

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2009

Kids' Discovery Days

KID BITS



Junior researcher

It's never too early to learn research skills. When your youngster asks a question you can't answer, say, "Let's look it up." Then, search together in an encyclopedia at the library. You can also help your child find the answer online by typing key words into a children's search engine (www.yahookids.com, www.kids.click.org).

Stay up-to-date

Being involved in your youngster's education shows that you care about what she's learning. Remember to check her backpack every day when she gets home. Comment on each item ("What a colorful painting!"), and try to return forms the next day. Write important events (field day, spring concert) on your calendar.

Family sing-along

Singing together is an easy tradition that can help your family have fun together and stay close. Hold sing-alongs at home or in the car. You might take turns teaching songs to each other. Introduce your youngster to ones you loved as a child, and let him share songs he is learning at school.

Worth quoting

"You really can change the world if you care enough."

Marian Wright Edelman

Just for fun

Q: What do you do if you find a dinosaur in your bed?

A: Sleep somewhere else!



Be a helper

Helping others can be a real confidence booster for your child. From household chores to spontaneous favors, being helpful can teach your youngster about teamwork, responsibility, and decision making.

Use teamwork. Ask her to stuff pillows into their cases while you put sheets on the bed, or to wipe the windows after you spray them. She'll see that working together gets a job done! *Tip:* If she makes a mistake, let it go. At her age, developing a good attitude toward helping out is more important than a job done perfectly.

Make helping a habit. Have your youngster take her plate to the sink after every meal and put dirty clothes in the hamper each night. Give her regular responsibilities, like watering plants or putting her toys away. She'll learn that helping out is something families do every day.



Let your child decide. Ask her to come up with a plan for putting groceries away. She might put cereal on one shelf, canned goods on another, and pasta and rice on a third. Or have her figure out how to make everything fit in the dishwasher (plates and pots on the bottom and cups on the top).

Go beyond chores. Doing things for others, even when it's not your assigned chore, is being truly helpful. Together, think of opportunities to lend a hand. She might help you babysit a friend's child or take in a sick neighbor's mail.♥

Steps to spelling

My name is B-l-a-k-e! Remember when your youngster learned to spell his name? Here are three ways to use that excitement as a springboard for spelling other words:

1. Help him put his name everywhere. Let him spell it with magnetic letters on the refrigerator. Or have him use paper and crayons to make a name sign for his bedroom door.

2. Together, look on road signs and product labels for words that begin or end with the same letter or sound as his name. For instance, *Charlie* might find *children*, *chair*, and *cheese*.

3. Use names of family members and classmates. When your child is learning to spell a word, remind him of a name he knows. ("We begins like *William*. What letter sound do you hear?")♥



Time to laugh

Did you know that laughter can reduce stress and make your child feel good? Keep your whole family chuckling with these ideas:

- Take turns choosing a joke of the day. When it's your youngster's turn, help him pick one and practice telling it. Then let him repeat it to others. He might call his grandmother or tell the joke to neighbors who stop by. He'll build speaking skills and strengthen his memory.
- Keep track of your child's favorite jokes in a notebook. Let him watch you write down jokes he has heard or read (try



tell him that "moo-sic" makes the joke funny because "moo" is the sound a cow makes, and "moo-sic" sounds like "music." ♥

books like *Knock, Knock! Who's There?* by Tad Hills or *Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?* by Jon Agee). Suggest that he illustrate the jokes, and then read the pages together.

- Laugh at your youngster's made-up jokes. Help him understand what makes a joke funny by showing him how words can have double meanings. Share this joke: "What did the cow listen to? Moo-sic." Then,

ACTIVITY CORNER Rainy day math

When April showers keep your child indoors, use the time for indoor fun with math.

Start by filling a cardboard box or plastic tub with materials like a deck of cards, buttons, pennies, math flash cards, blank paper, crayons, play dough, a plastic knife, dice, and buttons. Then, try these activities:

- Have your youngster lay out five playing cards. She can practice counting by matching the correct number of buttons or pennies with each card.



- Take turns making play dough pies and tossing a die to see how to divide them. Using the plastic knife, cut each pie into equal-sized pieces (example: roll a 4, and cut 4 pieces).

- Let her choose a flash card and draw a picture to match it. For $3 + 2$, she could make a sky with 3 stars and 2 clouds. Then, ask her to tell a story about her drawing. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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PARENT TO PARENT

Off to work

"Why do you have to go to work?" my daughter Rosa asked me one Saturday. I told her that adults work to earn money and also to enjoy doing something they're good at. She wanted to know about my job—I'm a radiology technician—so I explained all about x-rays.

After that, I made a point to show her people working. When I took her for a haircut, I told her that the stylists get paid for making people's hair look nice. At the grocery store, I pointed out the people stocking the shelves, filling our prescription, and scanning our order.

Now she notices workers everywhere: a police officer directing traffic, a postal worker delivering mail, a waitress taking orders. She's talking about what she wants to be when she grows up—and she understands better why I go off to work. ♥



Q & A TV alternatives

Q: My family watches too much TV. How can I get everyone to cut back?

A: Motivate your family to take part in this year's Turnoff Week, April 20–26, by putting away remote controls and planning fun activities.

Get everyone moving with an evening of roller skating or bumper bowling. On the weekend, go outdoors for a family game of kickball or catch. If your youngster misses

favorite television characters this week, check out library books about them. He'll discover that reading and acting out stories can be even better than TV!

When Turnoff Week ends, talk about how much fun you had. If you haven't set screen time limits before, now may be a good time. You might try limiting your children to one to two hours a day for all screen time, including television, video games, and computers. ♥

