

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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UMES Child & Family Development Center
Ms. Donna Long, Director

KID BITS



Chore choice

Encourage your child to do his household chores by giving him a say in the matter. For example, ask him, "Would you rather take out the trash or dust the furniture today?" Giving him a choice will make your youngster feel—and act—grown up and responsible.

Life-size letters

Here's a fun way to teach your child about beginning sounds. Together, make giant letters out of cardboard or poster board. Then, have her decorate each one with pictures of things that start with that letter. She can cut them out of old magazines or draw her own.

Safety first

Remind your little one to stop for a safety check before heading out to play. Be sure he puts on a helmet, wrist guards, and kneepads for activities like bike riding and inline skating. Wearing protective gear helps prevent broken bones and head injuries, as well as nasty scrapes and bruises.

Worth quoting

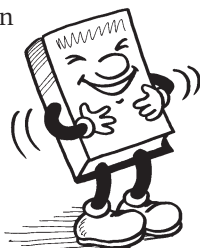
"All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

Pablo Picasso

Just for fun

Q: Which word in the dictionary is spelled wrong?

A: Wrong!



Playing with poetry

Andy loves to sing. Marissa enjoys rhyming books. José likes to hear silly poems. What do these children have in common? They are all discovering language using poetry and rhyme.

You can explore the world of poetry with your little one, too. Your child will love spending time with you, and he'll gain important skills for school.

A new ending. When you read rhyming books such as *Goodnight Moon* aloud, leave off the last word of a line ("And there were three little bears sitting on ..."). What other word can your child come up with? ("stairs") He will improve his vocabulary as he searches for rhyming words.

Poetry playhouse. Acting out rhyming books lets your youngster practice public speaking and work on comprehension. For "No more monkeys jumping on the bed," he can shake his finger as he recites the line and bounces his stuffed animals on the bed.

Rhyme race. Help your child memorize a poem by saying it back and forth to each other. Then, time yourselves to see who can say it the fastest. In repeating the lines, your youngster will boost his memory.

My own poem. Encourage your child to make up rhymes. For example, read a Dr. Seuss book (*There's a Wocket in My Pocket!*), and have him think of original lines ("There's a mink in my drink"). He'll stretch his imagination and learn about "chunks"—the combinations that make up certain sounds.



Tip: Your library has many great poetry books. A good place to start is *The Oxford Illustrated Book of American Children's Poems* edited by Donald Hall. ♥

Fall learning

Fall is a great time for families to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Use these fun autumn activities to build your youngster's math and science skills.

Pick apples

Head to a local orchard to pick your own vegetables and fruits. Have your child count apples as she places them in a basket. **Math challenge:** Can she put in two at a time and count by twos?

Sort leaves

Together, gather fallen leaves. Let your youngster sort them by color, shape, or size. **Science challenge:**

Ask your child to think of other ways to "classify" the leaves (pointed vs. rounded tips, long or short stems). ♥



Fine-motor fun

Little fingers often have trouble with delicate tasks. Doing these art projects will help your child build small-motor control—and learn to write, fasten, button, and tie better!

Play dough

- ✂ Roll play dough into pea-sized balls, and stack them into a tall tower.
- ✂ Flatten the dough into a round circle, and stick it with toothpicks to make a design (smiley face, heart).
- ✂ Use scissors to cut the dough into logs or blocks, and build a house or an igloo.



Construction paper

- ✂ Tear paper into small pieces, and glue them onto a large sheet to design a sailboat or flower.

- ✂ Use a hole-punch to make little circles of paper. With glue, outline shapes (triangle, square) on a sheet of paper, and sprinkle the circles on the shapes.

- ✂ Cut the paper into wide strips, and then cut one edge of the long sides into a fringe. Tape together to make a crown.

Paints

- ✂ Use skinny and fat brushes to paint watercolor pictures. Paint letters and numbers, too.

- ✂ Dip cotton swabs into washable paint and make a self-portrait.
- ✂ With fingers, palms, and fists, paint landscapes using fingerprint. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Rockin' rhythm

Your child will learn about music and practice math skills as he makes and plays his own musical instruments.

Horn. Have your youngster cover one end of an empty paper towel roll with wax paper and put a rubber band around it. With a pencil or pen, help him poke a row of holes along one side of the roll. Show him how to play his new instrument. He can move his fingers on and

off the holes and hum a musical pattern (short, short, long) into the open end.



Tambourine. Your child can put dry pasta between two paper plates and tape or staple them together. Then, he can make a rhythm pattern, such as shake, shake, stop.

How many different patterns can your youngster play on his horn and tambourine? ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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PARENT TO PARENT

Say yes

“Why do you always say no, Mommy?”

When my little boy asked me that, I immediately said, “No, I don’t.” That response made me realize that Kyle was right. I also realized that by saying no too often, the word didn’t mean much. I decided it was time to look for ways to turn “no” into “yes.”

Play in the mud? Sure—if you wear old clothes. Take a walk in the rain? Yes, as long as there’s no thunder or lightning. Stay up late once in a while? Okay, if you’re not cranky the next day.

Saying yes has made everyone, including me, more cheerful. Now when I do have to say no, Kyle knows I mean it because it isn’t something he hears all day long. ♥



Q & A Autism or personality?

Q: I’ve heard a lot about autism recently. I get the idea that children who have it are often loners. That describes my child pretty well—could she have autism?

A: Autism covers a wide range of developmental problems. On the mild end, a child may avoid eye contact, be very sensitive to certain sights and sounds, and prefer to play alone. A child with a more severe form might not speak. Keep in mind that

these symptoms can be present in other conditions—or in children with no serious problems at all.

Symptoms usually appear by the toddler or preschool years. They include a lack of normal language development (or a loss of previously acquired language), problems interacting with others, repetitive movements such as rocking or hand flapping, and a need for rigid routines.

If you’re concerned, talk to your child’s teacher and pediatrician. They can refer you to professionals who can evaluate your child. ♥

