

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May 2009

Kids' Discovery Days

KID BITS



Fair share

Show your child how easy it is to share by pointing out everyday opportunities: "We can all share the elevator if we move to one side." Ask her to help you find ways to share. ("Who do you think would like the extra tomatoes from our garden?") When it's time to share with a playmate, remind her that she knows how!

DID YOU KNOW?

Tongue twisters are a great trick for helping children speak clearly and learn letter sounds. Give your youngster's mouth muscles a workout with "She sells seashells down by the seashore" or "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers." Say them together until your child has memorized them. Then, take turns trying to say them fast.

A good year

Wrap up the school year by helping your youngster write a thank-you note to her teacher. She can make it personal by writing something specific she enjoyed: "I liked it when you read funny poems." Have her illustrate her note or enclose a photo of herself with the teacher.

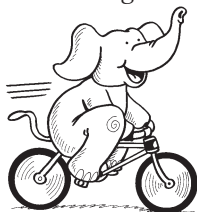
Worth quoting

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Just for fun

Police officer: "One of your elephants has been seen chasing a man on a bicycle."

Zookeeper: "Nonsense! None of my elephants know how to ride a bicycle!"



Among the stacks

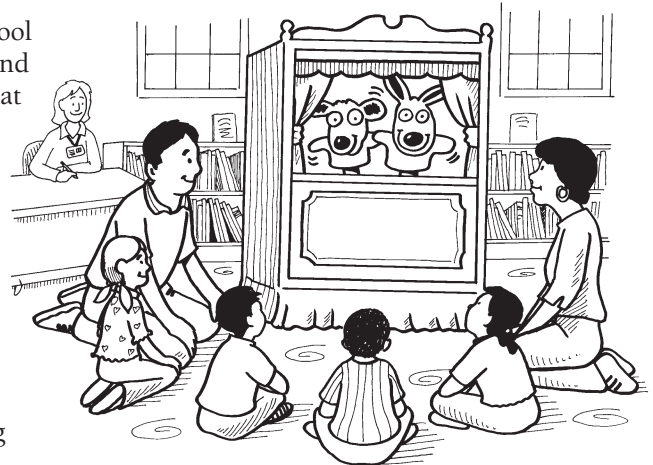
The public library is a cool place to be on a hot day. And regular visits will ensure that your child enjoys reading and learning all summer. Make the most of your library trips with these ideas.

Attend special events.

Find out when story hours or puppet shows are being held. They'll give your youngster practice listening and being part of a group.

Some libraries may also offer evening family activities like bat watching or stargazing. Try one, and then introduce your child to nonfiction by borrowing a related book like *Bats at the Library* by Brian Lies or *Zoo in the Sky* by Jacqueline Mitton.

Visit author Web sites. Help your youngster discover writers he likes. Ask the librarian for suggestions of Web sites, or find a list at www.authoryellowpages.com. Read a few aloud to your child, and let him pick books by those



who capture his interest. For instance, try Mercer Mayer's Web site (www.littlecritter.com), and check out *All By Myself*.

Explore new sections. Vary your library visits by browsing different areas. By summer's end, your youngster will be familiar with the whole building. In addition to the children's section, try crafts, magazines, audiobooks, and reference. Your child can learn something new in each one. *Example:* Check out a craft book, such as *Beginner's Origami* by Steve and Megumi Biddle, and choose a project to do at home. ♥

Build hand-eye coordination

Simple outdoor games can help you send your youngster back to school with better hand-eye coordination for writing, drawing, and using scissors. Try these three:

1. Play catch with increasingly smaller balls (beach ball, soccer ball, softball). Or have your child throw balls into goals of different sizes (laundry basket, large box).

2. Make a ring toss game. Cut the centers out of paper plates, and let your youngster toss the rings onto water bottles. Make the challenge more difficult by having her take a giant step backward after each successful toss.

3. Fill two spray bottles with water, and ask your child to draw two circles on the sidewalk with sidewalk chalk. Race to see who can soak a circle first. ♥



Budget-friendly outings

Family fun can fit into any budget. Here are a few free or low-cost activities:

- Watch a live performance. Check the newspaper for free outdoor concerts sponsored by your town or a local group. During the show, point out musical instruments, and encourage your child to clap along with the beat.
- Spend a day on the farm. Your youngster can learn where food comes from by watching a cow being milked or seeing



how grain is harvested. *Note:* Call your county extension office to find a farm you can visit.

- Visit local sites. If your town has a waterfront, you may be able to tour different kinds of boats and even a lighthouse. Many towns have historic homes and museums. Your local chamber of commerce can give you information about special events, or check online at www.historichomestour.com.
- Visit a nature center to look at plants and wildlife. How many different-colored flowers, rocks, or birds can your child see along a creek or trail? ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



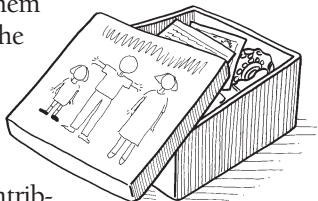
Family keepsake box

Bring family history to life for your child by decorating and filling a special box together.

First, have your youngster call relatives to ask for items they can share, like copies of family recipes and birth announcements. He might suggest that they send photos of objects they don't want to give away, such as a baby's first pair of shoes.

When the items arrive, have your child keep them together in the box. Help him write the name of each one and who contributed it on an index card and add it to the box. He can cover the lid with construction paper and decorate it with markers or crayons.

Use the project to talk about your family's heritage. You might have your youngster describe each item to you, or you could take turns telling stories about the keepsakes. ♥



Q & A

Handling disappointment

Q: My daughter takes it really hard when her drawing doesn't come out "right" or a friend doesn't play with her at recess. How can I help her handle life's ups and downs?

A: Learning to deal with disappointment takes gentle encouragement. First, let your daughter talk about how she feels. You'll show that you take her feelings seriously. Then, help her see the bright side: "You used lots of colors and had fun drawing," or, "Maybe you and Kayla will play tomorrow. Why don't you ask her what she wants to do?"

You can also tell her how you've handled disappointment. "When I broke my arm, I couldn't play field hockey. But I cheered on my teammates while it healed." Remind your daughter that she can draw lots more pictures, and tomorrow she can play with friends at recess again. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Teachable moments

When we were outside the other day, my son was surprised to see some ants carrying a piece of bread. Nathan asked how the ants could lift a piece of bread bigger than they were, and I honestly wasn't sure.

So we asked our neighbor, a high school science teacher. She explained that ants are much stronger than you would think. In fact, she said, they can carry 10 to 20 times

their body weight. To move really heavy things, they work as a team.

When we told Nathan's teacher the next morning, she was happy that I'd turned his question into a "teachable moment." She said unplanned events sometimes make the best lessons at school—and at home, too.

Now I look for teachable moments all the time. We've discovered a bird's nest, watched popcorn pop, and even read about double rainbows. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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