability to use language. A young child’s “speech” includes crying, gestures and facial expressions, as well as words. Pay close attention to understand the message and meaning of what a child is communicating. When a child uses words that are hard to understand,

repeat what you think is being said. Teach children new words by saying the names of things as they are used in daily routines. Describe what you are doing. Increase children’s language skills by adding new words to what they say. For example, if the child says “truck,” you can say, “You want the big truck?” Children usually understand more than they can say. Use words and phrases that match the child’s ability level.



A PARENT REFLECTS: Talking to Children

Research on reading done by Hart and Risley made me wonder about the amount of talking that takes place in our household. The research said that the average American 1-year-old to 2-year-old hears 340 utterances, 1,440 words, 90 questions, 17 affirmations and seven prohibitions each hour that they spend with a parent. We have three children under the age of 5. Are my children hearing that much language? We read them many books, we talk about the things they are interested in, but the research certainly makes me think about the "extra language" I use as I interact socially with my children each day. According to Risley, parents' "extra talk" contains more "varied vocabulary, complex ideas, subtle guidance and positive reinforcement thought to be important to intellectual development." Reading this has made me realize the importance of all of those conversations we have - even when I am so tired that I would just like it to be quiet. I hope all parents will talk to and with their children, because all the language experiences my children and others encounter will determine their vocabulary growth and verbal development. The amount of social interaction we have with our children within their first few years is the major determiner of later language use and understanding. I guess I'd better go talk with my children!

Hart, B. & Risley, T. R. (1995). Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children. Baltimore: Paul Brookes.

Paying Attention

The amount of time children stay with activities depends on their age, abilities and interests. Support and expand their ability to pay attention by showing an interest in what they do. One way for parents to show interest is to imitate what the child does. When doing an activity together, take turns. Wait until the child has done something before taking a turn. Describe what the child is doing.

Realistic Expectations

Children learn more when they practice things that they know how to do. Watch children at play and during daily routines. Pay attention to what they can do without help. Note how they spend their time. If you ask a child to do something and he does not respond right away, wait. It takes some children a little longer to figure out what is expected of them. Children can become confused when they do not have enough time to figure things out. Frustration, resistance and lack of interest are clues that too much is being asked of them. Use the Stages of Development section on page 1 of this publication as a guide to help determine realistic expectations.





Reading and learning

A PARENT REFLECTS: We Do What We Can

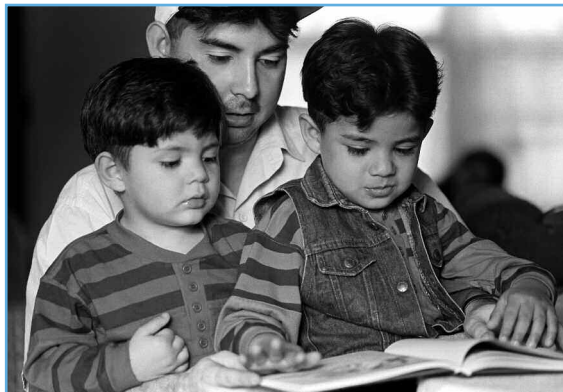
My child is still a struggling reader and probably always will be. But he loves books, we read to him, and he often chooses to read on his own. I feel sure that the time we have spent reading together has helped him realize the fun and value of reading.

Why it is important to read to children:

- Studies prove that the most important thing adults can do to prepare young children for success in school and for reading is to read aloud with them.
- Many doctors believe that a child who has never been read to is not a fully healthy child.
- Reading aloud regularly with a child builds stronger relationships by building communication between the adult and child.

The benefits of reading aloud with children:

- A child's self-esteem seems to grow as he experiences the attention of a parent or other adult who reads aloud with him;
- Children who are read to communicate better with parents and other family members;
- Introducing new topics, such as colors, shapes, numbers and the alphabet, is fun when it is part of reading;
- Children build listening, vocabulary, memory and language skills through being read to;
- Reading to children helps them develop imagination and creativity;
- Children learn about the world through books; through reading they may become interested in specific subjects, such as helping in the community, gardening or animal care;
- Children learn positive behavior patterns and social values;
- Children develop positive attitudes about themselves and others;
- By reading together with parents or other caring adults, children learn the joy of reading.



Toolkit: Everyday Exposure

Reading is very important to each child's future. Young children need to be read to every day. Older children need to be read to by adults and to read by themselves every day. It is important that children see adults reading. This may seem like a lot of work, but children value those activities that they recognize as being important to adults. There are things to read everywhere: magazines, newspapers, books, food labels, signs and recipes.



Communication and learning

Engaging a child in listening, speaking and reading can increase communication skills and can help the child learn and have fun at the same time. Here are some ways to get started.

Listening

- Give names to things in the child's environment, such as colors, clothing, food, toys and body parts, to increase her vocabulary;
- Sing songs and recite rhymes daily;
- Listen to music, moving to and clapping with the beat of the music; and
- Read stories at bedtime or during other regularly scheduled times, and talk about the pictures.

Speaking

- Ask the child questions about his day, stories he listened to or other experiences;
- Explain new vocabulary used in books;
- Label new items in the child's environment;
- Show interest in what the child says;
- Share storytelling time with the child;
- Build vocabulary by reading daily; and
- Go on field trips to places where there will be plenty to talk about, such as the zoo, a farm or a grocery store.

Reading

- Help children learn about books by talking about their parts and ways to read them, such as book covers, front and back, right side up, one page at a time, left to right, and beginning and end;
- Have the child "read" a story out loud;
- Read and reread stories as often as the child requests;
- Put the child's name on belongings to help him learn to recognize his name in print;
- Read road signs and business signs to the child when driving;

- Read books that have memorable, repeated words and phrases, so the child can join in;
- Display and talk about printed materials such as books, magazines, recipes and coupons;
- Regularly visit the library with the child;
- Read recipes, cards and other printed texts, such as information found on cereal boxes;
- Look at and read everything that comes home from school; and
- When the mail arrives, look through it with the child.

Writing

- Provide daily opportunities for children to "write" and draw with different instruments, such as crayons, pencils, markers, pens and paintbrushes.





Helping at home

Letting children do little household jobs is an important way they become independent and learn responsibility. It is typical for young children to want to imitate or do what the big people in their lives do. When children resist doing household jobs, sometimes it has to do with the way those activities are presented. Things go best when children are asked to do things they are actually able to do. It also helps to turn the jobs into fun experiences.

To encourage children to be helpful:



- Think about activities children can do to help and to learn independence, such as dusting, sweeping, washing cars, pulling weeds, carrying small branches, picking up books or toys, washing dishes, making beds, picking up clothes, emptying trash, feeding animals, folding clothes, stirring powdered drinks or breaking spaghetti before cooking it.
- When working with children, talk about sorting by sizes, shapes, colors and textures. For example, sort clothes and place them in piles – one for each family member. Match socks. Put all white things in one pile and all colored things in a different pile. Compare the size of the child's jeans with the sizes of others' jeans.
- Consider skills that children need to develop and practice, and encourage tasks that focus on these skills. For example, when children are developing fine motor skills, working in the garden gives them opportunities to dig, pour, pull things out and put things in.
- Remember that young children are learning and cannot be expected to do jobs as well as older children or adults.





Daily routines

Young children benefit from regular daily routines. Repeating activities each day helps children understand what comes next. Routines create a sense of order and help parents organize the family's life.

Toolkit: The Social Story

Social stories are a great tool for helping children understand daily routines. Many children's books are really social stories: simple accounts that illustrate examples of life situations and routines. The social story is based on the simple steps taken to complete a usually routine task. It includes answers to the questions, "who, what, where and why." A social story increases a child's understanding of a life situation and becomes a guide to establishing a desired behavior. Here's an example of a social story:

I am in my bed and wake up. It is quiet in my house. It is quiet in my room. My alarm clock will ring when it is okay to leave my bedroom. I can play with toys. I can look at a book. I need to stay in my room until the alarm clock rings and it is safe to leave. Mommy is waiting for me in the kitchen. Now I can go "potty" and eat breakfast.

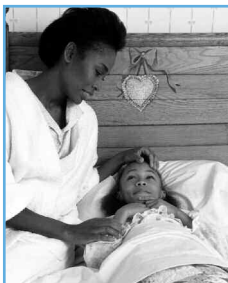
Waking

Remember that what happens at the beginning of the day may set the mood for the rest of the day. These tips can help parents get off to a good start.

When children wake and are active and alert:



- Do chores;
- Begin playtime; or
- Work on dressing, language or learning skills.



When children have a difficult time waking up:



- Cuddle the child and sing a special song;
- Help the child roll and stretch, or give him a back rub;
- Set a radio alarm clock or other device to wake her;
- Play favorite music;
- Consider setting an earlier bedtime; and
- Bathe the child to help in waking up.

When children wake up too early and wander around the house:



- Put a gate on the bedroom door;
- Leave the child's door open a little, and put a bell on the doorknob;
- Turn on music in the room;
- Let the child play quietly in his room;
- Let the child read books in her room;
- Set an alarm clock in the child's room, so she knows when it is okay to leave;
- Have a box of "quiet toys" that the child can play with until others are up;
- Install a safety doorknob on the bedroom door;
- Put automatic floor sensors in the child's room;
- Install monitors or Webcams; and
- Teach the child a desired behavior by reading social stories about morning routines.

When children wake up grumpy:



- Allow a comfortable amount of time for waking up before more structured activities of the day begin;
- Try not to rush;
- Cuddle and sing to the child;
- Play music;
- Leave the child alone for a few minutes;
- Talk about what is coming next in the day's routine; or
- Give the child a bath, if that is an enjoyable routine.

