

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



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Early Intervention Program
Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV

Teach your preschooler how to end conflicts without fighting

Preschoolers are impulsive. When they are upset with another person, they often act without thinking—and that can lead to trouble. Helping your child learn to resolve conflicts peacefully will improve his relationships with classmates and friends.



Teach your child that when he feels mad he should:

- **Use words.** Teach him to say “Stop” when another child is provoking him. Practice calmly saying, “Stop that. I don’t like that.” Give him examples of other phrases he can use. “It’s my turn now, please.” “It hurt when you bumped into me.”
- **Walk away** and tell an adult if the other child won’t stop when your child asks.
- **Keep his hands to himself.** Make it clear that hitting and other physical violence is *always* wrong. If your child hits, or another child hits him, separate them immediately. Say, “Hitting hurts. Hitting is not allowed.”

To help your child cope with his anger, suggest things he can do to vent this strong emotion. Outdoor options include running, jumping or even a loud yell. Indoors, he could draw a picture of his feelings.

Source: “Everybody Gets Mad: Helping Your Child Cope with Conflict,” American Academy of Pediatrics, nswc.com/nofights.



Establish habits for school success

Many of the things you can do to make sure your child’s preschool years are the best they can be will continue to be important throughout her school career. Establish these habits now to support your child for years to come:

- **Follow routines at home.** Children thrive when they have regular times to eat, sleep, play, read, etc.
- **Create daily rituals** your child will look forward to, like reading together before bedtime.
- **Encourage rule-abiding** behavior. Talk about classroom rules with your child. Never tell her you think a rule is silly.
- **Stay up-to-date** on school news. Read the information the school sends home.
- **Stay in contact** with your child’s teachers. Ask how you can help your child learn.
- **Show a positive attitude** about school.
- **Assure your child** that she has what it takes to work hard and learn.

Math can be delicious!

Serve up some mealtime math to build your child’s skills in a tasty way. You might say, “Here is a slice of banana. Here are two more. Now how many do you have?” Or explain that the two halves of his sandwich are triangles (or rectangles). What shape do they make when he puts them together?



Board games have benefits

Playing board games with your child is a fun, screen-free way to increase her concentration, develop cooperation and encourage sportsmanship. To keep her interested:

- **Choose games** with simple rules and themes geared to preschoolers.
- **Help your child count** out loud as she moves around the board.
- **Ask questions**, such as, “What do you think will happen if we draw this card?” or, “Which space do I move to now?”

Cheer your child on when she plays fair, follows directions and takes turns—not just when she wins.

Find new things to learn on a neighborhood tour

Whenever you help your child experience new things—or familiar things in new ways—you are helping him learn. Bundle up and take a walk around your neighborhood together. Notice the buildings and activities around you. Ask your child to:

- **Describe** shapes and colors he sees.
- **Close his eyes** and describe the sounds he hears.
- **Tell you** what is different in winter than in summer.





How can I teach my child to care for herself and others?

Q: I think it is important to encourage my daughter's self-esteem. But I also want her to develop a sense of responsibility. How can I do both?

A: These goals mesh nicely. Learning to fulfill responsibilities at home will prepare your child to succeed in school. At the same time, accomplishing new things and contributing to the family will help her see herself as a capable, valuable person.

To get started:

- **Assign your child** some simple chores to do around the house. A preschooler can water a plant or scoop dry food into a pet's bowl. When she completes a chore, say "Thank you. That was very helpful."
- **Forget about perfection.** If your child folds a towel, it will probably not look as smooth as if you had folded it. Don't fix it. Let your child have the satisfaction of knowing she did it herself.
- **Involve your child in decisions** that affect the family, when appropriate. Listen to her ideas with respect. For example, you might ask her what she thinks the family should eat for dinner. If it's reasonable, have her help you prepare it.



Do you pave the way for transitions?

Ending one activity and moving on to another is a challenge for many preschoolers. But these transitions are frequent in an elementary school day. Are you making transitions easier for your child? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you tell** your child what to expect? "We are going to the park to play ball, and then we will come home and read."
2. **Do you give** your child a job to do during transitions? "Please let me know when you can see the park entrance."
3. **Do you use** objects to help your child move from one activity to another? "Let's take this book home to show Dad."
4. **Do you explain** in advance what will happen during an unfamiliar activity?

5. **Do you establish** goodbye rituals? "Kiss Grandma, then we'll go."

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are smoothing your child's way through transitions. For each no, try that idea.

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

—John F. Kennedy

Strike a balance in your preschooler's schedule

When choosing activities for your child, it's critical to make sure his schedule is enriching, not overwhelming. Be sure to:

- **Put** family time first.
- **Keep** your child's abilities in mind.
- **Listen.** If he repeatedly says he doesn't want to do an activity, don't force it.
- **Allow** for free time. All children need plenty of unscheduled hours. But don't let free time turn into screen time.

Source: Dr. Veritas, "3 Ways Over-scheduling Can Hurt Your Kids," American College of Pediatricians, niscw.com/balance.

Explain, don't bribe

Some parents make deals with their kids. "If you do ... , I'll give you" But these deals are really just bribes. They teach kids to focus on what they can get, rather than on doing what's right. Instead, explain why the action you want your child to take is helpful.



"Please put your mittens in the box in the closet. Then we won't waste time looking for them before we leave and we'll have time to read an extra story."

Share reading pleasure on Family Reading Night

Excite your child's interest in reading by showing her that it is something the whole family enjoys! Gather frequently for a Family Reading Night.

Let your child look at a favorite book while everyone else reads something that interests them. After 10 minutes or so, ask your child to tell you about her book. Then read it aloud to her. Share a snack and talk about what you each like about your books and reading.

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