

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2008

UMES Child & Family Development Center
Donna Long, Ed.D., Director

KID BITS



Building blocks

When your youngster builds towers and roads with blocks, she is boosting her imagination and creativity. Consider a new twist by tying block play to a favorite book. *Example:* Reading *Toy Boat* (Randall de Sève) might inspire her to build a ship that carries her through the ocean.

Safety tip

Help your child stay safe if he gets separated from you in public. Tell him he should ask a police officer or a store employee for help finding you. When you're shopping, point out salespeople. Explain how you know they're workers (they're behind a counter, they wear badges).

Different strokes

When you support differences among family members, you encourage your children to respect everyone's unique qualities. Your younger one may enjoy drawing, while his older brother would rather play soccer. Ask questions and make comments about both activities. You'll teach them to value differences in others.

Worth quoting

"Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine."

Anthony J. D'Angelo

Just for fun

Mom: That butterfly used to be a caterpillar.

Joanie: I knew it looked familiar!



Making decisions

Whether she's deciding what to eat or picking out a new toy, your child is learning to think for herself.

Give her the tools she needs to make good decisions now, and she'll be better prepared for tougher choices when she's older. Try these steps:

1 Begin by letting your youngster listen as you make a decision. Talk through your choices so she'll understand how you make up your mind. "Should I wear sandals or sneakers? The sandals are prettier, but I'll be more comfortable in sneakers."

2 Next, teach your child to think over her options. Put two chairs side by side. Ask her to sit in the first seat and say what she likes about one alternative, such as using her allowance to buy

barrettes (she can use them right away). Then, have her switch seats and come up with a drawback (it will take longer to save for a scooter). Ask her which choice feels better.

3 Finally, give your youngster plenty of opportunities to practice making choices. Does she want grapes or an apple for a snack? Would she rather brush her teeth before or after her bedtime story? Learning to make daily decisions will help her feel more in charge of herself—and more likely to cooperate with you and others. 👍

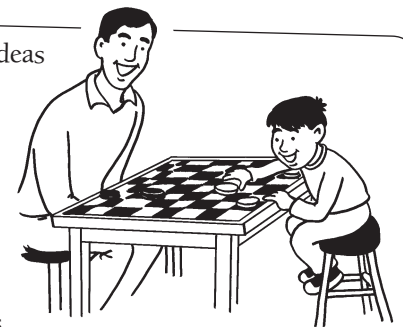


Learn with games

Most young children love games. Try these ideas for finding games that are fun *and* challenging.

Try old favorites. Youngsters can learn colors by playing Candy Land. Hi-Ho! Cherry-O helps strengthen hand muscles needed for writing as children pick up tiny cherries. And Uncle Wiggly gives them practice in early reading skills—directions are written in simple rhymes, as well as numbers and symbols for children who aren't reading yet.

Stock up on games. You can find inexpensive games at yard sales and thrift stores. Visit a game room at your local recreation or community center. Finally, try swapping with a friend or neighbor so each of your families can play a new game for free. 👍

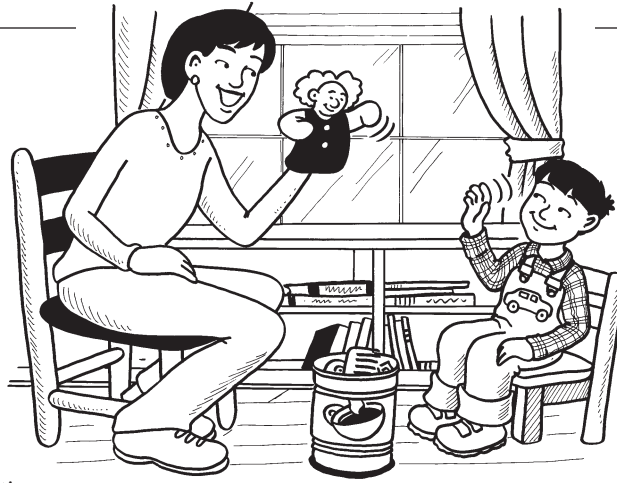


Telling stories

The next time your youngster asks for a story, try leaving his books on the shelf. Instead, tell him a tale of your own. Listening to you will improve his language, vocabulary, and concentration. Try these ideas from three experienced storytellers.