Dressing

When children like to dress and undress:

- I Can**
 - Praise the child's abilities;
 - Encourage language skills by naming pieces of clothing;
 - Play a color game by naming a color and having the child put on or take off a piece of clothing that matches that color;
 - Name a body part and have the child pick the clothes that go with that body part;
 - Call attention to how different clothing feels, such as soft, rough or smooth; and
 - Encourage the child to check the weather and pick clothes accordingly.

When children dress slowly:

- I Can**
 - Have the child pick out his own clothes the night before;
 - Have pictures to remind the child of all the steps in the dressing routine;
 - Plan ahead, so the child has enough time;
 - Dress in a place with limited distraction;
 - Comment on each step the child completes, such as, "Your shirt is on";
 - Use music or a kitchen timer to set the amount of time the child has to dress;
 - Cut a smiley face sticker in half and place half on the heel of each shoe to make it easier to figure out which shoe goes on which foot; and
 - Put a dot or sticker on the child's same-side hand and shoe for matching.



- Make sure the child has enough time to dress at a comfortable pace that matches her abilities; and
- Look for signs of frustration, and offer to share the job with the child: "You can pull your pants up, and then I will zip and snap them."

When children show little interest in dressing:

- I Can**
 - Create a box or bag of boys' and girls' "dress-up" clothes for playtime;
 - Provide the child with choices of clothes to wear;
 - Plan something the child likes to do, and explain that it will happen after dressing;
 - Make dressing time more interesting by introducing games, songs or "silly" things like putting socks on hands; and
 - Have the child dress in front of a mirror.

When children are unable to dress themselves:

- I Can**
 - Help the child become more aware of what is happening by naming the clothes and their associated body parts and by describing what is happening; for example, "shirt over head";
 - Play games or sing songs while dressing, such as Peek-a-boo, This Little Piggy and *This Is the Way We...*;
 - Remember that children typically can undress before they can dress themselves;
- Encourage the child to do things she is capable of doing by starting with simple tasks, such as taking off socks;
- Start the job and let the child finish;
- Place hands on the child's hands and guide them through some of the dressing and undressing routines;
- Give the child opportunities to practice using dress-up clothes or dressing a doll. Select a doll and doll clothes with fasteners that match the child's abilities;
- Encourage the child to use the skills that will make dressing and undressing easier, such as lifting arms or legs; and
- Teach alternate or unusual ways to dress, such as putting arms in a shirt or coat sleeves and then flipping the garment over the head.

When children become frustrated with dressing or undressing:

- I Can**
 - Use clothes that are stretchy and have no buttons, snaps or zippers;
 - Alter clothes to make them easier to put on, such as putting loops on the sides of pants to make them easier to pull up;
 - Use shoes that slip on or have hook-and-loop tape;

Mealtime at Home

A PARENT REFLECTS: How Much Food Is Enough?

As an infant, my child was a great little eater – fruits and veggies, she loved them all. But something happened to her when she turned 3. She decided that she did not like most of the foods that I offered her. Things that she normally loved, she suddenly wanted nothing to do with. I became very concerned that she was not getting the proper nutrition to stay healthy, so I took her to the doctor, hoping to find out what was wrong. I was surprised when he told me that this was normal for most 3-year-old children! He said I should try offering her smaller portions more often, and that a normal, healthy child will naturally select a balanced diet over a week's time, not a 24-hour period. He also told me the appropriate amounts of food for her age and weight. Guess what? It was much less than I had been trying to get her to eat.

For smooth and happy mealtime routines at home:



- Set up mealtime rules, keeping in mind the child's age and abilities;
- Consider how much food the child can eat at one time;
- Change a family meal tradition if it doesn't fit the child's needs and abilities;
- Set a good example for table manners, use of utensils and behavior;
- Avoid foods that get the child "wound up";
- Use social stories about meal time; and
- Turn off the TV.

When children are picky eaters and refuse certain foods:



- Be a good role model;
- Remember, children may need several opportunities to taste and enjoy new foods;
- Keep in mind there is no single food that is required for good health;



- Talk with the doctor about how much the child needs to eat in order to stay healthy;
- Not require a child to eat something simply because a lot of time was spent preparing it;
- Give the child choices;
- Involve the child in preparing meals, to generate his interest;
- Consider whether the food's texture, temperature, color, sound or smell and whether the food is raw or cooked makes a difference in what the child will eat;
- Encourage the child to eat independently, including buttering bread;
- Place small portions of food on the child's plate and allow requests for seconds;
- Give the child and others plenty of time to eat; avoid rushing through meals;
- Use social stories;
- Provide healthy foods; and
- Plant a garden with the child's help, motivating him to eat garden-grown foods.

When children do not feed themselves:



- Encourage as much independence as the child is capable of, even if the result is messy;
- Start with finger foods, such as crackers, bananas, raisins or cheese;
- Use adaptive utensils if the child has trouble with regular silverware. For example, bend the handle of a spoon so the scoop is lower than the handle;

- Wrap a piece of cloth or paper towel on the handle of a spoon and secure it with tape for a better grip;
- Purchase hollow foam tubing at the hardware store, and put it around the spoon or fork handle;
- Place a hand over the child's hand to help guide the spoon;
- Offer a sippy cup or a cup with a lid and straw for drinking;
- Consider adaptive equipment found in catalogs;
- Use serving utensils that match the child's abilities, such as a small, covered pitcher for pouring; and
- Use a bowl or a plate with a higher lip.

When children are messy when they feed themselves:

- I Can**
- Put a hand over the child's hand to help guide the spoon;
 - Serve foods that stick to utensils, such as pudding, oatmeal and mashed potatoes;
 - Change the child's position, so foods can be easily reached and so the child is physically supported and balanced;
 - Place an old shower curtain or piece of plastic on the floor under the chair;
 - Remember that practice makes perfect, and that this, too, will improve;
 - Allow the child to be messy and to have fun cleaning up later; and
 - Put the child's plate on a piece of waffled shelf liner, to help keep it in place.

When children do not want to take time to eat:

- I Can**
- Establish a routine with a consistent eating time;
 - Give the child a verbal reminder five minutes before mealtime;
 - Give the child an auditory reminder five minutes before mealtime by ringing a bell or setting a kitchen timer;
 - Give the child a visual reminder five minutes before mealtime by showing a picture related to eating;
 - Give the child a chance to smell or taste the food before sitting down at the table;

- Increase the child's interest in mealtime by having him set the table or help prepare the food; and
- Decorate placemats or food to add mealtime interest.

When children play with their food:

- I Can**
- Keep large serving bowls off the table;
 - Cut the food and butter the roll before setting the plate on the table;
 - Play "tea party," so children can practice eating and socializing;
 - Talk to the child during the meal to keep the focus on eating;
 - Remember that children eat with their fingers before they use silverware;



- Remind the child which foods are okay to eat with the fingers;
- Make sure the child has a spoon and fork that are easy to use; and
- Eliminate decorated plates and utensils, to decrease stimulation.

When children will not sit at the table:

- I Can**
- Set predictable times for meals and snacks;
 - Turn off the TV, DVDs and other distractions;
 - Make mealtime a family time;
 - Serve small portions;
 - Allow the child to make choices;
 - Allow the child to stop eating when he feels full; and
 - Adapt mealtime rules to the child's needs and abilities.

When children put inappropriate things in their mouths:

While this behavior is common for infants and toddlers, some children may continue it into the preschool years. This is especially true for children who may not be getting enough stimulation or information from their other senses.

I Can

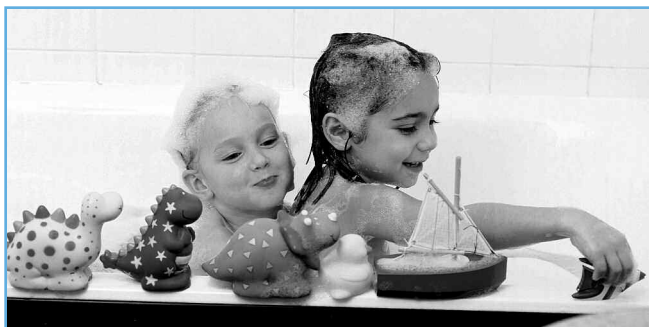
- Be aware that tasting is one way children learn about the world;
- Find objects or activities that provide stimulation but are functional and safe, such as sucking on a straw, blowing bubbles or chewing on a toothbrush; and
- Provide the child with choices that will engage her attention, such as playing in sand or water; using modeling clay; or bouncing, tickling or jumping.

Bath Time

When children love bath time:

I Can

- Play games that encourage the child to follow directions;
- Read stories, name body parts or play counting games while in the tub;
- Show the child how to wash his face and brush his teeth;
- Talk about items in the tub, and comment on their texture; for example, "The washcloth is soft, the soap is slippery";
- Have bath time toys that allow the child to learn about sinking or floating, or being full or empty;



- Change water temperature so the child will experience "warm" and "cool";
- Have containers in the tub that the child can use to practice pouring;
- Use shaving cream for smearing or drawing pictures on the wall or on the sides of the tub;

- Let the child wring out the washcloth or sponge, to develop hand strength; and
- Use a mirror to talk about body parts or to make silly faces. Children love to see their own reflections.

When children resist bathing:

I Can

- Make bath time interesting by engaging in a favorite activity, like reading, in the tub;
- Consider using scented soap, bubble bath or special bath crayons;
- Use a visor to protect the child's face and eyes when shampooing hair;
- Use a tearless shampoo;
- Agree on a schedule, then post the schedule so there is a pictorial reminder of the bath or shampoo days;
- Allow enough time to avoid rushing the bath;
- Give the child choices about bath time, and let her select a special soap or towel;
- Allow the child to select the toys that will be in the tub; and



- Suggest that the child wear a swimsuit, to make things more fun.

