

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

October 2009

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

## KID BITS



### “What’s your opinion?”

Give your youngster’s self-esteem a boost by asking—and listening to—her opinion. Ask her which book she thinks would make a good movie. Or let her decide whether to wrap a gift in red or blue paper. You’ll show her that her ideas are important.

### Family car wash

It’s a workout, a chore, and a good time: washing your car together. Give each person a sponge and one area of the car to soap. You might put your child in charge of doors, for example. Then, take turns hosing off your section.

### Pumpkin decorating

Bring out your youngster’s artistic side by letting her paint a pumpkin. She could make a smiley face on one side and a spooky one on the other. Or she might try something totally different, like flowers or rainbows.  
*Tip:* Acrylic or poster paints will work best.

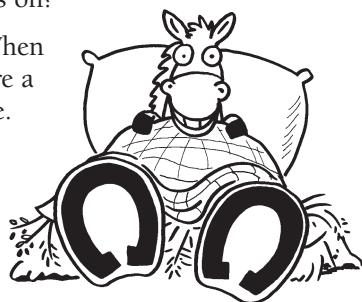
### Worth quoting

“Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.”  
*William James*

### Just for fun

**Q:** When do you go to bed with your shoes on?

**A:** When you’re a horse.

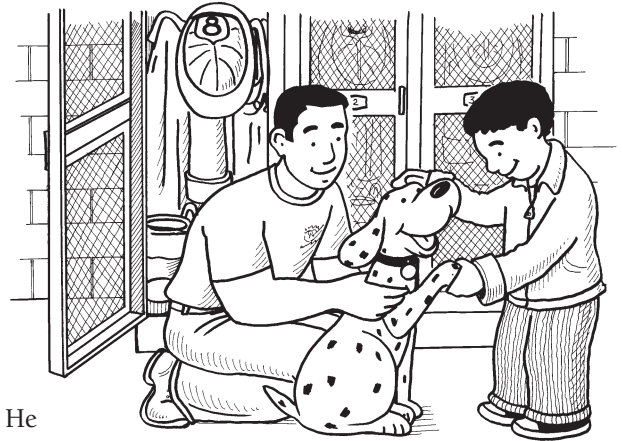


## Be a good citizen

How can you help your youngster grow up to be a helpful, responsible member of the community? Start by showing him what good citizens do—and then let him do his part. Here are some ideas.

**Find role models.** Let your child see good citizens at work. Take him to a fire or rescue station (call ahead to find out a good time to visit). He may be able to sit inside emergency vehicles and hear firefighters or rescue workers describe their jobs (putting out fires, helping people who are sick or hurt). You can also invite him along if you volunteer in a soup kitchen or help clean up the neighborhood.

**Take action.** At home, discuss ways your youngster can be a good citizen. He can encourage family members to wear seatbelts by posting a sign in the car. Help him write “Click it!” and have him draw and color a picture of himself buckled in. He might also help you pack up toys



to donate to charity or boxes of toiletries to send to soldiers.

**Discover democracy.** Explain that adults have a say in government when they vote to choose leaders such as mayors and presidents. Suggest that your little one participate by writing a letter to the president. He can dictate sentences to you about things he cares about (“I’m worried about dogs that don’t have homes”). Help him mail the letter to: The President, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500. ♥

## Dramatic play

Acting out fairy tales can build your child’s language, imagination, and planning skills. Here’s how she can stage her production:

1. Let her choose a familiar story and decide which roles to act out. For “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” she might be Goldilocks and Baby Bear while you are Mama Bear and Papa Bear.
2. Ask your youngster to find props around the house. She may use bowls for the bears’ porridge and different-sized pillows for their beds.
3. Read the book aloud and act out your lines. As Goldilocks, your child can taste porridge and lie down on the beds. Stop to let her say Baby Bear’s lines (“Somebody’s been sleeping in my bed...”). Encourage her to use as much expression as possible. ♥

