

# How I Help My Child <sup>With A</sup> 🗝️😊

(Excerpt 50 pages)



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# **Helping Your Child Be Healthy and Fit With Activities For Children Aged 4 to 11**

**By Carol S. Katzman and Carolyn R. McCary**

**with Deborah Kidushim-Allen, R.D.**

Edited by Cynthia Hearn Dorfman and Russell J. Hall

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## INTRODUCTION

Long-term good health is less an accident than the result of good habits and wise choices. To enjoy good health now and in the future, youngsters must learn how to eat, exercise, sleep, control stress, and be responsible for personal cleanliness and reducing the risk of disease. In addition, they need to be aware of what to do in an emergency and when to say “no”.

Habits that include eating nutritious foods and understanding the relationship between physical and emotional health will help your child grow up healthy. Your child’s ability to learn and the chances for a longer and more productive life can be greatly improved by developing and following good health practices.

### **First of All, Your Child Is Special**

The mental and emotional health of your child is just as important as physical health. From the earliest moment, a child needs to feel that he or she is special and cared about by family members and friends.

A child who enjoys good mental and emotional health is able to approach new situations with confidence. When children are comfortable with themselves, they can express their emotions in a positive way. As children learn to value themselves and develop confidence in their ability to make responsible decisions, they are building a sense of self-worth or self-esteem.

Parents and teachers share the responsibility for helping children build self-confidence. A child who is confident is more successful in everyday interactions with peers and adults. Confidence in one’s ability to learn new and difficult skills can affect future achievement, as well. Developing a trusting relationship with your child, establishing open communication, and recognizing personal achievements are all important. When children know they can do something well, it makes them feel special.

### **Get Ready, Get Set, Grow Up Healthy**

From the time your child is born, there are ways in which you can help your child learn how to grow up healthy. This book has activities that help children

- \* understand their emotions and build self-esteem;
- \* eat the right foods;
- \* prevent disease;
- \* and build strong bodies.

The book also has safety tips, ways to help your child say “no” to drugs, a section on parents and the schools, a bibliography, and a chart to help you keep track of your child’s vaccinations.

## THE BASICS

### **Does This Mean I Can't Eat Ice Cream?**

Good nutrition does not mean that your children cannot eat their favorite foods or that they must eat foods they do not like. Good nutrition means variety and moderation in a person's diet. Choosing what foods to eat is important in pursuing a healthy life. Your children may choose to eat certain foods because they taste good or because they are available. Make nutritious foods available and monitor the "sometimes" foods—sugary snacks and fatty desserts.

### **I'd Rather Play**

Good health is a blend of physical and emotional well-being. Exercises are basic elements of physical fitness that should be part of play.

Aerobic exercises, such as jogging or jumping, that increase the heartbeat, strengthen the heart and muscles, improve endurance, condition the total body, and help prevent disease. Anaerobic, slow, stretching exercises improve flexibility and muscular fitness. Both types of exercise are important and fun.

### **I'm Afraid and I'm Unhappy**

We all face stressful situations. With family members, with teachers, with friends, and with strangers problems can arise that make your child feel anxious, nervous, confused, or frightened. Too much stress or the wrong kind of stress can make it difficult for children to learn. Helping your child learn appropriate and healthy ways of handling stress, through exercise, proper sleep, discussing problems with an adult, or breaking down jobs into manageable parts, for example, is important.

### **You Sneezed Right in My Face!**

A healthy lifestyle includes habits that will help your child avoid diseases caused by germs. Material carrying germs can be transferred through handshaking, kissing, coughing, sneezing, or by other means of direct contact. Most shared items have germs on them. Teaching your child how to reduce the transmission of germs can help your child, as well as others, stay healthy.

### **I Don't Feel Well!**

A clean environment will support the health and well-being of your child now and in the future. You can begin by having a healthy home that is free of dirt, dust, and germs, as well as dangerous substances such as radon or lead. Make sure, too, that poisonous substances, such as household cleaners and pesticides, are kept away from children. You can also take precautions in preparing foods by washing them carefully and cooking them at the recommended temperature. Outside the home, you can work with others to help combat excessive pollution in your community.

## IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

### Nutrition and Your Child

They went to the cupboard... Today, feeding children is based on concerns about heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and high blood pressure. There is reason to be concerned. More than 20 percent of Western children are overweight with a good chance that 50 to 70 percent of them will remain overweight as adults. It is important for parents to set good examples of healthful eating. Research shows that children develop eating habits similar to those of their parents. While it is a parent's job to provide balanced selections from the five food groups, children can be allowed a certain amount of freedom to choose what and how much they eat.

Poor eating habits and craving for sugar snacks and fatty foods may develop if parents fail to direct the decision making process. Remember that the issue isn't "good foods" versus "bad foods". If children balk at food put before them, don't worry. Studies show children will, over time, eat the amount of food that is right for them if they are offered healthful choices. You can't expect a child to want to eat broccoli if chips are offered, or drink milk or orange juice when parents are drinking sodas. Of course, an occasional high fat food, gooey dessert, sugary snack, or soda is permissible, provided they are not substitutes for nutritious foods. Parents can make eating a pleasure for the entire family by helping create positive attitudes about food that will lead to a lifetime of good health.

What are the five food groups, and how can we help the entire family eat a balanced diet? The food guide pyramid on this page shows how to select a balanced diet and how to teach your child to make wise choices.

How many servings do you need each day?

	Many women, older adults about	Children, teen girls, active women, most men about	Teen boys, active men about
Calorie level*	1,600	2,200	2,800
Bread Group Servings	6	9	11
Vegetable Group Serving	3	4	5
Fruit Group Servings	2	3	4
Milk Group Serving	2-3**	2-3**	2-3**
Meat Group Servings	2, for a total of 5 ounces	2, for a total of 6 ounces	3, for a total of 7 ounces
Total Fat (grams)	53	73	93

\* These are the calorie levels if you choose low fat, lean foods from the 5 major food groups and use fats, oils, and sweets group sparingly.

\*\* Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, teenagers, and young adults to age 24 need 3 servings.

A balanced diet includes food from each of the following food groups:

1. grains (bread, cereal, rice, and pasta);
2. fruit (fresh, dried, or unsweetened canned);
3. vegetables (raw or lightly cooked);

4. meat (meat, poultry, fish, dried beans, eggs, and nuts); and
5. dairy (milk, yogurt, and cheese).

Offer your children nutritious choices for meals and snacks. This way you can help them control their own diet. For example, you might offer a choice of an apple, an orange, or a banana. With older children (aged 7 and up) you can start by planning a menu together, letting the children check to make sure it includes all five food groups.

Remember that each of the food groups provides some, but not all, of the nutrients a child needs. Foods in one group can't replace those in another. No one of these major food groups is more important than another. For good health, all are necessary.

What's for breakfast? Many of us do not eat in the morning. Estimates suggest that up to 25 percent of all school-aged children leave the house without breakfast.

You may think that breakfast is just another meal. For a child, breakfast provides much needed energy (calories) to start the day off right. Adults may be able to make up for skipped breakfast by grabbing something on the way to work or while doing morning errands. Your child, however, does not have that opportunity. A nursery school child usually has a mid-morning snack 3 to 5 hours after waking up. After nursery school, few children are offered a morning snack.

Getting your child to eat breakfast isn't always easy. Try to tune into your child's morning personality. A sleepyhead may need a quick breakfast. An early riser may like to eat breakfast before getting dressed. If this conflicts with your morning schedule, let your children get their own breakfast. Even a 6-year-old can open a container of yogurt.

A good breakfast consists of complex carbohydrates and simple sugars (breads, whole grains, fibre, fruits, and vegetables); proteins (dairy, chicken, beef, fish, eggs, nuts, and dried beans), and some fat. Carbohydrates and simple sugars offer quick energy but leave the stomach quickly. A breakfast of only carbohydrates can give a child mid-morning discomfort. When milk, cheese, yogurt, lean meat, or an egg is added, the food stays in the stomach longer and provides sustained energy.

### **It's Child's Play**

Physical fitness is a vital part of being healthy. For children, being and staying physically fit can happen with activities they refer to as PLAY! Play that makes them breathe deeply is aerobic exercise. Aerobic activities such as bicycling, jumping rope, roller skating, running, dancing, and swimming can be beneficial if they are done for 12 to 15 minutes without stopping.

