

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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UMES Child & Family Development Center
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KID BITS



Left, right

Play this game to teach your child left from right, an important pre-reading skill. Have him hide a small toy in one hand. Then, guess which one it's in and say, "Open your left hand" or "Open your right hand." Repeat often until he remembers which is which.

Five-minute warning

It can be difficult for young children to change gears. Try giving your child a five-minute warning when playtime is almost over. Saying "Five more minutes" will help her switch activities—and maybe even cut down on complaints!

Indoor playground

Playground fun doesn't have to end when the weather turns cold. This winter, create an indoor play space in the corner of a room or in the basement. Stack pillows, gather jump ropes, and lay out exercise mats or towels. Encourage your child to stay fit by rolling, jumping, and tumbling.

Worth quoting

"There are not seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million." *Walt Streightiff*

Just for fun

Anna: I lost my dog.

Brittany: Why don't you put an ad in the paper?

Anna: What good would that do? He can't read.



Routines for a new year

Having a routine lets your child know what to expect and helps him do what you expect of him. As the new year begins, try these suggestions for calm mornings, pleasant afternoons, and relaxed evenings.



Morning

- Use creativity to coax your child out of bed. Turn on upbeat music to get him moving. Read a "wake-up story"—just like a bedtime story but in the morning.
- Have him dress first and then sit down for breakfast. Make the meal more fun by putting out several items he can choose from. *Ideas:* whole-grain cereals, low-fat yogurt, sliced bananas, cut-up apples.

Afternoon

- Go through your youngster's school bags and fill out paperwork right after school or when you get home from work. To keep papers organized, use an accordion folder to file school calendars, lunch menus, and field trip notices.
- Introduce your child to a daily "work" time to prepare him for homework later on. After a snack and playtime, help your youngster practice handwriting, or color pictures together.

Evening

- To get the house in order, hold a "10-minute tornado" after dinner. Set the stove timer for 10 minutes, and have everyone quickly clean up any clutter they see.
- Help your child look forward to bedtime. Plan quiet activities to enjoy together. Try reading, singing favorite songs, or playing a card game.♥

"And then you ..."

In school, your youngster needs to be able to follow directions. Help her practice at home:

- When playing a board game, read the instructions out loud. Ask questions to make sure she understands: "How do you move the playing piece?" "When is the game over?"
- Try to give directions only once. Speak slowly, and make eye contact: "Please put on your shoes and then your jacket." Have her repeat the directions back to you.



- Play "Red Light, Green Light." Your youngster will need to listen carefully to know whether to move (when you shout, "Green light!") or stay still ("Red light!").♥

What's in the bag?

Make the most of “wait time”—sitting in traffic, standing in a check-out line, waiting in the doctor’s office—by packing a goody bag that lets your child work on skills. You could include:

Soft tape measure. Practice math by measuring things. How long is the grocery conveyor belt? How wide is the bench in the waiting room?

Index cards, crayons. Have your youngster write her name, words she knows, and words she sees (“stop,” “no,” “north”). Store the cards and crayons in a ziplock bag. Encourage her to keep reading her old cards and



creating new ones—she’ll quickly learn to read more words.

Mini photo album, stickers. Fill half the album with family photos that your child can look through. On the other pages, let her use stickers to make designs. Putting stickers on and taking them off is not only fun, it helps build muscles in small hands.

Small box, dice. Play counting games such as 21. Take turns rolling dice and adding up the numbers. The person who gets closest to 21 without going over wins.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER I hear you!

Help your youngster make a homemade telephone for an early lesson in sound waves.



You’ll need: 2 small plastic cups, colored markers, pencil, 12-foot piece of string

First, let your child decorate the cups with markers. Use a pencil to poke a small hole in the bottom of each cup. Help your youngster put the string through the holes and tie knots on the inside of the cups at each end.

Now his telephone is ready. Have him speak into the open end of one cup, while you listen 12 feet away through the open end of the other cup. He’ll be amazed when you can hear each other!

Explain that your voices make sound waves that are carried on the string from one cup to the other. Say something else, and have your youngster touch the string—he’ll feel the vibration of the sound waves.♥

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

Trying to be perfect

Q: My daughter insists on making her work “perfect.” She will erase her whole name if she writes just one letter crooked. How can I get her to ease up?

A: Take heart: perfectionism does have a good side. Your child is a hard worker who sets high standards for herself. But there are ways to lessen her frustration.

Try focusing on the process, not the product. While finger-painting, discuss the fun you’re having rather than how your picture will turn out. “The paint feels so gooey. I love this shade of purple!”

Also, steer your child to easier activities. If she struggles with tiny blocks, give her larger ones.

Finally, let her hear you laugh about your own mistakes. When your white laundry comes out pink, pluck out the guilty red sock, and say, “Well, that’s what bleach is for!”♥

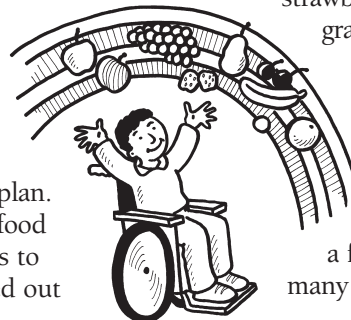


PARENT TO PARENT

Color me healthy

I recently read about the new food pyramid. I was surprised to learn that kids are supposed to eat five to nine servings of different fruits and vegetables a day. My son certainly wasn’t doing that!

So I came up with a plan. The next time we went food shopping, I asked Carlos to “pick a rainbow.” I called out



a color, and he looked for a matching fruit or vegetable. Red brought apples, of course, but also red peppers and strawberries. For purple, he found grapes and plums. For green, he got green beans and zucchini.

Now at dinner we try to see who can have the most colorful plate. Even though peas are not my son’s favorite, he’ll take a few just so he can have as many colors as I do!♥