When I was little...

Margaret likes to tell stories about her childhood. "My daughter's favorite is about the time my little brother, Dave, lost his pet hamster. When I woke up, it was in bed with me! My little one never gets tired of hearing that story."



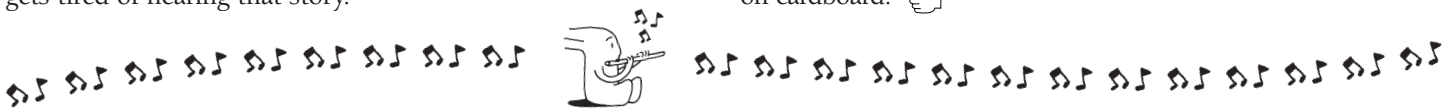
the Bay' is always a hit. I use a comb and a little plastic bear, and I cut out magazine pictures of a fly and a tie and glue them on cardboard." 👍

Once upon a time

Charlie retells fairy tales to his grandson. "He really enjoys 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff.' He loves to hear me use a raspy voice as the goats cross the bridge—"Trip-trap, trip-trap."

Coffee-can theater

Jennifer shares a coffee can full of props with her students. "I pull them out as I recite stories and songs. 'Down by



ACTIVITY CORNER Party time

Whose birthday is it anyway? Set your child's creativity loose by throwing a party for someone famous from history.

Start by looking for birthdays at www.famousbirthdays.com

or www.biography.com. Maybe you'll celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2 or Vincent Van Gogh's on March 30.

Help your youngster learn about the person by finding a biography at the

library and reading it aloud.

Then, ask him what the person might have liked for his birthday, and have him draw pictures of the gifts. *Examples:* a book for Dr. Seuss, paintbrushes for Van Gogh. You might even decorate a cake with "Happy Birthday, Dr. Seuss" or let your child draw his version of Van Gogh's *Starry Night* (see www.vangoghgallery.com) to hang on the wall as a party decoration. 👍



PARENT TO PARENT

Kid-sized chores

When it came to housework, I rarely asked my daughter to help because it was easier to do it myself. But at our parent-teacher conference, Mrs. Klein mentioned that chores teach responsibility. She thought that having jobs at home might encourage Grace to participate more in classroom cleanup.

I started by getting Grace her very own child-sized broom and dustpan so she could sweep the floor. I also cut a sponge in half to fit her small hands, and she was happy to wipe off the table. Soon, I began asking her to do other tasks, like folding towels and filling the dog's water bowl.

Just as her teacher signals cleanup time with music, I now play upbeat songs when we do chores. That way, Grace is familiar with the routine. She is learning that everyone pitches in, and I'm happy to have her helping out! 👍



Q & A

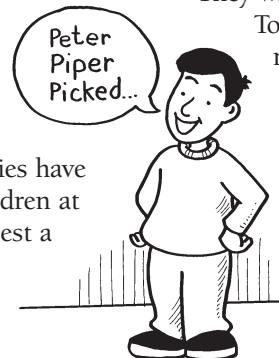
Help for speech problems

Q: *Could my child have a speech problem? I know what he is saying, but other people have trouble understanding him.*

A: It might be a good idea to have your youngster tested by a speech therapist. Ask his teacher or doctor for a referral. Most communities have agencies that evaluate children at little or no cost. Also request a hearing test, since even a slight hearing problem can affect speech.

You can prepare your youngster for his appointment so he'll feel comfortable. Explain that the therapist will show him pictures and ask him to name the objects. They will probably play games together. To test hearing, she'll say words at normal and softer levels for your child to repeat.

If a problem is found, the therapist may recommend follow-up sessions. She might also suggest activities you can do at home (saying tongue twisters, singing specific songs). 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5567