The young child develops an active lifestyle as he or she begins to creep, crawl, and then walk. Young children learn how to move in their environment by playing alone in their own personal space.

As children grow, they hop, march, run, roll, toss, bounce, and kick. Their bodies are changing in terms of height and weight, and they are beginning to form a self-concept through comparison with others as they move.

When play is organized into specific movements, it becomes exercise. For exercise to become part of each day, these movements or activities should meet the interests and needs of your child. Play is the beginning. Children can follow their own paths to lifetime fitness by exercising for fun and at their own pace.

Watching too much TV can deprive your child of opportunities to play and exercise. Set a good example. Limit TV watching. Walk to your destination as often as possible. Play active games with your child. Help form neighborhood sports teams and participate in the recreation.

Everyone can exercise. Certain exercises keep your heart and lungs healthy. Strong, flexible muscles can be developed with exercise. As your child achieves fitness through exercise, a growing self-confidence will be another benefit of a fitness routine.

### **Let's Stay Well**

Reducing the risk of disease is a major goal in helping your child grow up healthy. Bacteria and viruses cause disease and sickness, and cleanliness can help prevent the spread of these germs. Sharing such items as a comb, toothbrush, hairbrush, or cup, even among family members, can also spread disease. Having clean clothes and daily baths shows children that being clean not only feels good, but also helps them stay well.

You can teach your children to wash their hands at an early age. Tell your children that skin can stop germs from entering the body, and washing can reduce the risk of infection if your child has a cut or scrape.

Explain, too, that harmful germs and viruses can be spread by a sneeze or a cough. Teach your child to stay away from people who are sneezing and coughing. Children can help prevent the spread of disease if they cover their sneezes or coughs with a tissue.

Everybody has an internal disease fighting system (immune system) made of antibodies and white blood cells. Your child can help that immune system function well by getting enough sleep, by eating nutritious meals, and by exercising.

Vaccinations also prevent disease and play an important part in helping your child grow up healthy. The idea of having a shot may be frightening to a child. Help your child understand that this vaccination is a medicine that prevents disease. It's a lot more fun to be playing with friends than to be sick.

A vaccination chart for keeping track of immunizations can be found on the inside front cover. The importance of vaccinating children at the appropriate ages cannot be overemphasized.

## ACTIVITIES

The activities that follow are designed to introduce your child to some of the basic ideas of good health. There are activities that focus on understanding emotions and developing self-esteem, those that emphasize nutrition, those that stress cleanliness and caring for your body, and those that promote exercise (see the symbols to the right that indicate the type of activity). These activities are just samples of the many things you can do with your child to enhance awareness of the benefits of good health throughout life. So, get started and have fun!

### Face File

Young children love to cut and paste. They can learn about their emotions at the same time.

What you'll need

Magazines

Pieces of cardboard or construction paper

Paste or glue

Box or folder

What to do

1. Have your child find pictures in magazines to illustrate different feelings.
2. Have your child paste each face on cardboard or construction paper.
3. Together, decide what feeling is expressed by the face and label the picture.
4. Sort the faces by categories of feelings, such as sad, funny, surprised, happy.
5. Use a box or folder to file the pictures.

By looking at the pictures, children can recognize how people feel by their facial expressions.

### A Mirror of Me

Help your child frame a mirror with items that represent the things your child likes.

What you'll need

Small pocket mirror

Lid of a shoebox

Magazines, photographs that can be cut up, paint or an ink pad for thumb prints, or other items that represent your child's interests

Scissors if you wish to cut out pictures

Glue that is strong enough to hold the mirror

What to do

1. Help your child attach a small pocket mirror inside the lid of a shoebox.
2. Have your child decorate the inside of the lid with objects that reflect special interests. Some of the decorations might include a thumb print, photographs, pictures of favorite foods, sports, and hobbies.
3. Have your child look into the mirror to see a wonderful face and the things that make it smile!
4. You might want to hang the framed mirror on the wall of your child's room.

This activity recognizes the things that are important to your child and helps your child realise that an identity is based on one's own interests.

### **Quilt of Many Feelings**

Traditionally, making quilts has been a way for people to express themselves through the use of colour and pattern in a practical way. A quilt of faces can help your child understand how emotions are conveyed through facial expressions.

