

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May 2008

UMES Child & Family Development Center
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KID BITS



Goodbye gift

Your little one can thank his teacher by donating a book to the classroom collection. Put a mailing label inside the front cover to make a bookplate. Then, help him write a note: "To Miss Hernandez. Thank you for a great year! From Henry."

Gracious host

Having friends over lets your child practice social skills. Explain that it's nice to let her guest take the first tricycle ride, for example. Make sharing easier by letting your youngster put away one favorite toy before her friend arrives—everything else is for both youngsters to enjoy.

Dear diary

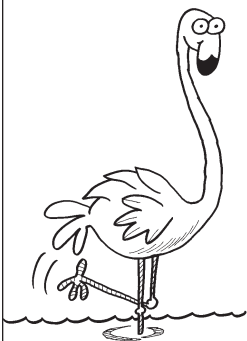
"What did you do over the summer?" Your child will be able to answer this question easily in the fall if he starts a diary now. Encourage him to write or dictate a sentence each day describing what happened. You might suggest topics, such as "The Hottest Day" or "A Long Trip."

Worth quoting

"If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a room with a mosquito."

African proverb

Just for fun

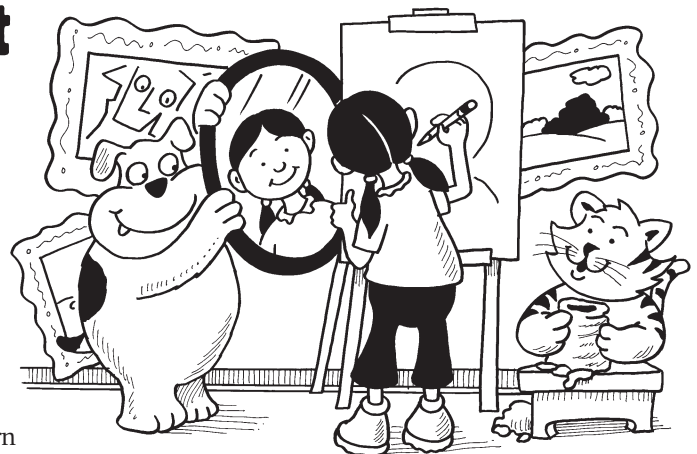


Q: Why does a flamingo hold up one leg?

A: If he held up both, he'd fall down.

Art smart

Introduce your child to the world of art, and she'll discover new ways to express her creative side. These projects will sharpen her observation and fine-motor skills—and help her appreciate art.



Portrait

Your youngster can learn about details by drawing her face. Have her look in a mirror and describe her features (straight black hair, big brown eyes). Encourage her to pay attention to eyelashes and freckles, too. Then, she can sketch her portrait with a pencil. When she finishes, let her color it with chalk or crayons.

Sculpture

Explain the difference between flat pictures and solid objects. Give your child clay or play dough and suggest that she sculpt a household object (vase, fruit, candle). Before she begins, have her walk around the item to examine all

sides. Tell her that a sculpture, unlike a drawing, is three-dimensional—it has height, width, and depth.

Landscape

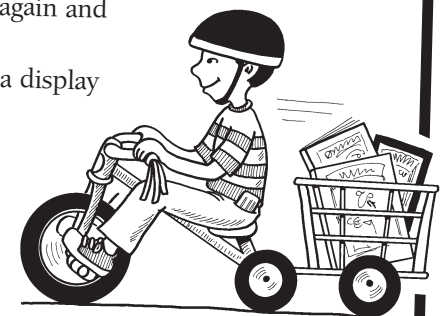
Take watercolors, paper, and a paintbrush outside, and ask your youngster to draw what she sees. She might paint trees, flowers, clouds, and the sun. Or she could draw her house and swing set. Painting scenes will teach her about shapes, proportions, and mixing paints to make different colors.

