

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2009

Parker Center

## KID BITS



### Growing up

Visiting friends, staying with sitters, or spending the night with relatives can make your child feel more independent. Visits like these will help her adjust to different people and places. And they show her that she can get along okay when she's away from you.

### What's next?

Help improve your youngster's reading comprehension by having him predict story events. When you read aloud, stop and ask him what might happen next. He can look for clues in the pictures or think about how things would turn out in real life. Continue reading, and see if his prediction was accurate.

### Take time to relax

Holiday stress can affect children as well as adults. Taking time for low-key fun will help everyone relax. Talk about activities that your family enjoys (going for walks, coloring), and plan to include them in your day. *Idea:* Consider setting aside a "free" day—you might spend the day at home in your pajamas.

### Worth quoting

"It's okay to make mistakes. Mistakes are our teachers—they help us to learn." *John Bradshaw*

### Just for fun

**Timmy:** Can I go back outside?

**Mom:** Yes. Here are your boots.

**Timmy:** Those aren't my boots—mine had snow on them!



## Play with me

For little ones, play time is learning time. When you join your child for a quick game of cards or spend an afternoon making a racetrack together, you teach him valuable skills. Here are some ideas.

### Make believe

Pretend play lets your youngster use his imagination and practice life skills. For example, the two of you might "fix" a table with toy tools, line up chairs and ride an imaginary train, or take turns serving food in a make-believe restaurant. Help your child learn to carry on conversations by asking him questions, such as "Where is our train going?" or "What do you want for lunch?"

### Plan a project

Ask your youngster to make something with you. He can practice planning and decision making as you work together to paint a mural, design a block city, or build a snowman. Let him decide which colors to use, where roads should go, or how to decorate the snowman.



### Enjoy friendly competition

Games teach your child to take turns, follow rules, and be a good sport—skills that help him get along with others. Together, play a game like dominoes, Memory, or Twister. Whether you win or lose, say, "Good game!" and encourage him to do the same.

*Tip:* Playing with your youngster can also prevent discipline problems. When you spend time together, he'll be less likely to misbehave later to get your attention. ♥

## Writing basket

Motivate your youngster to write by keeping writing supplies handy in a basket or tote bag. Try these suggestions.

● **Notepads.** Put in pencils, a pad of sticky notes, and a notebook. Suggest that your child walk around the house and copy words from book titles or product labels onto the sticky notes. Have her put them on separate notebook pages and make up a sentence for each word ("I love pizza").

● **Stationery.** Cut lined paper into halves, and let your youngster decorate each sheet with stickers. Add stamped envelopes and colored pens, and help her write and mail letters. She can also use her stationery to write stories.

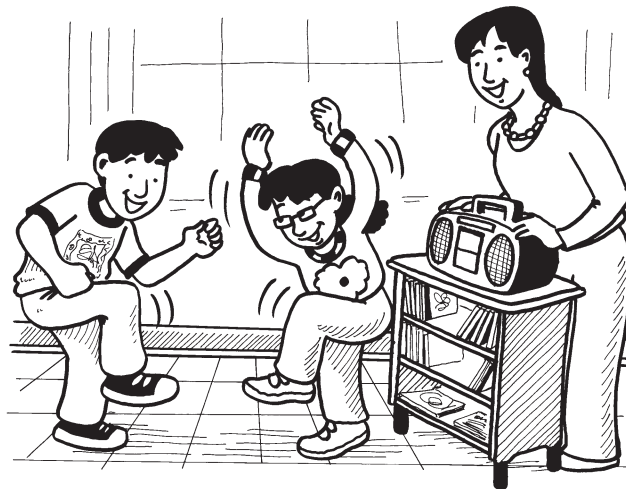
*Tip:* Ask your child to read her writing to you. ♥



## Make music

Children love to listen to music and sing, dance, and play along. But did you know that music can help build success in school, too? Use these tips to help your youngster get the most out of songs.

**Movements.** Play songs that include movements, such as “If You’re Happy and You Know It” and “The Wheels on the Bus.” Ask her to follow the directions (clap your hands, go round and round) as she sings along. She’ll sharpen her listening and



repeat it. Then, it’s her turn to make a rhythm for you to repeat. Or put music on the radio, and encourage her to play along to the beat. She can pat her knees, use toy instruments, or hit a pot with a spoon. ♥

memory skills. *Tip:* Look for children’s CDs at the library, or play songs on a computer (try sites like <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/musicchild.htm>).

**Patterns.** Use music to teach your youngster to recognize patterns—a skill she’ll use in math. Make a rhythm, such as two quiet taps followed by a loud one, and ask her to

### ACTIVITY CORNER

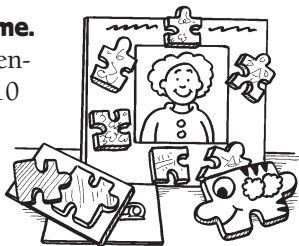
## Puzzle fun



Do you have jigsaw puzzles with missing pieces or ones that your child has outgrown? Your youngster can put them to good use by making inexpensive gifts for teachers, friends, and relatives. These projects will boost his creativity and hand–eye coordination.

### 1. Picture frame.

Cut out the center of an 8 x 10 inch piece of cardboard, leaving a frame that’s 2 inches wide.



Have your youngster spread glue on the frame and cover it with puzzle pieces.

**2. Pins.** Let your little one overlap several puzzle pieces into a design he likes and glue them together. When his creation dries, help him glue on a pin backing.

**3. Refrigerator magnets.** Your child can paint designs on puzzle pieces. Or he could make “puzzle people” or “puzzle animals” by gluing on googly eyes, tiny pompoms, or buttons. Add a strip of magnetic tape to the back. ♥

### PARENT TO PARENT

## Practice makes perfect

My son Eric always wanted me to push him on the swing because he couldn’t figure out how to do it by himself. I explained that he would learn only if he practiced—the same way he had learned to ride a tricycle.

So, I sat on another swing and showed him how to stretch his legs out as he goes forward and then bend his knees as he goes backward. Next, I taught him to lean back slightly and pull on the ropes to keep up his momentum. We ended each playground trip with me pushing him for a while so he could have fun while he was still learning.

After a couple of weeks, Eric could swing by himself. And I pointed out that he had learned a bigger lesson: practice really does pay off! ♥



### Q & A

## Coping with teasing

**Q:** My daughter is being teased at school. What can I do?

**A:** Frequent teasing is a form of bullying, and it can make your child feel bad about herself. Start by listening to her when she talks to you so she’ll know that you take it seriously.

Then, help her practice different reactions. She might just shrug her shoulders and walk away. Or she

could say something like, “That’s not nice.” Teach her to use an “I message,” such as “I don’t like it when you make fun of me.” Or she might stop the teaser simply by agreeing with him: “I know I’m short—it’s fine with me!”

If the teasing continues, your daughter should ask an adult at school for help. In the meantime, give her teacher a call so she can keep an eye on the situation. ♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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