What you'll need

Colored paper

Markers or crayons

Paste or glue

Large piece of paper (poster paper, a large paper bag cut and laid out flat, wrapping or computer paper)

What to do

1. Using different colors (pastel colors work best), cut the paper into 6" x 6" squares.
2. Have your child draw faces representing feelings they have had:

happy  
loved  
sad  
special  
good  
jealous  
bad  
lonely  
pained

3. Have your child label these emotions.
4. Paste the squares together on a large piece of paper to resemble a patchwork quilt.

Drawing pictures is one way children have of expressing themselves without feeling self-conscious or embarrassed.

### **My Folder**

A folder with your child's name on it can help your child get organized while enhancing self-image.

What you'll need

Dark crayon or marker

Large sheet of paper

What to do

1. Have your child write his or her name or initials many times on a large sheet of paper.
2. Fold the paper in half to create a folder.

3. Place pictures, work from school, or drawings that are important to the child in the folder.

Names are very important to children. Just think of how upset they get when they are called names. Talk with your child about his or her name. Is there a favorite nickname? What does the name mean? Was your child named for someone? This is an opportunity for you and your child to talk together to build a strong self-image.

### **This Is the Way We Wash Our Hands**

Children have to be reminded to wash their hands. This is a way to turn the reminder into fun.

What you'll need

Paper or cardboard

Small slice of soap or a sample soap bar

Glue

What to do

1. Have your child trace around his or her hand on a piece of paper or cardboard.
2. Cut a small slice of soap from a large soap bar or use a small or sample sized bar of soap.
3. Glue the soap onto the paper hand.
4. Hang the poster in the bathroom over the sink to remind your child about hand washing.

Washing your hands is one of the best ways to avoid spreading germs to prevent disease. It is especially important when eating or handling food.

### **Smile If You Like Me**

Make a game out of introducing your child to new foods.

What you'll need

Paper

Round object

Felt tip pen

New foods for your child to sample

What to do

1. Cut paper into three 3"x 3" squares.
2. On each piece of paper, trace around the bottom of a round object with a felt tip pen.
3. Have your child draw three different kinds of faces in the circles: a face with a smile, an unhappy face, and a face with a straight line for a mouth to show "I don't care".
4. Ask your child to try a new or different food. Emphasize that not all the portion has to be eaten: simply try the food and talk about likes and dislikes.
5. Tell your child to give you one of the faces that reflects the feeling about the new food.
6. Post a chart to record new foods your child tries.
7. Set a goal, such as trying one new food a week.

- Reward your child for trying the foods by writing “Good job!” on the chart, putting stickers on the chart, or celebrating by taking a trip to the local zoo or library when the chart is complete.

This activity gives your child a chance to enjoy and learn about a variety of foods without the pressure of having to “clean your plate” at mealtime. One point to remember when doing this activity is to try not to use food as a reward or bribe.

### **Follow the Recipe!**

One way to get children to eat healthful food, especially vegetables, is to involve them in the selection and preparation of a recipe.

What you’ll need

A simple recipe

Paper and pencil to write a list

Tray

Utensils and other equipment with which to cook

What to do

- Choose a simple recipe to prepare.
- Write a shopping list from the recipe. Check the nutritional value of the ingredients by reading the nutrition label aloud with your child.
- Take the children to the market. The supermarket is the perfect place to introduce the older ones to label reading. For children over age 6, see who can find the products with the most sugars, fats, and salt. Explain that the first ingredient listed is what the food has the most of. Then, hunt for alternative, healthier foods.
- Allow children to feel the weight and texture of vegetables.  
Handling hits and vegetables will help them learn how to distinguish between ripe, unripe, or spoiled produce.
- Have children help you put away groceries. Pre-school children enjoy washing fruits and vegetables, and you can explain the proper way to wash them to remove dirt and insecticides. Have them store fresh vegetables in the refrigerator, explaining this will help retain vitamins and help the vegetables stay fresh longer. Have them store root vegetables (potatoes and onions) in a cool, dry place away from light.
- Place all the ingredients you will need for the recipe on a tray to make cooking more efficient.
- Keep tasks simple and within the child’s abilities. Toddlers can stir an egg, mix ingredients, spread jams or peanut butter, or carry pots and pans. Older children love to measure dry ingredients and enjoy the challenge of pouring liquids without spilling.

