

# Helping Children Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

EARLY CHILDHOOD



March 2018

Early Intervention Program  
Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV

## Map a route to geography learning for your preschooler

Studies have shown that young children can—and should—start learning about geography. The journey starts with reinforcing your child's knowledge of her own surroundings and continues as she learns about the larger world.

To get started:

- **Explore your home** and neighborhood together. Which rooms are next to one another? Take a walk and point out important landmarks—your neighbors' homes, the store, library, etc.—and how they relate to your home.
- **Help your child make a simple map** or model of your street. She could use crayons, paper and stickers—or building blocks, train set parts and other toys. Then, ask her a few questions, such as "Where is our home on this map? What is next door? How do we get to the park from where we live?"
- **Read books with your child** about different places people live—big cities, little towns, farms. Talk about what they are like around the world.
- **Find a globe**, world map poster or floor puzzle. Show your child where her ancestors or friends came from. Ask her what she thinks life is like in those faraway places. To give her an idea, share photographs of the landscape, people or animals. Tell stories or sing songs.



## Collect weather words

March is famous for its changeable weather, so it's perfect for increasing your child's vocabulary. Each day, think of a weather word that suits the day—*blustery*, *mild*, *clear*, *frigid*—and talk about it with your child. Write it on your calendar. See if you can come up with a different word each day.

## Add variety to reading

You know that reading to your child builds his literacy skills. But *what* you read and *how* you read can make a difference, too. When reading aloud to your child:

- **Help him learn** about different kinds of writing. Expose him to fiction, poetry, biography, non-fiction and even instructions.
- **Encourage participation.** Many kids memorize their favorite books. When you're reading aloud, let your child chime in and "read," too.



Source: "Help Your Child Enjoy Reading Aloud: Tips for Parents," [Healthychildren.org](http://Healthychildren.org), American Academy of Pediatrics, [nswc.com/readingtips](http://nswc.com/readingtips).



## Nurture your child's 'can-do' attitude

A child who believes he can learn and make friends, and sets out to do so, has a jump on success in school. Recognize and encourage these signs of self-confidence in your preschooler:

- **Your child likes himself.** He seems comfortable with himself and is happy, most of the time, at home and at preschool. He rarely puts himself down.
- **Your child is optimistic.** He has a positive attitude and usually says things like, "I can do this!" and "That sounds fun!" When faced with an unfamiliar activity, he is willing to give it a try.
- **Your child has friends.** He believes that his friends like him. He looks forward to seeing them and thinks that they will have a nice time playing together.
- **Your child feels secure** around the adults in his life. He knows that you love him, even when he makes mistakes. He knows that teachers want to help him learn.

## Make a splash with science

Anytime is learning time for a preschooler. That includes bathtime!

Gather a large plastic bowl, some rubber animals, bubble bath solution and a drinking straw and do some watery science together. Have your child:

- **Float the bowl** on the water. Help her count how many rubber animals she can put into her "boat" before it sinks.
- **Pour a little bubble solution** into the bowl and add water. Help her use the straw to blow into the soapy water. How big can she make the bubbles? Talk about what causes bubbles to form.





## Can my child get enough sleep without napping?

**Q:** My four-year-old and I have frequent battles over naptime. He always says he isn't sleepy. But if I let him skip a nap, he is cranky from the late afternoon until bedtime. Or he falls asleep in the wrong places, like at the dinner table. Does he still need a nap?



**A:** Your son may dislike naps, but it sounds as though he still needs more sleep than he is getting. Few things are more important to a child's growth and success than adequate sleep. According to pediatricians, most four-year-olds need between 10 and 13 hours of sleep every 24 hours.

To help your child get enough sleep:

- **Set an earlier bedtime.** You may want more time with your child at the end of the day, but if he's fussing or sleeping in his supper, a later bedtime may not be the best choice at this time.
- **Establish a routine.** Try giving your child lunch at the same time every day, then having him lie down. It's natural to get sleepy after eating, and if he expects this routine every day, he may go back to napping.
- **Require quiet time.** You can't force your child to sleep. So if he won't, at least enforce an afternoon rest. For an hour after lunch, have him spend time in his room with books or quiet, non-electronic toys.



## Are you building pre-reading skills?

Learning about the alphabet and how letters make up words is an essential part of getting ready to read. Are you developing your child's awareness of written language? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you play** alphabet games with your child, such as matching pictures of items with the first letter in their names?
2. **Do you talk** with your child about the sounds letters make?
3. **Do you print** your child's name on her belongings and encourage her to write or scribble it, too?
4. **Does your child have** toys with letters on them, such as blocks or sponge cutouts?

5. **Do you point out** simple words your child sees often, such as *stop* or *in*?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are giving your child the building blocks of reading. For each no, try that idea.*

"The child learns while living and any part of living that is enjoyable is also play."

—Penelope Leach

## Support creative discovery

Children learn a lot from making art, and it's a great way for them to express themselves. To get your child's creative juices flowing:

- **Offer choices of art supplies.** They don't have to be fancy. Coffee filters, fabric scraps, egg cartons, catalogs and paper towel tubes are all fine choices.
- **Help your child get started.** If he wants to draw an airplane but isn't sure where to begin, prompt him with questions like, "What does a plane look like? How many wings does it have?"

Let your child make artistic choices for himself. The creation process is more important than the final product.

## Teach your child how to disagree politely

Help your child learn that, while it's OK to have different opinions and ideas from others, it's not OK to express them in destructive ways. To promote positive expression:

- **Demonstrate civility** by hearing your child out before correcting her gently.
- **Teach her polite words** she can use instead of aggressive actions.

## Design a Week of Senses

To teach your child about the five senses, assign each sense to a weekday. Plan an activity to do together to explore each day's sense. For example:

- **Monday**, pick a color and *look* for it everywhere you go.
- **Tuesday**, name the noises you *hear*.
- **Wednesday**, help your child *touch* things that have different textures.
- **Thursday**, *smell* different spices.
- **Friday**, give your child a new food to *taste*.



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