When children do not like brushing their teeth:

I Can

- Select a flavor of toothpaste the child likes;
- Let the child select his own toothbrush;
- Show the child how to brush and floss;
- Be a good role model; and
- Purchase a vibrating or musical toothbrush.

When children like to play with water at the sink:

I Can

- Remember that most young children enjoy this activity;
- Set aside special times when playing in the sink is okay, such as when washing dishes;

- Combine water play with other activities, such as cleaning items around the house; and
- Let the child practice rolling skills by having him roll hand-washed clothes into a towel.

When children do not like doing things for themselves:

- I Can**
- Encourage the child to practice self-care tasks by washing dolls, washing mom's hair, or combing the hair of a brother or sister;
 - Think of ways to change the environment to make it easier for the child to help himself, such as using liquid soap instead of bar soap, having a step stool close to the sink, and having the toothbrush and toothpaste in a place where the child can reach them;
 - Place the child's name or a special symbol on things, so she knows what belongs to her;
 - Give the child enough time to do things for himself; and
 - Have a mirror at hand, so the child can see what she is doing.

Bedtime

When it is time for bed:

- I Can**
- Set a regular time to go to bed;
 - Create a routine of things to do before bedtime, including brushing teeth, going to the toilet, reading a book, singing songs or listening to music. Repeating the same steps nightly adds to children's sense of security and prepares their minds for sleep;
 - Have a regular place for the child to sleep;
 - Provide the child with several reminders before bedtime by setting a kitchen timer or by having a special program he watches just before bedtime;
 - Engage in quiet activities or talk about pleasant events before bedtime, to help the child calm down; and
 - Maintain a regular bedtime routine as often as possible.



A PARENT REFLECTS: Breaking the Habit

When my child was very young, I got into the habit of staying with her until she fell asleep. By the age of 4, she insisted that I lie down with her every night after we had gone through the regular bedtime routine. When I tried to break the habit by walking out of the room and letting her cry, she screamed until no one in the house could stand it. I tried a gradual way of breaking this habit: the first week, I sat next to her on the bed. The second week, I sat on a chair next to the bed and held her hand. The third week, I sat on a chair at the edge of the bed. The fourth week, I was at the doorway so my child could see me. The fifth week, I sat in the hallway. The sixth week, after the regular routine, I left the room completely.

When children will only go to sleep if rocked:

- I Can**
- Set a time limit for the bedtime routine that includes rocking; and
 - Decrease the amount of rocking time by setting a timer and gradually reducing the amount of time until it is within reasonable limits.

When children wake up crying during the night:

- I Can**
- Stay calm, and remember that waking in the night happens to all children at times;
 - Listen for a few minutes to see whether the child quiets without doing anything;
 - Provide the child with comfort in his own bed;
 - Try to determine the problem; it could be a bad dream, a stomachache, an earache or a fever;
 - Provide the child with medication recommended by the doctor, if the problem is medical;
 - Give the child a nightlight, special blanket, stuffed animal, flashlight or other items that will help her feel more secure during the night; and
 - Avoid rough play, scary stories or other activities before bedtime that might trouble the child during the night.

When children resist going to bed:



- Follow the ideas listed earlier for establishing a bedtime routine;
- Help the child choose a quiet activity before bed; for children who need order and routine, it may be helpful to do the same activity each night;
- Give the child a chance to do physically tiring activities during the day;
- Patiently place the child back in bed each time he gets up, and say nothing;
- Have a different family member put the child to bed;
- Let the child fall asleep with a favorite stuffed animal; or
- Shorten the child's afternoon nap.

When children still need to nap but do not want to:



- Have a daily rest time, even if the child does not sleep;
- Use a timer or alarm, or listen to a timed CD, to indicate when rest time is over;
- Allow the child to do quiet activities during rest time;



- Check to see whether there are things the child is eating or drinking that might be causing the problem; for example, sugar and caffeine can affect moods and sleep patterns; and
- Remember that this behavior is typical for some preschool children.

When children wet the bed:



- Remember it is typical for some children to have occasional accidents until they are 6 or 7 years old;
- Make sure the child goes to the toilet before bedtime;
- Limit the amount the child drinks in the evening;

- Use a night-time diaper until the child has sufficient control;
- Let the child know that an accident is normal and is not a serious problem;



- Let the child help clean up by putting sheets and wet clothes in the washer;
- Talk to the doctor to rule out any medical problems;
- Comment when the child has a "dry" night ("Your clothes and bed are dry this morning!"); and
- Tell brothers and sisters not to tease the child.

When children have night terrors:



- Remember, it is typical for some preschool children to experience nightmares; it comes with their growing independence and their fear of things not yet understood;
- Provide comfort and support;
- Talk with the child's doctor or another professional;
- Leave on a nightlight in the child's room;
- Explain that there will always be someone to provide comfort when the child wakes; and
- Be creative: stand a stuffed dragon or dog next to the bed as protection, line up all the stuffed animals in the doorway to "guard" the room, draw a pretend circle around the bed and tell the child nothing will come into the circle, or make a "dream catcher."



Toilet Training

Before children are toilet trained:



- Remember that toilet training is a very individual thing, and not all children are toilet trained at the same age;
- Consider the child's abilities and stage of development;
- Put a "potty" chair in the bathroom a few days before beginning toilet training;
- Use words or signs that the child can use to signal he needs to "go potty";



- Take the child to the toilet at the times she usually has a wet diaper;
- Arrange a special shopping day with the child to select special "grown-up" underwear;

- Dress the child in clothes that are easy to get on and off;
- Watch for signs that the child might use to indicate she is ready for toilet training, such as pulling at her diaper or clothes, making faces or going to a particular part of the house;



- Take the child to the toilet each time he wants to go;
- Praise the child for any behavior related to going to the toilet, such as sitting on the potty chair or pulling down pants;
- Think about things that will help the child relax while sitting on the toilet, such as looking at a book, having a conversation or playing with a toy;
- Turn on the water; the sound might encourage the child to go to the toilet;
- Be patient, patient, patient;
- Try a schedule of toilet breaks at regular times; and
- If appropriate, have the child sit on his potty chair while others are using the toilet.



Playing and learning

Playing is how young children like to spend their time. When you hear someone say, “He is just playing,” it sounds like play is not important. But play is very important! All the time children are playing, they are also learning. In fact, children often learn more through their play than when we try to formally teach them something.

Play does not require expensive toys. Dropping a spoon on the floor over and over, sitting in a box, making faces in the mirror, imitating animal sounds or using a hand to make shadow puppets all can be playful activities.

Just as our children learn to sit, crawl, walk and then run, play happens in stages too. At first, play might include watching things move, tasting things and banging objects. Before children start to play with other children, they watch other children playing, they play alone and they play beside other children. Playing usually starts by trading toys, and it lasts for short periods of time. Playing together, pretending, sharing, and more involved kinds of playing develop as children grow older and have more chances to play with other children.

Playing Alone

When children begin to enjoy playing alone:

- I Can** • Extend and expand the child’s skills by making interesting toys available;
- Demonstrate new ways of using the old toys;
- Describe what the child is doing, to encourage her play skills;
- Provide dress-up clothes and other household items, to encourage pretend play.
- Let the child watch himself play in a mirror;
- Provide a variety of play materials, including sand, water, books and blocks;
- Encourage the child to use motor skills by offering windup or stacking toys, or by giving the child modeling dough with cookie cutters and a rolling pin; and



- Use the time the child is playing independently to do something else.

When children want parents or other caregivers to play with them:

- I Can** • Imitate what the child is doing;
- Encourage taking turns;
- Encourage conversation about something the child wants to talk about;
- Encourage pretend playing;
- Let the child make the rules and decide who will play which role;
- If necessary, set a time limit; for example, “I will play with you for 15 minutes, then I will fix dinner”;
- Consider including the child in tasks that need to be done; and
- Set aside special times during the day or week when the child knows it is “our” time to play together.

When children are not interested in playing with toys:

- I Can** • Have many kinds of toys, such as action toys, puzzles, musical toys, pretend toys and dolls that match the child’s age and ability;
- Play with the toys to encourage the child to join in;
- Take note of things the child does play with, such as kitchen utensils, boxes, pots and pans, and measuring cups, and use these to create a means of playing that promotes sorting, stacking, pouring and banging;
- Try verbal play, such as singing, rhyming and making silly sounds;
- Play hide-and-seek using favorite toys, such as dolls, stuffed animals or balls;
- Make up play routines that do not require toys: make a tent with a blanket and chairs and pretend to camp; fix a picnic, and play a guessing game with food items in the basket; or use big boxes to play “train” or hide-and-seek;

- Set up an area where it is okay to be messy and have messy things available to explore, such as pudding, modeling dough or shaving cream; and
- Check to see if there is a toy lending library in the area.

TOOLKIT: Common Household Items and Play

Play is an important part of a child's development. Toys are not the only things children use for playing and learning. Common things found around the house can provide children with opportunities to count, match, sort, compare and create, as well as to learn colors, sounds, sizes, shapes and textures. Here is a list of common household items and ways they can be used for playing and learning. Use your imagination and think of more ideas!