Pediatricians recommend that parents should get more involved with their children. What better way than by making a game out of cooking, a necessary task but one in which everyone can be involved. Having your children participate in food selection can help you manage food choices for toddlers, pre-school children, and primary school children.

### **Oven-Fried Potatoes**

NOTE: This activity requires parental supervision.

Here is a healthy recipe that you might want to try.

What you'll need

3 medium potatoes, peeled or unpeeled

2 tablespoons low calorie margarine, melted

1 ½ tablespoons olive or vegetable oil

Paprika

Parmesan cheese, grated (optional)

What to do

1. Cut potatoes lengthwise into strips about 4" x ½" x ¼"
2. Arrange in a single layer on a nonstick baking sheet.
3. Pour margarine and oil over potatoes and toss to coat well.
4. Sprinkle with paprika (young children enjoy doing this).
5. Bake at 450 degrees for 40 minutes.
6. Put on serving platter; sprinkle with cheese if desired.

Makes 6 servings

Safety tips in the kitchen: Children should not be left unsupervised when electrical appliances, flame, or heat are involved. Be extra careful with moving equipment, such as rotary blades of a mixer, food processor, blender, or hand mixer. Knives, scissors, and the like are best for older children. Remind children that handles of utensils on a stove top should be turned inward. Stirring spoons (especially metal ones) should have long handles and be kept away from the heat. Keep an eye on children near stoves, no matter what age and keep small children away from heat of any kind.

### **Sticks & Stones Snack**

Here is a snack that your children will have fun making and enjoy eating while getting needed nutrients.

What you'll need

4 cups of cereal (low sugar cereal)

2 cups of pretzel sticks

2 cups of raisins

Mixing bowl

What to do

1. Mix the cereal, pretzel sticks, and raisins in a mixing bowl.
2. Eat as a "between meal" snack. Makes about 8 cups.

This recipe was adapted from 'Kid's Recipe Magic', 1990.

Children need about 9 servings a day from the bread and cereal group and 3 servings of fruits. This snack can help meet these nutritional requirements.

## **Brushhhh!**

Playing and singing with children can help make tooth brushing an enjoyable experience.

What you'll need

Toothbrush (child sized in a favorite color or with a favorite cartoon character on it)

Toothpaste (you might try toothpastes especially made for children)

Wash cloth for young children

Children's dental floss.

What to do

1. When it is time for your children to brush their teeth, sing a silly song together about tooth brushing:

This is the way we brush our teeth,  
Brush our teeth,  
Brush our teeth,  
This is the way we brush our teeth,  
So early in the morning!

2. Make sound effects—"ZOOM, ZOOM, ZOOM .... or VROOM, VROOM, VROOM" when you watch them brush.

3. Have your children name their teeth and use their names: "Now don't forget Cutters, Doggies, and Chompers!" (Children often find it interesting that dentists call some teeth "canines.")

Before your baby even has teeth, clean the gums with a wet cloth after feeding. When teeth start to come in, brush with a soft toothbrush and water. At about age 3, teach your child to brush as follows: start at the gum and gently massage under the gum, then work the toothbrush around the teeth in a gentle, circular motion. Floss teeth daily when all the baby teeth are in.

## **To Share or Not To Share?**

Telling the difference between personal items that should not be shared and those things that are to be shared can be a hard distinction for children to make.

What you'll need

Newspapers or magazines

Large pieces of paper

Glue

Red pen or marker

Scissors

What to do

1. Have your child collect pictures of a toothbrush, cup, comb, hairbrush, and spoon or fork from newspapers or magazines.

2. Ask your child to paste the pictures on a large piece of paper.
3. With a red felt tip marker or pen, have your child put an X or \ through each picture.
4. Title the poster, “Things I Do Not Share”.
5. Have your child collect pictures of objects that he or she does share. These can be pictures of toys, pets, and books.
6. Use these pictures to make a poster with the title “Things I Share”.

Remind your children that disease is spread by the hands and through the mouth, so they shouldn't share toothbrushes, cups, spoons, or forks. head lice are spread by combs and brushes. Working with your child to make the posters will help you explain these points, while emphasizing that there are many things we can share.

