

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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UMES Child & Family Development Center

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KID BITS



Homemade puzzles

Have your child make his own letter puzzles. Start by helping him write his name on a piece of cardboard. Then, cut the letters apart in different shapes, and mix them up. As he puts the puzzle together, he'll learn how letters build words. Try other words, too, such as *Mom*, *cake*, and *happy*.

Making summer plans

Now is a good time to look into summer activities that will keep your youngster active, happy, and learning. Your local parks and recreation department may hold swimming programs or nature day camps. Also, consider dance or music classes offered by your community center, school district, or YMCA.

Playing together

Playing with your child is fun—and it can boost her confidence. When you dress up or play school together, you show you enjoy her company. Let her be in charge for a change by suggesting where you should sit or what you should wear.

Worth quoting

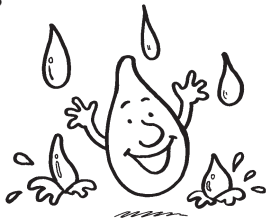
"We must teach our children to dream with their eyes open."

Harry Edwards

Just for fun

Q: What falls hard but never gets hurt?

A: Rain!



Creative conversations

How can your child meet Pocahontas, blast off to the moon, or invent a new umbrella? By using his imagination during conversations with you! Improve your youngster's language and vocabulary and give him a head start on reading and writing with these ideas.

Greet a famous person.

What if Pocahontas came to your house? Have your child imagine the visit from her perspective. For example, Pocahontas would be amazed by the washing machine and the computer. Your youngster will learn about point of view, which will help him understand how characters in stories think and act.

Take a fantasy trip.

Your child might hop aboard a rocket to the moon. He can close his eyes and imagine the journey. "Flames shot out behind the ship. The moon was bright and had lots of holes." Picturing the trip will help him learn to visualize stories when he reads and to be creative when he writes.

Invent something.

On a rainy day, ask your little one to come up with an unusual kind of umbrella. Let him describe it in detail so you can understand how it works. Maybe it pops

out of a backpack or grows larger when it gets wet. Learning to be specific will teach your youngster to notice details in books and add them to stories he writes. ♥



Planting fun

Show your child how grass grows with this hands-on science activity. She'll plant seeds, watch them sprout, and give the grass a haircut when it gets tall. Help her follow these steps:


1. Draw faces on a few small flowerpots.
2. Add potting soil, about two-thirds full, to each one.
3. Put in several grass seeds, and cover with one-quarter inch of soil.
4. Place the pots in a sunny spot, and water them each day.
5. Measure the growing grass every day with a ruler.

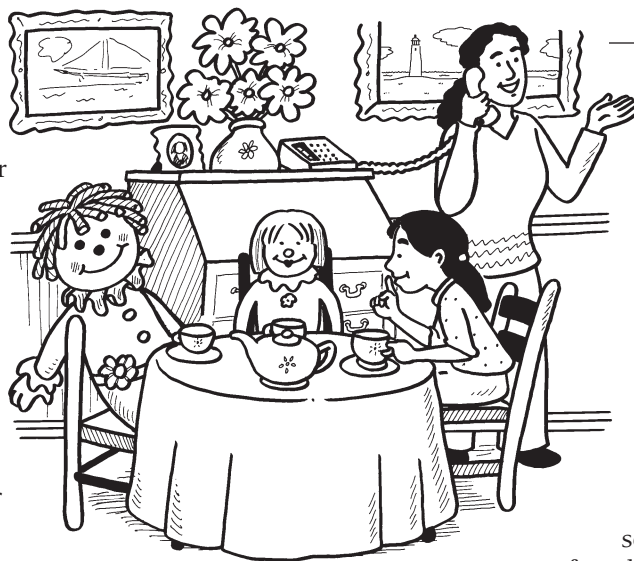
When the grass is about three inches tall, your youngster can play barber! ♥





Be polite

Using good manners will help your child get along with classmates, teachers, and others. Here are tips for encouraging polite behavior in everyday life:

 Carefully word requests to your youngster. Ask, "Would you please come to the table?" If she demands, "Give me a drink!" tell her, "Please say that again, nicely." She'll learn to politely ask her teacher for help or a classmate to pass the crayons.



 Explain that it's not polite to interrupt others. Before you make a call, let your child know that she'll need to keep herself busy. ("I'm going to talk to Aunt Margie now. Why don't you have a tea party with your dolls until we're finished?") Practicing this lesson at home will teach her not to interrupt her teacher and classmates.

 Encourage your youngster to think twice before saying something that might hurt a friend's feelings. For example, tell her it's best to say nothing if she doesn't like what a classmate is wearing. Your youngster will get in the habit of being sensitive to other people's feelings.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Animal habitats

Stuffed animals are good for more than cuddling. Creating homes for them will build your child's research skills and stretch his imagination.

Ask him to choose a favorite stuffed animal. Type its name (*monkey*) and home (*rain forest*) into a children's search engine, such as www.askforkids.com. Together, read information and look at pictures. Help him list things he'll need to build his animal's habitat.



For instance, he might use empty toilet-paper rolls for tree trunks. He can cut out leaves from green construction paper and twist pieces of green yarn together to form vines. A piece of aluminum foil could be a river.

Encourage your child to make homes for his other stuffed animals, too. *Example:* A horse could live in a tissue-box barn with an oatmeal-canister silo and popsicle-stick fence.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q & A No worries!

Q: My daughter worries a lot, especially in new situations. How can I help Emma relax and enjoy her new T-ball team?

A: Young children can get anxious when faced with something unfamiliar. You can lessen Emma's worries by encouraging her to talk about them. Is she scared she won't be able to hit the ball? If you know what she's afraid of, you can reassure her ("All the kids will be learning together"). Then, come up with a solution, such as practicing with her at home.

Finally, share your own fears—and your successes. "When I started piano lessons, I didn't know any notes. But I kept practicing, and now I love to play!"

Note: If your daughter's worries seem to interfere with daily life, talk to her school counselor or pediatrician.♥



PARENT TO PARENT Learning to recycle

With Earth Day coming up, I decided to talk to my child about recycling. I had noticed the blue bin in his classroom, so I asked him about it.

Ian said his teacher taught the class which items go in the trash and which can be recycled. That gave me a great idea—why not let him be in charge of recycling at home?

We got three big boxes from the

supermarket, and Ian used his best handwriting to label each one: *plastic*, *paper*, *glass*. Then we practiced sorting our throwaways. I made a few mistakes on purpose, and my son had fun catching me: "No, Mommy. That goes in the glass box."

Now I put everything in one bag, and Ian sorts it on his own. He feels proud to be our family recycling expert!

Editor's Note: Earth Day is April 22.♥