- Pots, pans, lids, pie tins and silverware can be used to explore sounds and sizes, to match things, and to use hand and finger muscles;
- Measuring spoons, cups and bowls can be used for matching, stacking, pouring and finding out how much will go into a space;
- Cans, plastic bottles and paper towel rolls can be used for rolling, pushing, comparing sizes and making "art";
- Muffin tins and egg cartons can be used for sorting and counting;
- Cookie cutters can be used for sorting and counting;
- Oatmeal, flavored gelatin and cereal boxes can be used for filling, emptying, stacking, putting things in, taking things out and playing "grocery";
- Large appliance boxes can be used to play hide-and-seek or to create a playhouse, store, post office or train;
- Sponges give children a chance to use their hand and finger muscles for wiping, wringing and squeezing;
- An egg beater or hand-operated mixer gives children a chance to practice fine motor skills;
- Food is one way for children to learn more about colors, shapes, tastes, sizes and textures;
- Mirrors allow children to find out more about themselves and the parts of the body and are also fun for making faces and playing peek-a-boo;
- Dress-up clothes give children a way to use their imaginations and to play grown-up;
- Scraps of fabric can be used to learn about textures and colors and to practice cutting and pasting;
- Thread, spools, yarn and shoestrings are great for creating beautiful art as well as for giving children a chance to practice sorting, stacking and matching;
- Magazines, catalogs and store ads give children a chance to cut, paste, find things that go together or make a "picture" shopping list;
- Old envelopes can be used to play post office and to sort by size and color;
- Hardware, such as nuts, bolts and tools, gives children a chance to feel grown-up and allows children to practice motor skills and hand-eye coordination (having an adult present is a good idea!); and
- Sand, water, rice, oatmeal and shaving cream are just plain fun and promote development in many ways.

A PARENT REFLECTS: Joint Attention

When my daughter Hannah was younger, she had very poor eye contact with others, no interest in normal toys and seemingly no need for social interaction. What she did like, though, was spinning plates or lids. She could (and still can) make "music" with those spinning objects. Her eyes would glow as she fastened them on her spinning plates. As the plate began to lose force and gradually lower itself to the floor, her eyes and head would follow it until she would be lying on the floor beside it. The second it stopped, she was spinning it again. She did it over and over until I couldn't stand the noise or futility of that activity anymore. If I tried to distract her by saying her name or bringing her a toy, I was ignored. If I took the plate, she would throw a tantrum. Then I heard about imitation and turn taking. With nothing to lose, I tried it. When she started to spin a plate, I sat on the floor beside her and also started spinning a plate. After awhile, I noticed her watching my plate out of the corner of her eye. I would wait until her plate started spinning, then I would spin mine. Gradually, when her plate quit spinning, she would give my plate her full attention until it was still. At this point, I decided to add turn taking. On the floor, we would sit facing each other with one plate between us. She would spin first. When it stopped I would say, "My turn," while picking up the plate and spinning it. Whenever it was her turn, I would say, "Hannah's turn," handing her the plate. During this whole process, I would deliberately try to make eye contact as I talked to her, "...my turn...your turn." Eventually, just saying her name would get an eye-to-eye look from her. Then she tolerated my taking her plate and substituting a toy. She has come a long way. She still likes to spin things, but it is not the only thing she enjoys doing.



A PARENT REFLECTS: The Perfect Toy

I spent a lot of time searching for the perfect toy. After Justin tore off the paper, it turned out that he was more interested in the box than the toy. Kristina's toys were arranged on the wonderful toy shelf in her room. Much to my surprise, she was more interested in playing with the pots and pans in the kitchen than the perfect toys on her toy shelf.



Playing with Other Children

When children are learning to play with other children:

- I Can**
- Place the child nearby while others are playing;
 - Start to play a game or play with a toy, and invite other children to join;
 - Invite children over to play at the home, and have fun activities available;
 - Talk with other families about hosting play time at their homes;
 - Remember that children are active watchers before they imitate or play with other children;
 - Read social stories about playing with others; and
 - Role-play with a baby doll or a favorite stuffed animal.



When children are bossed around by other children:

- I Can**
- Let children work things out for themselves, as long as no one is getting hurt;
 - Provide opportunities for children to play games and activities that require taking turns;
 - Read stories about friendship and sharing;
 - Talk about bossing and how it makes children feel;
 - Join the play routine, and model play skills such as sharing, taking turns and cooperating; and
 - Use social stories.

When children are unable to defend themselves when playing with other children:

- I Can**
- Watch to see if the children work things out for themselves;
 - Intervene when necessary;
 - Help children put their feelings into words (for example, “You are sad when she takes your doll away from you.”);
 - Encourage children to let others know how they feel; and
 - Teach children signs for “stop” or “no.”

When children's speech is hard to understand:

- I Can**
- Give the child a variety of ways to let others know his needs and wants by using gestures, simple signs or picture cues;
 - Arrange for one-on-one play dates, to let children get to know each other well;
 - Teach any signs or picture cues the child uses to the adults and children in his life – sign language can be a useful means of communication for all children, and it encourages verbal language; and
 - Remember that preschool children are very accepting and will often work out their own ways of communicating.

Playing Outside

Children should go outdoors every day for exercise, fresh air and fun. Caregivers and children will have greater freedom outdoors to jump, hop, swing, look and listen. Let children make noise. Remind them about any rules for playing outside.



When children need encouragement to play outside:

- I Can**
- Give children opportunities to practice motor skills on swings, slides, tricycles or monkey bars;
 - Call attention to sounds, sights, smells and textures and share them with the child (for example, “The air is cold, and I can feel the wind blowing on my face,” or, “Listen, I can hear an airplane!”);
 - Play “Red Light, Green Light,” “Mother May I?” or “Ring-Around-the-Rosy”; and
 - Let the child blow bubbles; this is a fun way of practicing both fine motor skills (such as putting things in and out and controlling breath), and communication skills (such as making sounds and strengthening mouth muscles).

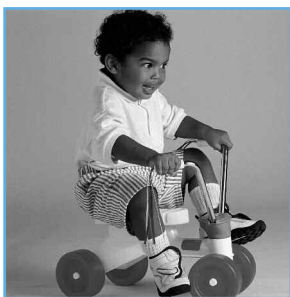
TOOLKIT: Soap Bubbles

Liquid dishwashing detergent or tearless shampoo, diluted with water, makes economical soap bubbles. Experiment with your brand for the best proportion of water. Twist the end of a pipe cleaner into a ring for the wand. Children can use a plastic margarine tub filled with the soap mixture for dipping. In addition to the pipe cleaner, try a new fly swatter.

When children who do not yet walk play outside:



- Buy a big push toy (for example, a large truck, baby stroller or lawn mower) for the child to hold onto when learning to walk, and make sure the toy is heavy enough or the child may lose balance;
- Allow other children to pull the child in a wagon;
- Have riding toys that the child can push or pull with her feet or hands; and



- Encourage the child to partner with others in play; for example, in a game of T-ball, the child who doesn't walk can bat and another child can run the bases.

Electronic Play

While young children enjoy watching television and playing on computers, it is best to limit the time they spend on these "screen-time" activities so they will have time to play with other people and to interact with toys and books.

When planning for screen time:



- Place limits on the amount of screen time – two hours a day is believed to be the most time a preschool-age child should be in front of a screen;

- Choose an active program video or DVD that children can sing, dance or exercise to;
- Choose a program that teaches children how to make something;
- Watch TV with children, and then talk about the program;
- Use this time to hug and hold the child;
- Use this time to practice exercises such as ankle flexing or muscle tone exercises;
- Introduce books and games related to a TV show; and
- Use a sticker or token system to encourage the child to play in other ways.

A PARENT REFLECTS: I Am a Cool Dude!

My son Curtis would use self-stimulation behavior, such as moving his head, hands and feet, whenever he felt happy or when he needed to calm himself. This happened at times such as when we were in crowds of people, when there was too much noise or when there were many things going on at the same time. Several professionals told me that this was not socially acceptable behavior and that it needed to be stopped. Another professional suggested that what my son was doing was serving a purpose for him and instead of merely trying to stop the behavior, we should replace it with a behavior that served the same purpose and was more appropriate. I bought a lightweight, colorful CD player with spongy headphones (my son is sensitive to some textures). We placed them on his head and he used them for more than two hours! What a difference! The self-stimulating behavior stopped while he was listening to the CD. I am so excited! I feel it should go with him everywhere. Parents also can try an IPOD with just the earpiece. I learned how important it is to keep searching for answers, because when I do, eventually I will find them.



Discipline

TOOLKIT: Praise

We often hear that it is important to praise children. Praise, which is a form of attention, lets children know they are important and have value. Praise works best when it is specific and when it tells children what they did that pleased us. Instead of saying things like, "Good job," say, "Thank you for putting your plate in the sink." Another way we can praise or provide positive attention to children is to comment on what they are doing when things are going well. Some call this "catching children at being good." Comments such as, "It looks like you are having fun making that garage," shows that we pay attention to them when things are going well, not just when things are going badly.

Behaving in positive ways is an important goal parents should have for their children. Discipline is part of teaching positive behavior, but it is much more likely to be healthy and effective when parents have the following:

1. Realistic expectations based on a child's developmental stage according to typical child development milestones appearing on pages 1-3 of this booklet. Parents can find additional information about child development at local libraries, on the Internet, from teachers, or in pediatricians' offices and medical clinics. When parents have questions about their child's challenging behaviors, they should feel free to consult with their doctor or other health professional.
2. A positive approach that includes praise for accomplishments;
3. Strategies for responding to challenging situations like those listed here; and
4. Above all, patience.

When children whine because they do not get their way:

- I Can**
- Give the child choices;
 - Stoop to the child's eye level and quietly say, "I will talk to you when you stop whining";

- Encourage the child to use words that let others know what he wants; and
- Be direct, simple and calm.

When children bite:

- I Can**
- Firmly state, "We do not bite people. It hurts.";
 - Provide some objects that are okay to bite; and
 - Observe if there are certain things that trigger biting, and step in with another choice before the child bites.