### **I Do It For Me**

How can I take care of myself? Here is an activity that will take advantage of your child's growing independence while emphasizing healthful responsibility.

What you'll need

Paper

Marker or crayon

What to do

1. With your child, make a chart that lists healthful responsibilities:
  - I take a bath.
  - I wear clean clothes.
  - I brush my teeth at least twice each day.
  - I wash my hair.
  - I wash my hands before eating.
  - I wash my hands after going to the bathroom.
  - I use my own brush or comb and don't let anyone else use it.
  - I get plenty of sleep.

The list can include other items that you and your child think should be on the list.
2. Make a box for each day of the week after each responsibility.
3. Have your child check off the things done each day.
4. At the end of the week, write WOW over the responsibilities or place a sticker over those completed during the week.

It is important that children learn to take responsibility for the care of their bodies. Having a chart helps them develop self-reliance and helps to make life calmer for both of you.

## **Hold that Tiger!**

Children love animals and they love to imitate. Combine these two interests to inspire exercise.

What you'll need

Magazines or newspapers

Cardboard or paper

Paste or glue

Scissors

An open space in which to move

What to do

1. Collect pictures of different animals.
2. Paste each picture on a different piece of cardboard.
3. Place the cards face down on a table and mix them up.
4. Have your child select a card and turn the card over to reveal the animal picture on the other side.
5. Have your child imitate the movements of the animal on the card. For example:

rabbit hop

horse gallop

turtle crawl

elephant slow lumbering walk, clasp hands together and swing arms side to side like a trunk.

frog leap

tiger fluid, smooth, sliding steps

These movements will help your child develop body awareness, space awareness, and coordination.

## **Warm Up**

Use one or more of the following exercises to have your child warm up before doing more vigorous exercises.

All exercises have been adapted from 'Get Fit!'

What to do

1. **Arm Circles.** Stand tall with knees slightly bent. Rise on your toes and slowly circle your arms inward and upward, until arms are straight over head. Inhale deeply. Continue circling your arms backward and downwards while lowering your heels and exhaling. Do this exercise slowly and smoothly. Repeat 5 times.
2. **Swinging March.** Stand up straight with feet shoulder-width apart, hands at your sides. Alternate right and left arms in forward circle motions. At the same time, lift your opposite knee so that when the right arm is circling forward the left knee is raised and vice versa. Do 10 complete circles with each arm and then switch arms to swing backward. Repeat 10 full circles with each arm.
3. **Pendulum Push.** Stand straight with arms at your side. Step to right, bending your right knee. Raise arms overhead and push toward the ceiling. At the same time, rise on your right toes and lift your left leg off the ground, keeping all the weight on the right foot. Put your left leg back on the ground,

bending both knees and placing hands on shoulders. Repeat to the left side. Repeat 10 times on each side.

4. **Jumping Jacks.** Stand straight with feet together. Jump up and land with your feet shoulder-width apart as you swing arms to shoulder height. Jump back to starting position while clapping your hands over your head. Jump up and land with feet apart while bringing your arms back to shoulder height. Jump back to starting position while lowering arms to your sides. Repeat this 4-part jumping jack 10-20 times at a slow, controlled pace.

Children should warm up their bodies for about five minutes to get muscles and joints ready for action and to prevent injury. They will be warmed up when they start to sweat and breathe heavier.

### **Stretch**

Muscles should be stretched after they've been warmed up.

What to do

1. **Back Scratch Stretch.** Have your child stand or sit to do this exercise. Raise the right hand in the air with the palm facing to the back. Bend the elbow and place the palm of the hand on the back between the shoulders. Bring the left hand behind the back to try to touch the right hand. Hold 10-30 seconds. Repeat two times on each side. Do not force the stretch.
2. **Knee High Stretch.** While standing, lift left knee toward chest. Place left hand under knee and pull leg up to stretch the back of leg and lower back. Keep the standing leg slightly bent. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat twice on each side.
3. **Thigh Stretch.** Keeping body upright, grasp left foot behind you with left hand. Slowly pull leg back so that the knee moves away from your body until you feel a stretch in the front of your leg. Hold 10-30 seconds. Repeat twice with each leg.
4. **Calf Stretch.** With hands against a wall, put right leg behind you. Keep right heel on the floor and very slightly bend the right knee. Lean forward until you feel a pull in your calf and behind your ankle. Hold 10-30 seconds. Repeat twice with each leg.

