

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2009



UMES Child & Family Development Center
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KID BITS

What's different?

Memory games can help your child retain information he learns at school. Ask him to look around a room for one minute. Then, have him close his eyes while you change two things (remove a plant, open a window). When he opens his eyes, let him figure out what is different.

Shadow math

Celebrate Groundhog Day this month, and go outside on a sunny day. Have your youngster stand in the sun while you cut a string the length of her shadow. Then, do the same thing late in the afternoon. Lay the strings side by side and teach her to compare length by asking, "Which shadow is longer?" "Shorter?"

Hand-washing help

Good hygiene can keep colds and flu from spreading. Teach your child to sneeze into a tissue and cover his mouth when he coughs. Also, show him how to scrub germs off his hands with warm, soapy water. *Tip:* He should wash for as long as it takes to sing his ABCs.

Worth quoting

"If your children look up to you, you've made a success of life's biggest job."
Anonymous

Just for fun

Q: What can speak every language?

A: An echo.



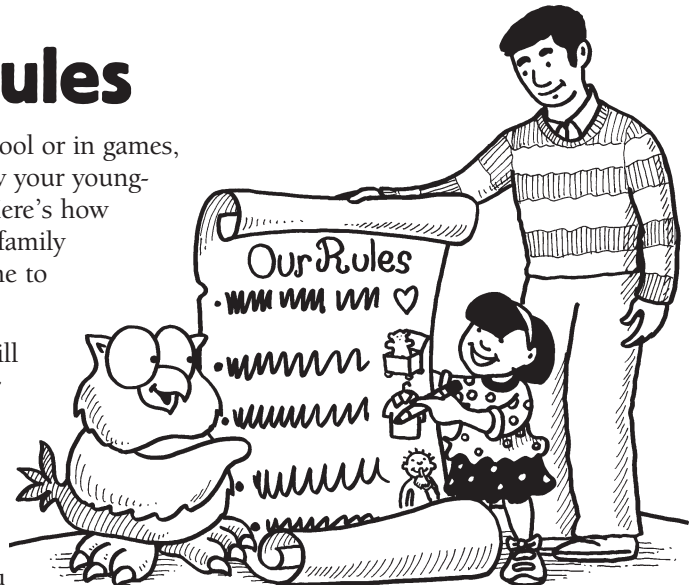
Family rules

Just like rules in school or in games, rules at home can show your youngster what's expected. Here's how you can create a set of family rules—and get everyone to follow them.

Write. Your little one will understand rules better if she helps make them. Ask for her ideas, and use them to make a friendly list. For instance, if she says, "Don't tease," you might write, "Be kind."

Combine similar ideas, since a short list will be easier for her to remember. *Example:* "Put toys away" and "Clean your room" could both fall under "Keep our home neat."

Post. To help your child read the list, have her draw a picture next to each rule. Beside "We use inside voices," she might draw a finger touching lips. Hang



the rules in a visible spot, such as a kitchen bulletin board.

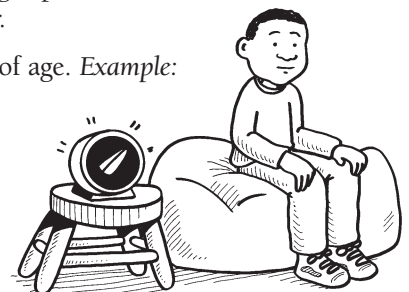
Follow. Have each family member agree to the rules by signing the list. Then, if your youngster breaks a rule, ask her to read it aloud to remind her how to behave. Set an example by showing how you're following the rules, too. When you listen nicely while your child is talking, for instance, mention how you're working on the politeness rule.♥

Time-out tips

A time-out can help your child switch gears when he's misbehaving and also teach him self-control. Try these steps for a successful time-out:

1. Be clear about why your youngster is getting a time-out. ("You are not allowed to yell at your sister.")
2. Find a place without distractions. You might pick a kitchen chair or a beanbag in the living room corner.
3. Set a timer. Try one minute for each year of age. *Example:* A five-year-old gets a five-minute time-out.

4. Start over. When the timer rings, say, "Time-out is over. You can get up now." Then, try not to bring it up again, and praise your child for his good behavior throughout the day.♥



Waiting games

Take advantage of time you spend waiting to help your child sharpen skills he needs for school.

- In a waiting room, ask your youngster to find three words he can read (see, dog, exit). He might look on signs or in magazines. Have him use the words to make up a sentence, and write it on a slip of paper for him to read (“Let’s see a dog go out the exit”). *Idea:* When you get home, let your child copy the sentence and draw a picture to go with it.



- At the bank or post office, your little one can brush up on math by counting people in line (“There are seven people ahead of us”). He can also practice ordinal numbers (“We are *eighth*”) and skip counting (2, 4, 6, 8).

- While driving to a familiar place, such as the store or a relative’s house, point out locations your youngster knows. “I see the water tower. Grandpa lives in the next block.” Let him help you navigate by asking him questions along the way: “Do I turn left or right?” ♥

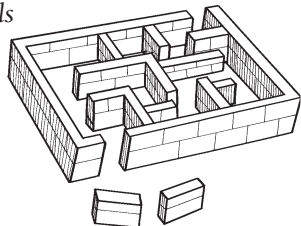
ACTIVITY CORNER



A-mazing!

Building a maze lets your youngster practice strategy and problem-solving skills.

Materials: building blocks, toy people or animals



On a flat surface, help your child use blocks to create the walls of a maze. Suggest that she begin with a straight path. Then, help her make a corner so the path heads in another direction. Be sure she includes two or three dead-ends, as well as a main route that twists and turns from the beginning to the end of her maze.

When the maze is complete, your child can lead toy people or animals through it.

Variation: Help her use clay to build a circular maze that ends in the center. Or go outside and let her make a maze using sidewalk chalk on your driveway or at the playground. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Caught early

Our daughter Morgan seemed uncoordinated, but we thought she’d outgrow it. Then her teacher told us she had trouble coloring and using scissors and that her speech was sometimes unclear.

We took Morgan to the health clinic, where a developmental pediatrician diagnosed her with a learning disability called “dyspraxia.” The doctor explained that kids with dyspraxia can struggle to coordinate the muscles used for writing, running, and even talking. She recommended speech and occupational therapy for Morgan.

We’re glad we learned about our daughter’s condition early. After a few months of therapy, her teacher told us Morgan is starting to enjoy art projects and seems more confident about talking in class. As she matures, we hope she’ll continue to do well in school with a little extra support. ♥



Q & A

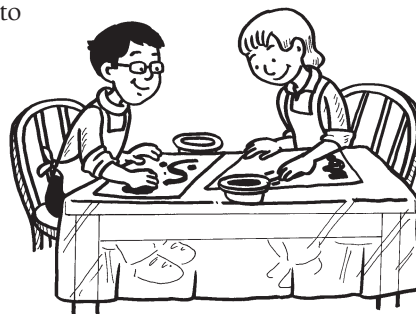
Invite friends over

Q: My son has been in preschool for a few months but hasn’t really made friends. How can I help him?

A: Getting to know one child well may give your son the confidence to approach others. Ask which of his classmates he’d like to have over one day. If he can’t decide, ask his teacher who he seems to get along with best. Then, use the class directory to call that child’s parents to invite him over.

When the friend arrives, suggest activities to help the youngsters play together. You might cover the kitchen table with plastic and let them finger paint, or set out a game like Twister or Operation that will get them laughing.

If the children have fun and play together nicely, ask your son if he’d like to make plans for another day. Soon, he may be having playdates with several classmates! ♥



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