Biting back is not an effective or desirable way to teach children good behavior.

When children say "no" or do not obey:

- I Can**
- Provide choices beforehand;
 - Remember that sometimes children say "no" and then do what they are told; wait to see what the child actually does instead of reacting immediately;
 - Remember that "no" is a sign of a child's growing independence; consider whether the issue is important enough to take action; and
 - Praise children for cooperation.

When children do things they know they should not do:

- I Can**
- Ignore the behavior if it is not a serious problem;
 - Explain other ways of behaving;
 - Direct the child's attention to a different activity; and
 - Set up consequences, be firm and follow through.



When children fight:



- As long as no one is getting hurt, wait to see if the children can “work it out”;
- If necessary, separate the quarreling children, and remove them from the situation to cool off (as a rule of thumb, one minute for each year of age is a reasonable amount of time for removing a child from a situation);
- Direct children’s attention to other activities;
- Model respectful behavior;
- Provide choices other than fighting;



- Look in the child’s eyes and state the rule against fighting; be direct, simple and calm;
- Use natural consequences; and
- Avoid power struggles.

When children throw temper tantrums:



- Give the child as little attention as possible until he demonstrates more self-control;
- Walk away if the child is not in danger of getting hurt or of hurting others; and
- Move the child to a place to be alone until she demonstrates self-control.

When children say, “I can’t do that”:



- Encourage the child to try by describing a time when he did the same or a similar task;
- Break the job into little parts that are easy to do;
- Show the child how to do the job one step at a time;
- Suggest creative ways to help the child do a job (for example, instead of just picking up the toys and putting them away, make the toys “march” to their homes); and
- Provide choices; create a job picture chart, and allow the child to select a job.

TOOLKIT: Baby Care Strategies

- Remember that babies will have times of crying that won’t be stopped by comforting.
 - Crying is how babies communicate.
 - Babies often cry for no apparent reason.
 - It’s okay to let a baby cry after the parent has tried to soothe her and has checked for all possible causes.
 - Crying is not a reflection on the parent’s skills.
 - Crying can’t be controlled.
- Think about the 2-2-2 theory. Babies begin to cry as early as two weeks, crying peaks at two months and a baby can cry up to two hours per day.
- Remember that:
 - Premature or “colicky” infants may be fussier.
 - Taking care of a baby is a big job.
 - No matter how frustrated parents get, they must never shake a baby.
- Learn how to calm a crying baby. Use the “5 S” strategy from www.thehappiestbaby.com:
 - Swaddle the baby;
 - Place the baby on his side or stomach, supervised, until he is calm;
 - Quietly whisper “shhhh” close to the baby’s ear;
 - Rock the baby gently; and
 - Offer breast, finger or pacifier so the baby can comfort herself by suckling.





In the car

Car trips can restrict movement and interfere with more vigorous forms of play. But well-prepared adults can help the child enter a whole new “world,” where the nature of play simply differs from home. Here are things that can help children get off on the right track.

Before getting into the car:



- Make sure that toilet needs have been taken care of;
- Tell the child the destination;
- Show the child pictures of the destination (this is particularly helpful for children who do not yet understand words);
- Let the child select activities (music, games, toys, coloring) to take in the car;
- Introduce a special activity for especially long rides; and
- Tell the child how long the ride will be (perhaps by using a visual timer, such as clock hands).

When children enjoy traveling:



- Play games such as “I Spy” or “20 Questions”;
- Have travel-friendly games and toys in the car, such as a magnetic drawing game;
- Comment about passing scenery or objects (signs, cars, animals), things heard (train, horn, sirens) and things smelled (bakery);
- Talk about street signs, the colors of other cars or traffic lights, and the idea of left and right when turning corners;
- Play music or DVDs;
- Sing songs; and
- Listen to books recorded on tapes or CDs.



When children unfasten seat belts or won't sit still:



- Provide “sitting still” activities the child likes in other settings, and do them in the car (playing with toys, eating snacks, watching a DVD or listening to music);
- Have someone sit next to the child;
- Place the car seat so the child can see out the window;
- Introduce a new toy or activity;
- Call attention to things as they pass, or play “I Spy”; and
- For a child with limited verbal skills, make a picture book of sights usually seen from the car. Have the child look for those sights.

A PARENT REFLECTS: A Special Choice

When my family takes a trip, I give each child a card with a smiley face in each corner. Before the trip begins, we review the rules: keep your hands to yourself and no yelling. I tell them that when they are following the rules, the smiley faces stay on their cards. When a child breaks a rule, I tear a smiley face off that child's card. Each child who has one smiley face left will get to pick something special. The “special choice” can be different, depending on how long the trip will take. A typical “special choice” is picking where we will eat lunch or dinner. Using this card system has made several long trips much more pleasant!



In community settings

Communities provide many fun places to go. Things will go more smoothly if adults plan ahead. Before taking a trip, talk with the child about what she will see, what you plan to do and what safety rules need to be observed. If the child does not know his name, give him a card with his name, address and phone number to use if he gets lost.

A PARENT REFLECTS:

A Walk in the Park

We have to plan family outings according to our son. Will he be able to handle this? What do we need to do to prepare for it? If things don't go well, what's Plan B? Nothing is easy. You might think a movie would be easy. Kenneth loves movies. Except that he doesn't tolerate some sounds well, he doesn't like crowds and he's not at all fond of the dark (not to mention that he sometimes can't hold still for long). We have to be prepared to pay admission for all of us and be aware that some or all of us may not see a thing. Going out to dinner sounds nice, except that there can't be a line, and the service must be fast. Be prepared for an argument from Kenneth if you drive up to a restaurant, discover a line and drive on to look for another. The restaurant must have things he'll eat, but you can't let him eat too much or he'll throw up. And you can forget a cup of coffee or a brief chat after Kenneth is finished eating. You're lucky to have the check by the time he's pushing to get out the door. And fast-food places with play areas? They won't let him play, so that's out.

- Adjust the length of the stay, according to the child's age and interest;
- Go during a less busy time of day;
- Attend story time;
- Get a library card; and
- Let the child choose some of the books.



Swimming Pools:



- Choose a pool that matches the child's needs (such as one with ramps, accessible bathrooms, good water temperature);
- Check ahead to find out the pool's policy about using special equipment (swim diapers, floating devices, toys);



- Encourage the child to practice motor skills in the water, such as kicking, walking and throwing;
- Use going to the pool as a motivator for the child to practice dressing and undressing skills;
- Bring another adult, if needed; and
- Put on bathing suits before going to the pool.

Libraries:



- Talk with the child about the library before going there;

Restaurants:



- Make reservations, or call ahead for seating;
- Bring a cracker or other snack if waiting is a problem;
- Order ahead of time, if necessary;
- Check with the restaurant about the kind of seating (high chair, booster seat) available and, if necessary, consider bringing the child's own seat;
- Pack quiet toys and the child's cup or silverware, if necessary;
- Ask for the table or booth that will best match the child's needs or interests, such as a site close to the bathroom or in a quiet location;
- Have the child sit in a place where there is something of interest, such as a window;
- Introduce a new toy or activity; and
- For messy eaters, see the Mealtime at Home section of this publication.

Movies:



- Decide ahead of time whether it is appropriate to expect the child to view a movie in the theater;
- Select movies that will hold the child's interest and attention;
- Increase the child's interest by reading the book that the movie is based on or by talking about the movie before going; and
- Offer the child a snack, such as popcorn.

Athletic and Other Events:



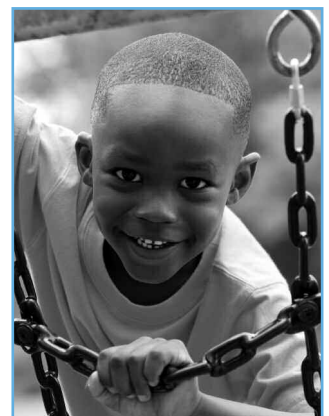
- Take one of the child's friends with us to the event;
- Help the child meet other children at the event;
- Prepare the child by talking about what will happen and by showing pictures or videos of similar events;
- Let the child know if the event will be noisy or crowded;
- Let the child wear ear plugs if noise is bothersome;
- Stand or sit in areas with fewer people, if necessary;
- Pack a snack or drinks to take along;
- Be creative about seating – take a blanket, stadium seat or wheelchair; and

- Make arrangements for watching a parade from inside a building to lessen the noise, if necessary.

Parks and Playgrounds:

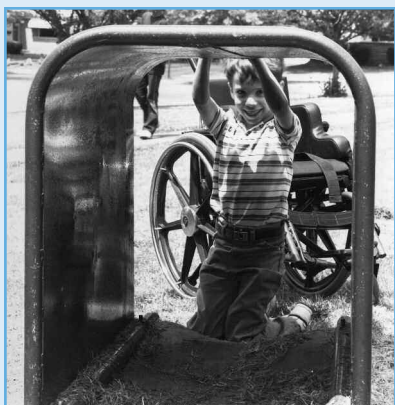


- Have fun playing together with the child;
- Encourage the child to use motor skills he already has developed and to try new ones such as kicking balls, throwing, catching, running, jumping, climbing or hopping;
- Try new things;
- Bring toys and containers from home for the child to play with in the sandbox;
- Go to the playground at times when fewer children will be there, if crowds or safety are an issue;
- Choose a playground that best matches the child's abilities;
- Allow the child to explore all the different things available at the playground;
- Make sure the child is wearing clothes that allow her to play freely and safely; and
- Invite friends to join the fun.