Stretching helps prevent muscles and joints from getting injured. Stretching makes the body more flexible so your child will be able to move easily. Stretching also helps your child relax.

### **Run For It!**

After you've warmed up and stretched, you're ready to run.

What to do

1. **Beginner.** Jog 2 minutes/walk 1 minute for a total of 15 minutes. Repeat. Do this at least three times a week.
2. **Intermediate.** Jog 4 minutes/walk 1 minute. Do this for about 15-20 minutes at least three times a week. After about two weeks, reduce the amount of walking to 30 seconds. Gradually build up to about 30 minutes using this pattern.
3. **Advanced.** Continuously jog for 20 minutes. If you like jogging, you can run for longer periods time.

Aerobic activities strengthen your child's heart and lungs by requiring lots of oxygen and making the heart beat faster. Walking, swimming, running, and dancing are examples of aerobic exercises.

## **Keep Going!**

These exercises will help your child build muscle strength and endurance.

What to do

1. **Push Ups.** Get down on your hands and knees and position yourself so that your back is straight, head in line with your spine. Hands should be placed slightly outside your shoulders, fingers pointed forward, feet on the ground. Slowly lower your body until your chest touches the floor. Return to starting position. Once you can do 20-25 push ups with your knees bent, advance to the straight-leg position on your hands and toes. Try to do 10 straight-leg push ups at a time.
2. **Curl Ups.** Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place your arms across your chest, hands on opposite shoulders. Slowly curl your head, shoulders, and upper back off the floor, bringing elbows to thighs. Breathe out as you curl up and return to starting position while breathing in. Repeat 10 times. You might find it helpful to have someone hold your feet to the ground.

Curl Ups build strong stomach muscles, and Push Ups build strong arm muscles.

## **Cool Down**

After doing aerobic or muscle exercises, your child is ready to cool down.

What to do

1. Have your child walk around for a few minutes to make sure breathing is back to normal and that the heart is NOT beating fast.
2. Your child should feel slightly relaxed when it is time to do stretches.
3. Doing the stretching exercises given on previous pages or others, have your child stretch all major joints and muscle groups, especially those used in the workout.
4. Have your child work on flexibility, since it's easier to stretch warm muscles.

Children should cool down after vigorous exercise to get their breathing back to normal. Cooling down also keeps muscles from becoming sore and stiff.

## **MORE IDEAS**

Here are some more ideas that will help your child grow up healthy.

### **Safety First**

Be aware of ways to prevent accidents and be able to identify how accidents are caused. Teach your children to pick up toys off the floor and stairs. When cooking, try to use the back burners, making sure that pot handles and spoons are turned toward the back of the stove. Use safety latches on cabinets that contain cleaning fluids or knives and other dangerous utensils. Cover electrical outlets with plastic devices made for this purpose. And always be sure to keep an eye out for your children!

Identify safety rules and practices to prevent accidents at home, at school, and during recreational activities. Look for playground and swimming pool rules that give safety precautions, and explain them to your children. Make sure your child wears safety equipment for specific activities: a helmet when riding a bike and knee and elbow pads when roller skating, roller blading, or skate boarding. Have your child practice hand signals while bike riding. For the car, make a “Buckle Your Seat Belt” sign and place it where children can see it.

Be aware of peer pressure. Observe your children in social situations, and listen closely when they talk with you about things that happen at school or on the playground. Get to know the parents of your children’s friends and try to attend as many functions in which your child is involved as you can.

Teach your children how to protect themselves. Have them practice saying “No.” Tell them not to talk to strangers, to always walk with a friend, and to avoid isolated areas such as woods or vacant lots. If your child is followed by a car, he or she should run away to a friend or neighbor’s house. Teach your children to be alert and to scream if someone grabs them. Keep the lines of communication open, so that your children will tell you if someone touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Work with your school and neighborhood to have the police brief your children about safety precautions and start a “safe home” program where neighbors display a sign in the window to show children that if they are in danger they can go to that house.

