EARLY CHILDHOOD

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

September 2024

Early Intervention Program
Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV

Support reading readiness by having your child 'read' to you



Sharing books and reading together every day is a proven way to develop your child's readiness to read. But you don't always have to be the one doing the reading!

Even before children can read, they can pretend. Pretending to read builds their recall skills, print awareness, and confidence and motivation to learn to read.

To maximize results from pretend reading, try this process:

1. **Choose a book** with rhythmic or rhyming text and simple pictures.
2. **Read the book aloud** to your preschooler often. Your child will likely memorize most of the story.
3. **Discuss the pictures.** As you read, point to a picture and ask your child to tell you what it shows.
4. **Stop reading** when you get to a repeated or rhyming word. See if your child can supply it.
5. **Gradually leave out** more words until your child is telling the story.
6. **Ask your child to "read"** the story to you. Since this is really pretending rather than reading, it's OK if your preschooler changes the words.

Source: C.M. Cassano and S.M. Dogherty, *Pivotal Research in Early Literacy: Foundational Studies and Current Practices*, Guilford Press.

Teach your child to work with others

A recent study shows that preschoolers who make the initial transition into kindergarten easily do better academically all year long. And one factor that leads to a smooth transition is a child's ability to work with others.

To foster your child's kindergarten readiness, provide opportunities to practice cooperation skills.

Encourage your preschooler to:

- **Share with friends** and family. Encourage your child to take turns, let others play with toys and offer to share treats.
- **Play and cooperate** with others as a group. Invite classmates over or take your child to a playground.
- **Think about** other people's feelings. Understanding how others feel will help your child become more considerate. When reading, stop and ask questions, such as "How do you think this character felt after losing the game? What could the winner do to help?"

Source: J. Sun and others, "Big little leap: The role of transition difficulties in children's skill development during kindergarten," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Elsevier.

Demonstrate how to listen

When you listen and respond to your child's chatter, you help your preschooler strengthen listening skills—which students use in every class. To model attentive listening:

- **Offer your full attention,** even if it means putting down what you are doing. Make eye contact with your child.
- **Avoid interrupting.** Preschoolers need time to put their thoughts into words.
- **Ask questions** after your preschooler has finished talking. Restate what you hear to make sure you understand.
- **Take note** of your child's tone of voice, facial expressions and behavior. These often say more than words.

Give intelligence a boost



Your child's intelligence will continue to develop into adulthood, and you play an essential role in that development. To provide a boost:

- **Offer enriching experiences.** Visit new places, play games, read together.
- **Help your child learn by doing.** Sorting socks with you, for example, teaches your child to compare and classify.
- **Show your love.** This helps your child feel secure enough to take on challenges.

Source: N. Memon, "How Can I Make My Child Intelligent?" MedicineNet.

Build communication skills

Sequencing—recounting events in the order they happened—is a communication skill your child will need in school. To help your preschooler understand that one event follows another, ask questions about daily routines, like "What are some things you do *after* dinner and *before* bed?" Offer prompts if needed. "You brush your teeth. Then what do you do?"



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Q&A How can I add to my child's excitement about math?

Q: My child loves to count things—stairs we walk up, stop signs we pass in the car. How can I take this interest further and turn a love of counting into a love of math?



A: To expand your child's enjoyment and comfort with math, add a math element to all kinds of fun activities you do together every day.

Here are some easy ways to include some math when you and your child:

- **Visit the grocery store.** Ask your child to point to two gallons of milk. Or, ask "Which do you think weighs *more*, two lemons or one orange?" Then, help your child use the scale to weigh them and find out.
- **Cook together.** Preschoolers love to measure ingredients for baking. Show your child how you divide the finished dish into portions, or put equal numbers of cookies onto family members' plates.
- **Set the table.** Have your child make a pattern with the utensils: spoon, fork, spoon, fork. Gradually make the patterns more complicated.
- **Have conversations.** Include math words in your chats. For example, "Your shirt has three *round* buttons: *one*, *two*, *three*. My shirt has one *square* button. Who has *fewer* buttons?"

Parent Quiz Are you instilling an eagerness to learn?

Babies are born wanting to know about everything around them. Encouraging and providing outlets for this curiosity helps them grow into students who love learning. Are you raising an eager learner? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___**1. Do you wonder** out loud about things and try to find answers? Be a role model.

___**2. Do you show** you welcome your child's questions? Say things like, "That's a good question!"

___**3. Do you offer** your child items that can be safely taken apart and put back together?

___**4. Do you let** your child use a magnifying glass to examine things? Supervise for safety.

___**5. Do you go** on adventure walks with your child and investigate new sights, smells and sounds?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean you are nurturing your child's natural desire to learn. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning."
—William A. Ward

Support preschool success

Doing a few simple things at home will help your child have the best learning experience at preschool:

- **Create stability** by establishing routines. Children thrive when they know when they will eat, sleep, play, read, etc.
- **Minimize screen use,** which can negatively affect young children's language and cognitive development. When you do allow it, interact with your child.
- **Talk with your child** about rules, and how following them helps keep everyone safe, happy and learning well.

You are needed on the team

Working as a team with the teachers is an important way to help your child throughout school. Here are some key ways to do this in the preschool years:

1. **Stay in touch.** Read everything the school sends home. Tell the teacher about anything—big or small—that is affecting your child.
2. **Attend events** for families at school.
3. **Keep an open mind** if the teacher says that your child needs to improve in an area. Your goal is the same—getting your child ready for the next step in learning.

Start an attendance habit



Students who attend school consistently have more success. To start your child's school career off right, explain that attending preschool is important. Showing that school matters to you will make it matter to your child. If your child doesn't want to go, just say that staying home is not an option. In case of illness, keep your child at home, but don't make it feel like a treat. Sick kids need to rest, not watch extra TV.

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