A PARENT REFLECTS: Practicing Therapy Exercises

My son goes to a therapist because he has poor muscle tone. The therapist gave us exercises to do at home to build his muscle strength and balance. Every time I tried to do these exercises, he pitched a fit. One day at the playground, I was walking on the railroad ties used as a border around the jungle gym. Without my saying a word, my son tried to do what I was doing. A little later, there were some children trying to do chin-ups on the bars, and I saw him watching them intently. After the children left, I noticed my son trying to do the same thing. I suddenly realized that he was practicing the things the therapist wanted us to practice without my having to make a big deal about it!



Adult Environments

When children must be quiet:

I Can

- Bring a meal or a snack;
- Let the child choose favorite quiet toys, such as books, crayons, magnetic drawing games or puzzles to take along;
- Provide a break by taking a short walk;
- Practice in advance what is expected (talking in whispers, staying in a seat);
- Recognize that children cannot sit quietly as long as adults, and plan accordingly; and
- Remember to praise and support the child's efforts.

Safety in Community Settings

Caring for children is a lot of responsibility, and part of that responsibility is keeping children safe from situations or people that might harm them. It is important to teach children to keep an appropriate distance from strangers. Here's how.

When children are too friendly with people they don't know:



- Watch a DVD from the library that gives ideas for helping children meet new people and be cautious of strangers;



- Make a book with pictures of people the child knows and does not know;
- Have the child point to people she knows and does not know in the book; and
- Use the book to talk about things to say and do with people we know, and things we say and do with strangers.





Shopping

Shopping entails sights, sounds and smells that stimulate children, as well as safety concerns that require parents or child-care givers to be on their toes. Yet it can be a fun, positive experience for you and your child.

When shopping with children:



- Tell the child where you are going;
- Look at pictures of what will be purchased;
- Have a list of things to buy, so the trip won't take longer than necessary;
- Plan the shopping trip with the child's needs in mind (where to shop, how far from home, how long to be out);
- Choose stores where the child can easily tolerate the lighting, noise level and number of people;
- Shop at a time when the child is not tired, cranky or hungry;
- Let the child pack a bag of things to take on the shopping trip (books, crayons, CD player, puppet, calculator);
- Plan ways for the child to take an active part in the shopping trip, such as matching coupons to actual items;
- Comment on the things in the store, what they are used for, the size and color of items, and the way things smell;
- Give the child chances to make choices, such as what kind of cereal to buy;
- Avoid those parts of the store that cause the most problems; and
- Make sure stores have accessible ramps for wheelchairs or strollers.



A PARENT REFLECTS: **Adapting can be simple!**

I was prepared. I knew it was important for Katie to be quiet and sit still. I packed some quiet toys, her favorite books, crayons and paper. The crayons were in a tin can, which Katie insisted that she open herself. When I tried to help her open the can, she jerked it away from me. The noise of the lid crashing on the floor and crayons rolling all over was embarrassing. After that, I always packed the crayons in a zip-sealed bag. It is more important for Katie to go places and experience new things than it is for me to worry about whether or not she will make too much noise!



Vacation and holidays

Both adults and children can enjoy family vacations and holidays, but keep in mind that new environments, even fun ones, can stress a child's routine and, therefore, the child's sense of well-being. Avoid problems by planning ahead.

When preparing children for new environments or changes in routine:

I Can

- Prepare the child for a trip by showing pictures, videotapes, DVDs or movies of the destinations;
- Make a picture book of activities planned as part of the trip;
- Hang pictures of the vacation site in the child's room;
- Talk about previous trips;
- Buy postcards for the child to send to family and friends while on the trip;
- Make sure to do things the child likes to do while on vacation;
- Try to limit the number of new experiences;
- Keep the schedule simple;
- Take things that bring comfort, such as a special blanket or toy;
- Allow the child to help plan the activities;
- Limit the amount of time in the car, and make frequent stops;
- Try short trips at first, and gradually increase the length of trips; and
- Call ahead to make sure the destination has the things needed, such as ramps, child-care services and medical facilities.



A PARENT REFLECTS: A Family Vacation

When we wanted to go on vacation, we let our children choose the place. They wanted to go to the beach! I always want to do things as a family, but I knew it would not be a vacation for me if we took our daughter Michelle to the beach. She loves water, but would drink half the ocean, and I pictured sand in her mouth, eyes - well you get the picture. Also, one of the goals for my husband and me was to spend time with our other children. To do that, we had to make a choice: leave our daughter home, change our plans or forget our goal. We brainstormed and talked with members of our extended family who lived near the beach. As things turned out, we spent part of our vacation as a family, and Michelle spent part of her vacation with her cousins while the rest of us were at the beach.





Special situations

Special situations call for planning. Here are some suggestions to help things go smoothly.

Visitors

When children show off, are rude or demand attention when visitors come to the house:

- I Can**
 - Remember that this is a common behavior;
 - Ask the visitor to pay attention to the child for a brief period of time;
 - Let the child help serve the visitor a snack or drink;
 - Give the child a choice, for example, “You can play with your toys here by yourself, or you can play in your room”;
 - Reinforce the child’s appropriate behavior; and
 - Use social stories before guests come as a way of helping the child learn about having visitors.

Medical Appointments

Before the appointment with a doctor, dentist or therapist:

- I Can**
 - Schedule appointment times when the child is well rested, such as after a nap;
 - Schedule one or two other errands the same day, so the appointment is balanced with enjoyable activities;
 - Whatever the child’s age, talk about the experience a day or two before the appointment;
 - Be positive;
 - Watch DVDs about medical visits with the child;
 - Read books and share stories about visiting a specialist;
 - Point out and name the equipment, then explain how it is used;
 - Listen to the child’s concerns and answer any questions. Clear up any misconceptions. Be truthful;
 - Respect the child’s feelings and fears;

- Encourage the child to prepare questions for the doctor;



- Role play or use toys to show what will happen at the specialist’s office;
- Engage in play with a doctor’s kit to let the child feel in control;
- Contact the specialist’s office to see if the child can tour or meet the staff before the visit;
- Ask the doctor whether the child should be given a pain reliever before the appointment;
- Suggest that the medical staff person use a dab of anesthetic skin cream before giving the child a shot; and
- Hold the child on a familiar lap for shots or medications.

While in the waiting area:

- I Can**
 - Bring a snack or drink;
 - Bring quiet toys;
 - Read a favorite story together;
 - Bring a favorite toy or item to provide comfort;
 - Be careful about germs on toys in the waiting area; and
 - Use hand sanitizer.

During the visit:

- I Can** • Build a relationship with all the staff; know everyone by name;
- Take happy photos of the child with the medical personnel;
- Use a calm, reassuring voice to talk with the child;
- Help the child ask questions and communicate; and
- Listen to the specialist and follow all of his or her instructions.

After the visit:

- I Can** • Talk with the child about the visit;
- Let the child play with the photos;
- Talk about people at the office and what they do;
- Be aware that the child might be fussy or sore after having immunizations;
- Plan to go somewhere special for a treat; and
- Give the child extra love and attention.

Hospitalization

Before the visit:

- I Can** • Remain calm; keep a positive attitude;
- Learn about the treatments and procedures, asking medical staff “what” and “why” before every procedure or medication;
- Build a relationship with the medical staff; they are the best resources for addressing problems that may arise. Use staff members’ names when appropriate;
- Ask if there is a Child Life Program and request the services of a Child Life specialist to help understand the hospital experience;
- Have the child help pack items to bring to the hospital;
- Watch appropriate DVDs with the child that the hospital may have available;



- Read children’s books about being in a hospital;
- Arrange for the child to talk with another child or friend who was in the hospital recently;
- Visit the hospital before the child is hospitalized;
- Talk with the child about who will be there and who he will know;
- Listen to the child and try to answer her questions;
- Talk about what to expect for the specific treatment;
- Talk with the child about where he will sleep and who will be there with him;
- Use toys to pretend being in the hospital, to help the child become familiar with people and routines; and
- Obtain a new or sterilized doctor’s mask, cap, gown or other piece of equipment for the child to use in pretend play. This will help reduce the child’s fear of people in surgical garb and hospital uniforms.

While in the hospital:

- I Can** • Put the child’s favorite items around the room;
- Play familiar music to soothe the child and make the room feel more like home;
- Bring family photos so the child has familiar faces to enjoy. Laminate some special ones to put on a key ring so the child has a set to keep;
- Review the room and equipment in the room, to make sure the child is safe;
- Ask the staff to follow the appropriate procedures, like wearing gloves, to protect the child as well as the staff;
- Encourage the child to ask questions about the routines, treatments or equipment;
- Provide comfort and security to the child through touching and holding;
- Teach slow, easy breathing as a way to relax;
- Talk to the child about what is happening and what might happen next;
- Prepare the child for unscheduled transitions;
- Take photographs for the family album. Laminate these so the child can play with them and use them to talk about the experience;

- Plan a schedule with the family and friends so that someone the child knows is always at the hospital;
- Plan some breaks and rest times for caregivers without feeling guilty; and
- Take time to spend with the other children or family members.

After leaving the hospital:



- Make sure family members understand and follow any special instructions;
- Have contact information, and know who to call when questions arise;
- Have appropriate food and snacks at home for special diets;
- Talk with the child about the hospital experiences; and
- Put the photographs in a book while remembering good and not-so-good times.

Giving Medicines

When children need medication:



- Give the child the medicine that was meant for her, not for a sibling or another child;
- Give the child the right medicine at the right time;

- Give the child the right dosage of medicine;
- Use the syringe, oral dropper, dosing spoon or medication cup that came with the medicine;
- Check to see that the measures match the prescription;
- Understand the abbreviations (“TBSP” or “T” for tablespoon and” tsp” or “t” for teaspoon);
- Use the right method for giving the medicine (by mouth, on the skin, in the ear);
- Read and follow special directions (for example, “shake before using,” “refrigerate,” “take with food”);
- Provide the right dosage at the right time (such as the amount of time between doses, right before bed, before eating);
- Keep a log of when to give medicine;
- Use a timer or cell phone alarm to remind us when to give medication;
- Know about possible reactions to the medication;
- Call the doctor or pharmacist if something is wrong after the child takes the medicine;
- Be patient if the child has difficulty taking medicine; and
- Ask other family members for help.