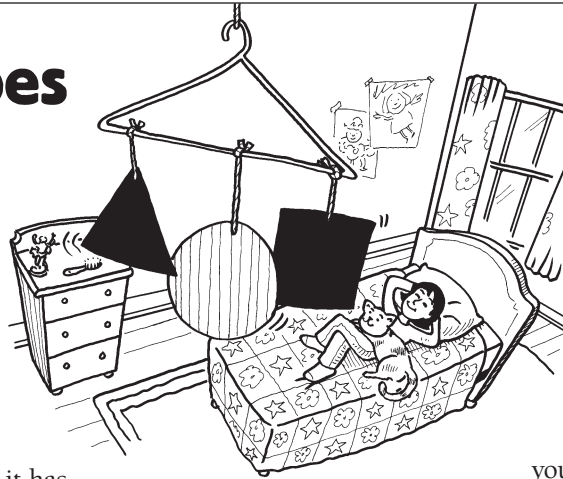


## A world of shapes

Zoe's sandwich is cut into triangles, Ellis's checkerboard has lots of squares, and Jill's hula hoop is a circle. Shapes are everywhere! Introduce your child to geometry with these three activities.

### 1. Find shapes

Play "I Spy" to point out real-life shapes to your youngster. Describe an object for her to guess. "I spy a square. It's soft and red. What is it?" (A couch pillow.) Talk about what makes it square: it has four sides that are the same length and four corners. Then, let her choose an object for you to guess.



### 2. Make shapes

Building a mobile can teach your child shape names. Have her cut different shapes from construction paper, and help her label them (triangle, rectangle). Then, hole-punch the shapes, thread yarn through the holes, and tie them to a plastic clothes hanger.

### 3. Celebrate shapes

Declare a "Shape of the Day." If your youngster picks circles, she might eat pancakes with banana slices, wear a polka-dotted shirt, and play Frisbee. On triangle day, she could draw a picture using only triangles, read a book about triangles (try *Greedy Triangle* by Marilyn Burns), and make a large triangle outside with sidewalk chalk and walk along the edges. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

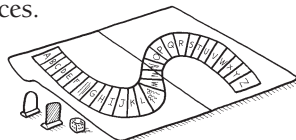
## Starts with...



"Let's make a board game!" Your youngster will enjoy learning about letters and sounds with this homemade alphabet game.

**Materials:** file folder, pencil, markers, die, game pieces

Draw a two-inch-wide S-shaped path from one end of an open folder to the other. Make horizontal lines to create 28 spaces.



Have your youngster use colored markers to write a letter (A to Z, in order) in each space. He should leave two blanks where you can write fun instructions: "Fell in alphabet soup. Go back two spaces." "Sing the ABC song and advance to M."

To play, roll the die and move that many spaces with your game piece. Then, say a word that starts with the letter you land on (example: "elephant" for E). *Tip:* Help your child by reminding him what sound the letter makes. The first player to reach Z wins. ♥

## 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

## PARENT TO PARENT

## Overcoming language barriers

My son wanted to play with Tim, a boy in his class who was learning English. But Mark didn't know how to talk to him. I asked my friend who teaches English as a Second Language for advice, and she said children this age usually learn English quickly. And the more other children talk to them, the faster they learn.



She suggested that Mark say hello to Tim each morning and good-bye each afternoon. He might point to the book corner and say, "Do you want to read together?" On the playground, he could motion to the sliding board and say, "Let's go down the slide."

My friend was right. After less than a month, Mark told me Tim is using more English. And now, my son says "hello" and "good-bye" in Korean! ♥

## Q & A

## Rewards for good behavior?

**Q:** I know some people give their children stickers to get them to behave better, but lately I've been hearing that this may not be a good idea. What else can I try to help my daughter behave?

**A:** Giving stickers or other rewards can seem like a good idea at first. But it may be more effective to show your child that doing the right thing comes with built-in rewards. For example, point out the automatic consequences

of good behavior: "Let's put the trains away quickly so we'll have more time to play at the park."

The feeling that comes from behaving well is another built-in reward. Help your youngster understand that she should be proud of her accomplishments. You might say, "You've learned to stay in bed all night. You must feel like such a big kid."

With your guidance, your daughter will see that the results of doing what's right are rewards that she can earn all by herself. ♥

