

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Provided in partnership with the
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Encourage learning at home in five simple, important ways

The nurturing you provide at home has a profound impact on your preschooler's learning and development. To help your child thrive and learn now and in the future:



1. Make time for fun.

Children learn through play. Play games and put together jigsaw puzzles with your child. Dress up as book characters and act out stories.

Stack blocks into tall towers. Sing silly songs.

2. Be physically active to promote brain development. Play active games together outside. Take walks and climb and slide at the playground. While you are at it, talk about the fun you and your child are having.

3. Encourage creativity. Activities like squishing clay, coloring and finger-painting are fun and educational—and strengthen motor skills.

4. Show your child that you care about education. Ask about what your child is doing in preschool each day. Explain that you and the teachers are a team, working together to help your child learn.

5. Help your child feel loved and safe. Hugs and snuggles give your preschooler a sense of security that can bolster self-confidence in school.

Source: K.L. Bierman and others, "Parent Engagement Practices Improve Outcomes for Preschool Children," Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Help your child participate in reading

Reading together every day helps boost your child's listening, thinking and language skills, and builds a broad base of knowledge. For the best results, make reading together an interactive experience. Here's how:

- **Preview the book** with your child. Ask, "What do you think it might be about?"
- **Begin to read aloud** and then pause after a few pages. Ask your child, "What do you think will happen next?" Predicting is a key skill for reading comprehension.
- **Bring characters to life.** Ask, "What do you think this character sounds and walks like? Encourage your child to act like the character.

- **Ask your child** to "read," too. Encourage your preschooler to point out familiar letters or words. Or, if the story is a favorite, your child can retell it from memory or describe what's happening in the pictures.
- **Stop reading** at a dramatic part so your child will look forward to reading more tomorrow!

Source: S. Kelley, "Best Practices in Early Childhood Literacy," Neag School of Education, UCONN.

Be a partner in education

Teamwork between families and schools improves student success—and it starts in preschool! For a strong start, teachers encourage families to:



- **Provide structure** with routines. Having regular times to sleep, eat, play, read, etc. makes it easier for your child to learn and do what's expected.
- **Balance the day.** All children need downtime to daydream, create and relax.
- **Stay in touch.** Read communications from school. Inform the teachers about your child's strengths and challenges.
- **Talk about school rules.** Explain to your child that rules keep people safe and make it easier for everyone to learn.

Play games with the senses

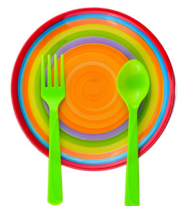
Your child's senses provide information about the world. Thinking about that information is the next step in learning, and playing games makes it fun! Try these two:

- 1. Have your child look** at five items on a tray. Then, take the tray away and remove one item. When you show the tray again, can your child guess what's missing?
- 2. Put several small items** in a bag. Have your child reach in and try to identify them by feel without looking.

Go on the hunt for math

To help your preschooler learn that math is everywhere, go on math hunts wherever you go. Help your child hunt for:

- **Numbers,** on signs, clocks, buildings, etc. Point them out and identify them.
- **Patterns,** on walls, floors and fabrics.
- **Shapes.** "The shape of your plate is a circle. Let's look for more circles today!"





My child cries every day at drop-off time. What can I do?

Q: My child started preschool last week. Every morning since, drop-off has set off a flood of tears. Is there anything I can do to make separating easier for both of us?

A: Crying when it's time to say goodbye is common among new preschoolers—and heart-wrenching for their families. Your child depends on you, and being apart feels scary. To ease this fear, help your child feel safe at preschool and understand that you will *always* come back.

To reassure your child:

- **Explain that the teacher cares.** Say, "If you need help, I want you to ask Miss Noreen. She will look after you and show you how to do things."
- **Talk about your return.** Draw a picture of a clock that shows the time you'll arrive. Say, "When the clock looks like this, I'll be here." Offer a small keepsake as a reminder, such as a paper heart or a picture of you.
- **Follow a short goodbye routine.** It might be a special handshake, followed by a hug and a kiss. Then, say you'll be back soon and go. It might take a few weeks, but your child will find comfort in doing the same things with you every day.
- **Ask the teacher how your child does** after you leave. Also ask about the activities your child enjoys at preschool, and talk about them at home.



Are you teaching patience by example?

It takes patience to learn, listen and think things through. Your preschooler learns this important school success trait from watching you. Are you demonstrating patient behavior? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you establish** routines and schedules that reduce the pressure to rush?
2. **Do you model** polite patience when you have to wait or take turns?
3. **Do you give** your child time to practice and master new skills?
4. **Do you remain** calm when your child is upset and show how to behave in difficult situations?
5. **Do you teach** your child that mistakes happen, but

people can learn from them and get smarter?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child learn patience. For each no, try that idea.

"Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish."
—John Quincy Adams

Sleep boosts brainpower

Sleep is as vital for sharp minds as it is for healthy bodies. Getting enough sleep makes it easier for your preschooler to manage emotions, pay attention and remember things accurately. To help your child get the recommended 10-13 hours of sleep daily:

- **Create a schedule.** Set a bedtime and wake time, and keep it on weekends, too.
- **Go outside together** often for active play and exercise.
- **Make bedtime soothing.** Read a story aloud and talk about positive things. Allow a nightlight if your child wants one, or offer a stuffed animal for company.

Show the value of respect

Respectful behavior is important in school, and young children learn it first by experiencing how good it feels to be asked politely, thanked and treated fairly.

Your child also learns by watching you treat others with consideration. Talk with your child about how other people might be feeling. You might say, "Grandma is frowning. What makes you frown? How do you think Grandma is feeling? What do you think we could do to help?"

Source: N. Yuill and others, "The Relation Between Parenting, Children's Social Understanding and Language," Economic and Social Research Council.

Help your child stick with it

Developing the ability to persist until a task is complete helps your child get ready for kindergarten. To encourage persistence:

- **Let your child struggle a little** with a task before you jump in to help.
- **Encourage trying again** after a mistake.
- **Play games** together that take concentration.



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