Going to school

Transition from Home to School

Children are constantly on the go. They encounter a variety of changes throughout their days, months and years. Changes are an inevitable part of life, and they vary in degree. For example, children change activities many times during a day at home, but they experience more demanding changes when they move from their home learning environment to preschool and school.

Parents can help their children make transitions, successfully working with service providers. It takes careful advanced planning, and the procedures follow specific guidelines. For example, families and service providers put much thought and energy into planning the transition process for children moving to a new setting (such as early intervention, preschool special education, Head Start and community preschool). As they explore new programs, to establish coordination and continuity of services, clear paths of communication between the families and service providers must be developed. Families always have the right to accept or reject supports and services that are offered for meeting the needs of their children.

All transitions, whether they occur on a daily basis or once in a lifetime, can be stressful for children and their families. For more information on transitions, visit the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Health Web sites listed on page 42 of this book.

Before children go to preschool:



- Visit the classroom with the child;
- Meet the child's teacher and school principal or director;
- Tour the school;
- Talk with parents of the child's classmates;
- Attend the school's registration and orientation activities;
- Talk to the child's teacher about entering school;
- Invite the child's teacher to visit the home; and
- Attend the school's open house for families and children.

A PARENT REFLECTS:

What did you do at school today?

I suddenly felt left out when Heather started preschool. In early intervention, I had been with her the entire time. Now that she was in preschool, there were times I did not talk to her teacher for weeks. Heather could not tell me what she made in class that day, what she ate, what books she read or what songs she sang. I felt like I was losing touch. Then, her teacher Carol and I made a checklist that goes back and forth to school everyday. On it, I give Carol information about what happens at home, and Carol lets me know what happens at school. (For example, did Heather use her words to solve conflicts? Did she help at clean-up time? Did she go to the toilet? What job did she do that morning?) The checklist also includes space where we can write notes or ask questions. Our checklist includes the goals on Heather's individualized education program, and using the checklist I get a really good picture of what Heather does each day. It takes only a few minutes to complete, and I feel much more in touch with my child's education and much more of an equal partner in it.

When children go to preschool:



- Learn the names of the other children in the child's class, so we can talk about them at home;
- Make a picture book of classmates to help the child develop skills like naming, sorting, matching and counting;
- Visit the child's class;
- Offer to help with classroom projects;

- Learn the songs, finger plays and games used at school and do them at home;
- Help the child make and send special messages (using either pictures or written or recorded stories) to teachers and classmates; and
- Get a notebook for the child to take back and forth to school for communicating with the teacher.

When children resist going to preschool:

- I Can**
- Try to find the source of the problem (is it the bus ride, bus driver, teacher, other child or children, meals, teasing, school routine?);
 - Fill a scrapbook with pictures of family and friends to look at while at school;
 - Make plans ahead of time with the teacher to give the child chances to share a favorite book, pet, toy or snack with the class;
 - Get a calendar of school activities, so the child can know what will be happening the next day; and
 - Invite the teacher to the home.



Riding the Bus

When children ride the bus to preschool:

- I Can**
- Make a simple *I Ride the Bus to School* book that includes pictures of people who ride the bus and a sequence of pictures that the child sees while riding the bus;
 - Help the child make a card or gift for the bus driver at holidays;
 - Sing “The Wheels on the Bus,” and include names of the other children who ride the bus as part of the song;
 - Help the child understand “time” by giving verbal or visual cues to indicate when the bus will arrive; and
 - Remember that any activity a child enjoys is an opportunity to expand the child’s understanding of the activity. This can include identifying the color of the bus; naming other

people on the bus; naming places the bus passes; talking about what the child will see first, next and last; or reviewing the bus rules.

When a child is afraid of bus noise:

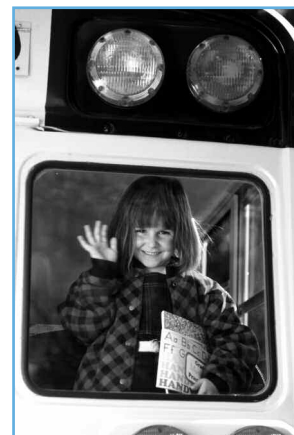
- I Can**
- Prepare the child before the bus arrives by describing the regular routine;
 - Warn the child that the bus may make loud noises;
 - Make a tape recording of different sounds, including bus noises, and guess what they are by listening;
 - Point to a picture of something that makes loud noises, name it and make the noise; or
 - Provide the child with earphones.

When a child does not like to ride the bus:

- I Can**
- Talk with the child to understand the problem;
 - Consider if there is a difference in behavior on days the child goes to school and days he does not, asking whether the routine could be more consistent;
 - Make arrangements with the bus driver for the child to sit up front or with a friend; or
 - Ask if it is possible for the child to have music on the bus.

When a child has toilet accidents on the bus:

- I Can**
- Make sure the child uses the toilet before getting on the bus (when leaving school and leaving home);
 - Limit the amount the child drinks before getting on the bus; and
 - Have the child wear pull-ups on the bus.





Child care

The first years of a child's life are critical to the child's development. Research shows that when children experience safe and healthy attention, they have improved development. Children whose parents and caregivers nurture them and provide them with meaningful experiences are much more likely to be successful when they enter kindergarten. Parents should be aware of ways they can make the most of every opportunity for their children to learn.

Many children, including those with disabilities and special needs, spend some time in a child-care environment. Finding a quality child-care setting is one of the most important decisions a parent will ever make. A variety of guidelines and resources are available to help make the right choice.

Selecting Child Care

Some general guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) will help focus your search for good child care:

- Preschool and child-care programs should focus on children, not the caregivers' needs;
- Preschool and child-care programs should have qualified staff; and
- Preschool and child-care programs should build relationships with children's families.

ChildCareAware, a nonprofit program of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), provides a variety of articles and checklists to guide parents in choosing a preschool or child-care setting. NACCRRA suggests five steps for choosing quality child care:

1. Start early. Start looking as far in advance as you can. No matter what type of care you are considering – a child-care center or care in someone's home – finding the right child-care option can take some time.
2. Make a call. Begin your search by calling your local experts – your Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) center. CCR&Rs can give you the facts about child care and a list of child-care options in your area that may meet your needs. Make sure to ask your CCR&R these things:

- What are the licensing requirements for child-care providers in my area?
- How can I get information about possible complaints against a child-care provider and/or any licensing violations?
- Does my family qualify for any child-care financial assistance programs?

3. Visit and ask questions at each child-care provider you are considering. Research these key indicators of quality:

- *Adult-to-child ratio:* Ask how many children there are for each adult. The fewer the number of children for each adult, the better for your child. You want your child to get plenty of attention. The younger your child, the more important this is. Babies need an adult-to-child ratio of no more than 1:4 (one adult for four infants), while 4-year-olds can do well with a ratio of 1:10 (one adult for 10 children).
- *Group size:* Find out how many children are in the group. The smaller the group, the better. Imagine a group of 25 2-year-olds with five adults, compared to a group of 10 with two adults. Both groups have the same adult-to-child ratio. Which would be calmer and safer? Which would be more like a family?
- *Caregiver qualifications:* Ask about the caregivers' training and education. Caregivers with degrees and/or special training for working with children will be better able to help your child learn. Are the caregivers involved in activities or programs to improve their skills? Do they attend classes and workshops?
- *Turnover:* Check how long caregivers have been at the center or providing care in their homes. It is best if the child stays with the same caregiver at least a year. Caregivers who come and go make it hard on your child. Getting used to new caregivers takes time and energy that could be spent on learning new things.
- *Accreditation:* Find out if the child-care provider has been accredited by a national organization. Providers who are accredited have met voluntary standards for child care that are higher than most state licensing

requirements. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are the two largest organizations that accredit child-care programs.

4. Make a choice. Think about what you saw at each visit, and make the best choice for your child and family.
5. Stay involved. The work isn't over when you find good care for your child. You and your child's caregiver are now partners. Here are some ways to be involved:
 - Meet with the caregiver regularly, and ask questions;
 - Offer to volunteer time, when needed, such as participating in clean-up day or fixing broken toys;
 - Be there for your child's birthday party;
 - Visit your child at child care, and read a book aloud; and
 - Join in special events such as field trips, career day or other celebrations.

ChildCareAware also provides information about quality child care for a child with special needs. In a quality child-care environment, caregivers respond positively to differences in children's abilities, interests and experiences. Children with and without disabilities develop an appreciation of each other and of individual differences. Your child with special needs will grow and learn physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially alongside his or her peers. In addition, your child will be interacting positively, learning from and making friends with a diverse group of children in a "natural environment," as provided for by federal law.

IMPORTANT: NACCRRA and the Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association (OCCRRA) provide information that can assist you in your child-care decisions. Responsibility for choosing a child-care provider rests solely with the parent or guardian. The names you obtain from child-care resource and referral services are referrals only. OCCRRA and its member agencies do not license, recommend, endorse, guarantee, control or regulate any child-care resource provided through their referral service.





