

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



November 2021

Early Intervention Program

Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV

Develop your preschooler's ability to think and communicate in detail

In school, your child will be asked to talk about her ideas and experiences. The more details and description she can give, the more thinking she will be doing—and the better she will be able to communicate her thoughts. As she gets older, detailed communication will become important for writing as well as speaking.



To develop your child's skills:

- **Provide a model.** When you talk to her, flesh out basic information with details. Instead of saying "We're going out," try "We are going to the store this afternoon. I need to get some vegetables and a box of crackers. You can help me pick them out."
- **Ask her to tell you about her work.** When your child produces a drawing, for example, get the story behind it. Which part did she do first? Why did she choose the colors she did?
- **Help her recount events in sequence.** For example, ask "What are some of the things you do after dinner and before bed?" If she's not sure, give her a prompt. "You brush your teeth. Then what do you do?"
- **Encourage her to give details.** If your child tells you that she went out to the playground, ask questions that will help her recall more of that experience. "What did you do there? Did you like playing on the swings or the slide more?" "Who was playing with you on the playground?"



Fill daily life with new experiences

Every new thing your child learns contributes to his body of knowledge. And relating new experiences to what he already knows helps him learn more. Introduce your child to a variety of new activities. Together, you can:

- **Search for signs** of the season when you are out together. Fall leaves, turkey decorations, orange pumpkins, different kinds of corn or squash.
- **Try a dish** from another culture. New foods are a tasty way to learn about other people.
- **Take a ride** on a new form of transportation. Discuss all the interesting things you pass.
- **Go outside** and look at the buildings and landscape. Point out shapes and colors. Ask your child to describe sounds he hears.
- **Explore a new place.** Take your child somewhere he's never been before—a local museum, an outdoor market, a car dealership.
- **Talk to new people.** Does your child know your mail carrier? The neighbor who just moved in?

Read for the fun of it

Having fun with reading is a serious way to help your child build reading skills. Children who enjoy reading do more of it! To make reading with you a pleasure:

- **Pick times** when your child seems to enjoy reading most.
- **Choose books** that match her interests.
- **Get comfy.** Snuggle up in a nest of pillows or in a favorite rocking chair.
- **Read with emotion.**
- **Take your time.** Let your child look at each page and ask questions.



Schedule time to let loose

Learning to stick with a task is part of being a student. But it isn't the only part! To teach your child that there's a time for everything, give him a chance to run around and be noisy after he completes a task. He'll learn that he can let off steam after working at home, and understand that he is capable of waiting until recess to let loose at school.



Practice ways to end conflict

Preschoolers often act on their feelings without thinking—and that can create conflicts with others. For everyone's safety, children need to learn how to resolve these conflicts peacefully. Teach your child to:

- **Say "Stop! I don't like that"** when being provoked by another child. If the other child won't stop, your preschooler should tell an adult.
- **Use words or phrases** instead of hitting or fighting. "It's my turn now, please." "Ow, you bumped my arm."
- **Walk away** to a safe distance from the other person.



Does my child really need pricey educational toys?

Q: The holidays are approaching, and I am overwhelmed by how much the educational toys seem to cost. Will my child's learning suffer because I can't afford them?

A: Many toys these days are so complex that they pretty much do the playing while the child just watches. But educators agree that thinking is one of the most critical parts of play. That's why they suggest simple toys that let your child use his thinking skills to decide how to play with them. A few basic enjoyable toys—along with books and puzzles—are all your child needs.

To encourage learning, look for toys that:

- **Inspire imagination**, such as toy animals, action figures and toy cars. As he plays with them, your child can make up stories and pretend. Even an empty cardboard box can provide hours of creative fun.
- **Can be used alone or in groups**. Sharing toys builds social skills. A simple toy, such as a ball, can be used both ways.
- **Are safe**. Toys with lots of little parts or sharp edges are more likely to cause accidental injury to your child than simpler toys, like blocks.
- **Your child will want to come back to**. Each time your child takes out a box of simple dress up clothes, (cap, hats, etc.) he will think of a new way to play.



Are you fostering respect for property?

Teaching children to respect themselves and others improves school learning environments. Respect for property is also important. Are you teaching your child to treat belongings with respect? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you assign** places for your child to store items, such as a bin for blocks or a container for crayons?
- ___ **2. Do you include** clean up in your play routine? "Before we get out a new game, let's put away the one we just played."
- ___ **3. Do you discuss** the benefits of respecting others' belongings? "If you treat Dad's rake with care, I'm sure he'll let you use it again."
- ___ **4. Do you praise** your child when she shows respect for property?

- ___ **5. Do you set** an example by treating property, including your child's, with respect?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child learn to treat property properly. For each no, try that idea.

"Civility requires that we express ourselves in ways that demonstrate our respect for others."
—Stephen Carter

Give your child directions

In school, students need to be able to follow directions. Help your child practice in engaging ways. Encourage him to:

- **Help out around the house**. Choose tasks that interest your child. Maybe he likes setting the table or watering plants. Then give him specific directions: "Fill the watering can. Touch the plant's soil. If it feels dry, water the plant."
- **Learn new board games**. Board games have rules that often need repeating. That's OK—it gives your child opportunities to listen and follow along. Just make sure he's enjoying the game, too.

Button up some math skills

Numbers aren't just words to recite. To build your child's understanding of what numbers represent, help her see and touch them:

- **Count aloud** while you button each button on your child's shirt: "One, two, three."
- **Put some buttons** on the table. Have your child touch each one as you both count aloud. Mix them up and count again. The number stays the same! Now remove a few and recount.
- **Have your child sort** the buttons by size and shape, number of holes and color. Each time she sorts, have her count the piles. Supervise as she does this.



Spread one name around

Use the familiar shapes of your child's name to boost his reading and writing readiness. Here are some easy ways:

- **Label items** like your child's bedroom door, coat hook and toys with his name. Capitalize the first letter.
- **Use fun materials** to help your child write his name: glue and glitter, sticks in sand. He could even try to shape letters out of dough or yarn.

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