

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2010

Kids' Discovery Days

## KID BITS



### Smooth racing

A toy car race can introduce your youngster to physics. First, race cars across the carpet. Then, try it on the floor. Ask your child which was easier. Explain that the cars go farther on the floor because the surface is smooth—there is less *friction* to slow them down.

### Being thoughtful

Show your youngster that it's rewarding to think of others. Tell her how you feel when she does something thoughtful for you. *Example:* "Thank you. Your get-well card made me smile." She'll see that good deeds make people happy, which can make her happy, too.

### "Hello!"

Use toy telephones or old cell phones to improve your youngster's conversation skills. Pretend to call and ask about his day. Remind him to take turns speaking and listening. To keep the conversation flowing, try prompting him: "It's your turn to ask me a question."

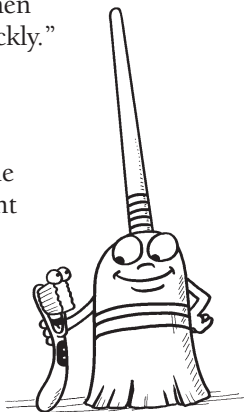
### Worth quoting

"Think of child development as a clock. Some clocks run fast; some clocks run slow. Some take awhile to wind up and then sprint very quickly."  
*Ann Benjamin*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What did the toothbrush want to be when it grew up?

**A:** A broom!



## Keys to self-control

How can you teach your little one to handle big emotions like anger, frustration, and disappointment? Work on increasing his self-control with these ideas to help him think before he acts.

**Talk it out.** Give your child words to use when he is upset. For example, if you can't find your glasses, you might say, "I feel so frustrated! Where did I last have them?" Then, when he's aggravated (say, he misplaced his favorite book), encourage him to use similar words. ("I feel mad because I want my book. I was looking at it in bed—maybe it's in my room.") He'll learn to talk through his problems and be less likely to yell or whine.

**Think ahead.** Help your youngster prepare for situations where self-control might come in handy. "We're going to your cousin's house. Let's think about what you can do if she's playing with a



toy you want." He might ask to join her or to play with another toy until she's finished. Having a plan can help him avoid grabbing the toy or yelling at his cousin.

**Calm down.** When your child begins to get upset, help him find ways to keep his cool. For example, he might take a deep breath, count to five, or draw a picture of how he is feeling. The distraction may be enough to settle him down. And once he's used to these techniques, he'll be able to do them without a reminder from you. ♥

## Be a sculptor

Playing with clay builds your child's creativity. It also strengthens her hand muscles for everyday tasks like zipping jackets and writing. Here's how to make the most of your youngster's sculpting time:

**1.** Let her get used to the clay by playing with it. She can knead, squeeze, and pound it.

**2.** Ask your child what she'd like to make. If she isn't sure how to start, offer suggestions. For example, she can roll clay into balls between her palms to make an animal's head and body. Or she might flatten clay with her fingers to form the walls of a house.

**3.** Encourage your youngster to add details to her sculptures. Provide tools (toothpicks, plastic knives) and decorations (sequins, buttons). ♥



# Family word games

Raise a child who loves language by playing word games as a family. These activities will teach your youngster early reading skills and build her vocabulary.

**Game:** Alphabet hide-and-peek

**Skill:** Combine letters to spell words.

**How to play:** Secretly choose a word (*ant*) and hide magnetic letters that spell it. Ask your child to search for three letters. When she finds them all, help her make the word. *Note:* You can give hints, such as, “It starts with A.”



**Game:** Fill in the rhyme

**Skill:** Hear rhyming sounds in words.

**How to play:** Look through a book, and find two words that rhyme (*shoe, moo*). Use them to make up a silly sentence, but leave out the second word for your youngster to fill in (“The horse tied his shoe, and the cow said \_\_\_\_\_”).

**Game:** Last word

**Skill:** Use descriptive words.

**How to play:** Ask your child to pick any household object (*vase*). Take turns saying one word that describes it (*clear, purple*). On your turn, introduce your child to interesting words she may not know (*crystal, fragile*). Continue until someone can’t think of another description. ♥

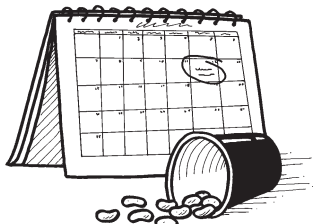
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### “How much longer?”

This waiting game can help your youngster keep track of time and practice counting.

Together, look at a calendar and choose an event that is a week or two away, such as a class field trip or a friend’s birthday party.

Ask your child to count the number of days until the event. Have him put one bean in a paper cup for each day that he has to wait. For example, if the event is 10 days away, he would put 10 beans in the cup.



Every day, he removes one bean and counts the ones that are left. Let him count the remaining days on the calendar, too, so he’ll remember that the beans represent days. When the cup is empty, the day is here. After it’s over, your youngster can choose another event to look forward to and refill the cup. ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Colorful cleanup

While volunteering in my son Sean’s classroom, I discovered a fun way to get him to clean up at home.

The students take turns pulling a small square of colored paper out of a bowl. Then, they walk around the room and put away every toy of that color. Sean got a green square, so he picked up green blocks and green plastic vegetables.

That evening, I decided to try the teacher’s idea. Sean and I cut pieces of construction paper (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, brown, black) and put them in a bowl. At cleanup time, we took turns choosing colors and putting away the matching items. The house was picked up in no time—and Sean got extra practice learning colors. ♥



## Q & A

### Doing your best

**Q:** My daughter can write and color neatly when she tries, but she often brings home sloppy work. How can I teach her to do her best?

**A:** Encourage your daughter to take pride in her work by showing interest in what’s in her school bag.

Sit down with her and look at each assignment. Choose one, and tell her what makes it look nice.



Be specific: “You cut that picture out so nicely. I can tell you took your time.”

Also, display work that your youngster is especially proud of. Hang it on the refrigerator, or take a photo and let her help you send it to a grandparent or an aunt.

**Tip:** The next time you see your child rushing through a task at home, such as writing her name, remind her how good she feels when she does her best. ♥

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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