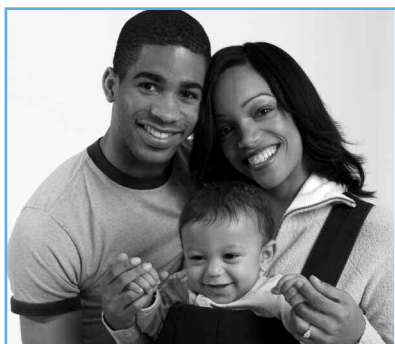
Taking care of parents

A PARENT REFLECTS: Don't Let the Well Get Dry

Whether it is being involved in school activities, choosing insurance policies, seeking a job or looking for a car, parents of children with special needs have to consider more variables than other families. Others may or may not agree with their choices, but it's the parents who live with the consequences. Parents may be so overwhelmed from dealing with day-to-day life that what may seem to be a simple request of time may be too difficult to accommodate. Parents and their children need to have fun, and even that requires a lot of effort for some of us. Parents need time to be parents. They need time to be spouses, and they need time for themselves. Parents need time for relationships with friends.

When parents feel anxious or upset about children's difficult behavior, it is important to:

- Choose to calm down;
- Call a friend or family member; we all need help at times;
- Find a safe spot for the child, then put some space between us;
- Remember to use a calm, respectful tone with the child;
- Whatever the child's age, use a tag-team method with a spouse, friend or close family member;



- Talk honestly and openly with others about feelings of anger;
- Help the child learn how to express his emotions when he is not upset;
- Reduce daily stress through a predictable routine and by planning "down time" together during especially hectic days;

- Choose not to feel guilty for taking self-time or for spending playtime with the child;



- Talk to other people in the child's life who may be less familiar with infant soothing or self-coping practices; and
- Use the *12 Alternatives to Whacking Your Kid* by the Wisconsin Committee for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect:
 - Stop in your tracks. Step back. Sit down.
 - Take five deep breaths. Inhale. Exhale. Slowly, slowly.
 - Count to 10. Better yet, 20. Or say the alphabet out loud.
 - Phone a friend, a relative, even the weather number.
 - If still mad, punch a pillow; or munch an apple.

- Thumb through a magazine, book, newspaper or photo album.
- Do some sit-ups.
- Pick up a pencil and write down thoughts.
- Take a hot bath or a cold shower.
- Lie down on the floor, or just put your feet up.
- Put on favorite music.
- Water plants.

Parents have a right to:

- Set aside time for themselves when they are sure the children are safe;
- Ask for help as often as they need it;
- Have “dates” with spouses;
- Close the bathroom door and not be bothered;
- Call friends or family members just to blow off steam;
- Say “no” to others;
- Make decisions that family and friends may not agree with;
- Make a mistake or a wrong decision;
- Eat a meal before it gets cold;
- Set aside time for each child individually;

- Be emotional;
- Be creative in developing solutions for dealing with everyday life;
- Say they don’t know the answer;
- Have days of temporary insanity;
- Say that it can’t be done alone;
- Not take everything said by professionals to heart;
- Hold onto hopes and dreams;
- Eat the last cookie in the house;
- Cry, even when they are happy;
- Throw up their hands and say, “I am not doing this today!”;
- Try new ways of solving problems;
- Have an uninterrupted telephone conversation;
- Just be a parent and have fun;
- Speak up and have someone listen;
- Not like “The Wiggles” and their antics;
- Get out of the house;
- Ask hard questions and receive honest answers;
- Say, “I don’t think that is any of your business!”;
- Seek a second or even third opinion; and
- Pursue life, liberty and a full night’s sleep.





Resources for parents

OHIO ORGANIZATIONS	TO CONTACT	WEB SITE
Brain Injury Association of Ohio	(866) 644-6242	www.biaoh.org
Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps (BCMh) (Ohio Department of Health)	(800) 755-4769	www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/cmh/cwmh/bcmh1.aspx
Family Child Learning Center – Family Information Network (FIN)	(330) 633-2055	www.familychild.org/fin/FIN.htm
Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association (OCCRA)	(877) 547-6978	www.occra.org
Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)	(866) 886-2254	www.ocali.org
Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD)	(800) 374-2806	www.ocecd.org
Ohio Department of Education: Office of Early Learning and School Readiness (ODE/OELSR)	(614) 466-0224	www.education.ohio.gov , keyword search: ELSR
Ohio Department of Education: Parent Mentor Project	(614) 752-1378	www.education.ohio.gov , keyword search: parent mentors
Ohio Department of Health (ODH) home page	(614) 466-3543	www.odh.ohio.gov
Ohio Department of Health: Help Me Grow (ODH_HMG)	(800) 755-4769	www.ohiohelpmegrow.org
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)		Call your county office, listed at http://jfs.ohio.gov/county/cntydir.stm
Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH)	(877) 275-6364	www.mh.state.oh.us
Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (ODMRDD)	(877) 464-6733	www.odmrdd.state.oh.us
Ohio Department of Public Safety: Buckle Us Up. Be Seat Wise! Use Safety Belts Properly, item # HSY7501 Always Buckle Children In The Back Seat, item #HSY7704 Safety Belt Use During Pregnancy, item # HSY7745		www.publicsafety.ohio.gov
Ohio Protection and Advocacy Organization	(800) 672-1220	www.ohioprotectionadvocacy.org
Prevent Child Abuse, Ohio A Step-by-Step Guide to Helping Us Prevent Child Abuse (free download)	(800) CHILDREN	www.pcao.org
United Services for Effective Parenting of Ohio, Inc. (USEP-OHIO)	(614) 868-8600 (800) 262-4KID	http://www.usepohio.com/ Web site under development at this printing.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	TO CONTACT	WEB SITE
American Council for the Blind	(800) 424-8666	www.acb.org
American Foundation for the Blind	(800) 232-5463	www.afb.org
American Society for Deaf Children	(800) 942-2732	www.deafchildren.org
Apraxia-KIDS		www.apraxia-kids.org/
The Arc of the United States (Advocacy organization serving children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities)	(301) 565-3842 (800) 433-5255	www.thearc.org
Autism Society of America (ASA)	(800) 328-8476	www.autism-society.org
Center for the Study of Autism		www.autism.org
Child Care Aware	(800) 424-2246	www.childcareaware.org/en/
Children's Tumor Foundation	(800) 323-7938	www.ctf.org
Cleft Palate Foundation	(800) 242-5338	www.cleftline.org
Cornelia DeLange Syndrome Foundation, Inc.	(800) 753-2357	www.cdlsusa.org
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation	(800) 344-4823	www.cff.org
DB-LINK, The National Information Clearinghouse on Children Who Are Deaf-Blind	(800) 438-9376	www.tr.wou.edu/dblink
Do2Learn: Activities parents can use to promote independence		www.do2learn.com
Division for Early Childhood	(406) 543-0872	www.dec-sped.org
Evenflo. Safe Passage: What You Need to Know. Proper Selection and Use of Child Restraints	(800) 233-5921	www.evenflo.com
Epilepsy Foundation of America	(800) 332-1000	www.epilepsyfoundation.org
American Academy of Pediatrics: Early Education and Child Care Initiatives	(888) 227-5409	www.healthychildcare.org
Family Village		familyvillage@waisman.wisc.edu www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/
Family Voices	(888) 835-5669	www.familyvoices.org
The Fathers Network		www.fathersnetwork.org
FIRST WORDS Project	(850) 488-5780	http://firstwords.fsu.edu/
<i>Healthy Kids, Healthy Care</i> (publication of the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education)	(800) 598-5437	www.healthykids.us/
International Rett Syndrome	(800) 818-7388	www.rettssyndrome.org
Harvey Karp: The Happiest Baby on the Block		www.thehappiestbaby.com
The Listen Up Web (specializing in information for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing)		www.listen-up.org
Mayo Clinic		www.mayoclinic.com

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (cont.)	TO CONTACT	WEB SITE
National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	(800) 424-2460	www.naeyc.org
National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments	(800) 562-6265	www.spedex.com/napvi/
National Association for Sickle Cell Disease	(800) 421-8453	www.sicklecelldisease.org
National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies	(703) 341-4100	www.naccrra.org
National Brain Injury Association of America	(800) 444-6443	www.biausa.org
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disorders (NCBDDD)	(800) 232-4636	www.cdc.gov/ncbddd
National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC)	(800) 616-2242	http://nccic.org
National Deaf Education Network and Clearinghouse	(202) 651-5051	http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu
National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)	(800) 695-0285	www.nichcy.org
National Down Syndrome Society	(800) 221-4602	www.ndss.org
National Easter Seals Society	(800) 221-6827	www.easterseals.com
National Fragile X Foundation	(800) 688-8765	www.nxf.org
National Health Information Center (NHIC)	(800) 336-4797	www.health.gov/nhic
National Organization for Rare Disorders, Inc. (NORD)	(800) 999-6673	www.rarediseases.org
ARCH National Respite Network	(919) 490-5577	http://chtop.org/ARCH/
Safe Kids Worldwide	(800) 441-1888	www.safekids.org
Nemours Foundation: KidsHealth	(202) 662-0600	www.kidshealth.org
Parenting Exchange: Stephens, K. (2007). The Complete Parenting Exchange Library (CD)		www.ParentingExchange.com
PEAK Parent Center	(800) 284-0251	www.peakparent.org
Spina Bifida Association of America	(800) 621-3141	www.sbaa.org
TeachNet		www.teachnet.com
United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)	(800) 872-5827	www.ucp.org
Zero to Three	(202) 638-1144	www.zerotothree.org

Contributors



Early Childhood Services Coordinators who serve on the Ohio Department of Education's 16 regional State Support Teams (SSTs) lent their knowledge and expertise to the production of *Living, Learning and Playing Together: A Guide for Parents of Preschool Children*. The Office of Early Learning and School Readiness thanks these individuals:

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