

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Cormier School & Early Learning

Splash, learn and have fun with bathtub science activities

A bathtub is more than a place for sudsy fun. It also makes a wonderful science laboratory! All you need to introduce your child to some important science concepts are a few simple “tools”—plastic items like cups, bottles, spoons, animals and a bowl, and a small rock.

For science fun at bathtime, help your preschooler:

- **Predict and test.** Ask your child to look each item and guess if it will float. Then, have your child drop the items one by one into the water to test the predictions.
- **Compare volumes.** Pour different amounts of water into two plastic bottles. Ask your child, “Which has more? Which has less?” Have your child pour each bottle’s water into the bowl, one at a time, to verify.
- **Compare weights.** Fill one bottle with water, and another with soap bubbles. Talk about the concepts of heavy and light. Explain that bubbles are mostly air, and air is lighter than water.
- **Discover buoyancy.** Float a large plastic bowl on the water. Put in the small rock. Explain that things that sink on their own can sometimes float when they are inside something that is more buoyant. Next, help your child count how many plastic animals will fit in the boat before it sinks.



Build focus and persistence

In a long-term study, children with longer attention spans and an ability to persist in the preschool years were more likely than other children to complete education beyond high school. To help your child develop these traits:

- **Read stories aloud.**
- **Keep your child’s work areas free of clutter.**
- **Limit screen activities.**
- **Help your child work up to 10 or 15 minutes of independent play each day.**



Source: M.M. McClelland and others, “Relations Between Preschool Attention Span-Persistence and Age 25 Educational Outcomes,” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Elsevier.

Fit fitness into every day

Did you know daily exercise can help your child do better in school? Research shows that it has a positive effect on eye-hand coordination, alertness and self-control. Preschoolers’ activity levels are linked to their families’ levels, so lead the way! Take walks together, explore outdoors, or finish meals with active games instead of dessert.

Source: S.L. Barkin and others, “Parent’s Physical Activity Associated With Preschooler Activity in Underserved Populations,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Elsevier.



Practice respectful behaviors at home

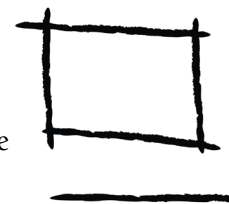
Preschoolers aren’t expected to behave perfectly all the time. But respectful behavior makes learning easier and it ranks high on the list of things teachers at all levels wish families would help their children learn.

To encourage respectful behavior:

- **Discuss cooperation** with your child. Explain that when a teacher (or you) asks your child to do a task, your child should complete it—“even if you would rather do something else.”
- **Promote sharing.** Encourage your child to share some toys with siblings and friends. Remind your child to ask permission to use someone else’s item.
- **Practice patience.** Help your child learn to wait for a person to finish talking before speaking up. Explain that in school, students should raise their hands if they want to talk to the teacher.
- **Nurture consideration** and kindness. Prompt your child to say things like, “It’s your turn now” and “I like your shirt!”

Make a map together

Thinking about how places relate to their surroundings is the basis of geography. To spark interest, help your child make a simple map of a place that has meaning, such as your family’s house and street. It can be as basic as a square for the house and a straight line for the road. Start now, and by age 12, your child may be drawing cities!



Source: P. Brilliante, Ed.D. and S. Mankiw, Ed.D., “A Sense of Place: Human Geography in the Early Childhood Classroom,” *Young Children*, NAYEC.



My child is turning into a perfectionist. What can I do?

Q: My preschooler used to be easy-going. But lately, my child has been saying things like, “I am the slowest runner,” and “My numbers are all wobbly.” How can I help my child stop being so self-critical?

A: Your child has begun spending time doing activities alongside other preschoolers. It’s natural to make comparisons—and worry about falling short.

To reassure your child and discourage harmful perfectionism:

- **Share some no-pressure,** fun activities together every day.
- **Talk about effort.** Explain that before anyone can become good at something, they have to try it and keep trying and getting better. Offer praise when your child shows effort. “You always try your best.”
- **Take the fear out of mistakes.** Say that everyone makes them and people can learn from them. When your child messes up, say, “That didn’t work out like you thought it would. This is a great chance for us to think about what you could do differently next time.”
- **Focus on progress** and avoid comparing your child to others. “There are no wobbles at all in this number 4 you wrote. I can read it easily.”



Are you helping your child learn to listen?

Learning and communicating are fundamental tasks in school. And both require the same essential skill: listening. Are you showing your preschooler how to be a good listener? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you offer** your undivided attention when your child is talking to you? If you are busy, tell your child when you will listen.
2. **Do you listen** patiently and give your child time to think while speaking?
3. **Do you avoid** interrupting your child and ask your child to do the same when you are talking?
4. **Do you let** your child talk problems through and avoid breaking in to offer the “right” answer? If possible, allow your child to try to figure things out.

5. **Do you “listen”** to your child’s behavior? Acting out is communicating a need.

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are demonstrating listening skills for your child. For each no, try that idea.

“Children will listen to you after they feel listened to.”

—Jane Nelson

Increase reading readiness

This is a vital time in your child’s development to build reading readiness. To help:

- **Cozy up and read** together every day. Happy times with you foster your child’s interest in reading.
- **Demonstrate how** reading works. Show how you read each line of text from the left side of the page to the right. Point to each word as you read it.
- **Connect sounds** to letters. “This word is *bat*. Bat starts with the letter B. That’s the same letter your name starts with, Brian. What sound does B make? What other words start with the letter B?”



Make preschool appealing

Children get more out of school when they want to be there. To encourage your child to have a positive attitude toward preschool:

- **Talk about the fun parts.** Ask, “What was your favorite part of school today?”
- **Speak favorably** about teachers. Say, “Your teachers want to help you learn.”
- **Help your child** get to know school friends better. Invite a classmate to play.

Plan for a balanced week

Days packed with preschool, extracurricular activities and too much exposure to screens can leave children overwhelmed, exhausted and anxious. To keep some breathing room in your child’s weekly schedule:

- **Choose one or two** structured activities that match your child’s interests.
- **Plan one or two** hours of free time each day for your child. Offer access to games, books, toys, art supplies, etc.
- **Allow a little boredom.** It can inspire children to imagine, think and create.

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