Tip: If possible, visit an art museum to show your child the work of local or world-famous artists. ♥

Library time

Guarantee your youngster a steady supply of fresh reading material by putting weekly library visits on your summer calendar. Try these ideas:

- Stop at the front desk to get your child a library card. Having his own card will make him proud, and he'll want to use it again and again.
- Help your youngster select books. Look for a display of new children's titles. Or find stories about favorite subjects (robots, dinosaurs). *Tip:* Let him see you pick out a book in the adult section, too.
- Back at home, have a show-and-tell to share everyone's choices. You can read aloud to your child, and then let him pick a book to read to you. ♥



Sing, look, and listen

Have you ever wondered how teachers inspire a roomful of children to follow rules? Many use special songs and signals to keep things running smoothly. You can try these techniques to improve behavior at home:

■ Music can help your child through tasks. Invent your own words to a familiar song. For example, sing this version of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”: “Brush, brush, brush your teeth, brush them till they shine. Brush, brush, brush your teeth. Then it’s storytime.”



■ Turn lights off and on to speed your youngster’s transition from one activity to another. When it’s time to stop playing, make the lights flicker. That’s the signal to see how fast he can clean up or get ready to go out.

■ Clap a rhythm to get your child’s attention and encourage self-control. If he needs to settle down, try two slow claps plus three quick ones. Have him copy you. Once he’s listening, help him choose a calm activity (sorting stickers, listening to music).♥



ACTIVITY CORNER Family links

A game of miniature golf is sure to bring the whole family outside for fun. Add to the excitement by creating your own course that you can set up in the backyard or take to a park.

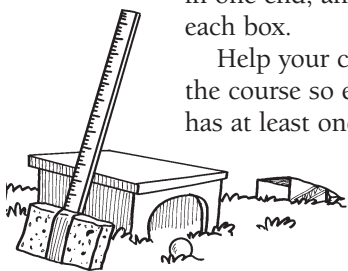
Have each person make a club by taping a sponge to a yardstick. Next, cut off the ends of various containers (milk cartons, cereal boxes) to convert them to tunnels. Create “holes” by turning shoe boxes upside down, cutting a half circle in one end, and numbering each box.

Help your child set up the course so each hole has at least one tunnel.

She might add obstacles like a Frisbee,

rolled-up towel, or

bucket. Now, you’re ready to take turns hitting plastic golf balls or Ping-Pong balls through the tunnels and into the boxes. Fore!♥



PARENT TO PARENT Speaking English

Spanish is our family’s first language. We speak it at home so our daughter will stay fluent while she learns English at school.

But we didn’t want Carla to forget any English during the summer, so we asked her teacher for ideas. Mr. Wilson suggested that we enroll her in a program run in English, such as a swim class or a science camp. He encouraged us to invite English-speaking friends to our home for dinner, and he recommended that we have our older daughter or a babysitter read books to Carla in English.

Mr. Wilson also said occasional television shows and videos would expose Carla to more English. With all these great ideas, we’re hoping our daughter will return to school in the fall speaking English even better than before!♥



Q & A No bragging

Q: After his soccer game, I heard my son Nick tell his friend Drake, “I’m the best player on the team.”

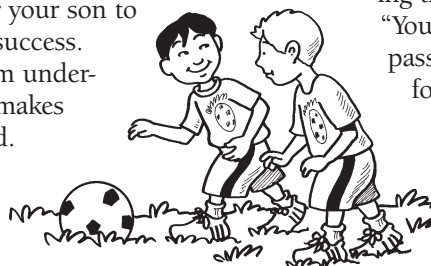
How can I explain that it’s not nice to brag?

A: It’s important for your son to feel good about his success. But you can help him understand that boasting makes other people feel bad.

Start by pointing out his friend’s skills: “Drake is a

good dribbler.” Tell him it’s important to have teammates with different strengths.

Then, suggest that Nick invite his friend over so they can have fun with soccer. When they’re dribbling and kicking the ball, you might say, “You’re doing a great job passing the ball back and forth.” Praising both boys will encourage your son to be proud of his friend, too, and help him to stop bragging.♥



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