### Response to Emergencies

Recognize and learn appropriate responses to emergency situations, such as fires, lightning, tornadoes, and earthquakes. Teach your children the proper uses of fire and fire safety. Plan a home fire escape with your children and practice it often. Also, show children what to do if their clothes catch fire (STOP where you are, DROP to the ground, and ROLL to put out the flames). Make sure your children know how to dial the emergency number 999. Post it and other emergency numbers near the telephone where they will be easily seen. In the event of a tornado, teach your children that the safest place to go is the basement or interior room or hallway on the bottom floor of the house. In an earthquake, teach children to get under a desk or table, and stay away from windows. If your children are outside during a storm and there is lightning, teach them not to stand under or near a tree. Trees tend to attract lightning, because they are so tall.

### First Aid

The best rule of thumb is, “When in doubt, call the doctor.” Know the symptoms that require a doctor’s care: intense pain, high fever, excessive bleeding, unconsciousness, difficulty breathing. Emphasize to your children that the best way to care for a minor cut or scrape is to wash it with soap and water and cover with a bandage if the cut is bleeding or will be exposed to dirt. If possible, take a first aid course from the Red Cross, your local YM/YWCA, or other organization to learn the procedures in life-threatening situations, such as choking or poisoning. Some doctors or health centers have free pamphlets or video tapes on first aid and what to do in case of emergency.

### And They Licked the Platter Clean

- \* If your child won't try vegetables, mix finely grated raw carrots with peanut butter and use as a spread for crackers, bread, apple slices, or bananas.
- \* Puree an egg or egg substitute with cooked or defrosted frozen vegetables and grated cheese. Cook the mixture the same as you would scramble eggs.
- \* Serve vegetables as a first course on a colorful, child-oriented plate and then serve the meat or fish as the second course to be eaten after the vegetables are finished.
- \* Make edible art. Use the plate as the background and have each child add apple sauce for clouds, shredded lettuce for grass, celery sticks for a stem, carrot rounds for flowers, orange slices for leaves, raisins for rocks, and any other edible ingredients for natural scenes.
- \* Most toddlers need to eat more often than older children. Give them favorite, high energy foods and quick and convenient snacks such as slices of fruit and raw vegetables, whole grain breads, crackers, and cereals, or chunks of cheese.
- \* Encourage your children to enjoy and learn about a variety of foods. All foods can fit into a healthy diet over time.
- \* Introduce new foods to pre-school children. They are more willing to try them and will enjoy practicing their skills with fork and spoon.

### **Growing Up Drug Free**

From the time your child is born, there are things you can do to help your child grow up drug, alcohol, and tobacco free. Here are some guidelines.

- \* Take precautions with medicines and harmful household products.
- \* Respect your child's feelings.
- \* Use effective communication skills; avoid statements that blame, sarcastic remarks, or put downs.
- \* Be certain that rules for behavior are fair and consistent.
- \* Set aside time to be with your child.
- \* Guide your child's activities. Know where your child is at all times and get to know your child's friends.
- \* Set the example for your child.
- \* Have drug, alcohol, and tobacco free parties and activities in your home.
- \* Learn about the school's drug policy.
- \* Ask for help if you need it.

## APPENDICES

### **Parents and the Schools**

The school can be a vital link to your child's well-being. So much of your child's life is spent in school, it is important that you be aware of all the people and situations involved.

Besides the school nurse (who may not be at the school full time), there are many resources you can call on.

Teachers are aware of the whole child and things that might be getting in the way of your child's learning. School counselors can advise on your child's social and emotional well-being. Many school counselors concentrate on helping children build self-esteem, and some work with groups of children with similar problems, such as coping with a divorce or death in the family.

Physical education classes provide an opportunity for exercise, and they foster teamwork. The school cafeteria is a source of well-balanced lunches, many of which are subsidized for low income students. The head teacher or staff can advise on special services provided by the school district for children with handicaps and special learning needs.

The most important thing you can do is stay in contact with the school, especially your child's teacher. Listen carefully to the teacher, because the teacher will often spot problems or warning signs of serious trouble before you might notice them.

It is also important for you to tell the teacher if your child has a serious health problem or is experiencing an emotional crisis at home. It is imperative for the school to know if your child is on medication and what it is, who should be contacted in case of an emergency, and what to look for in your child's behavior that might be a warning sign of the onset of a medical emergency. Your child's welfare is a partnership between the parent and the school. If a serious medical condition exists, private or community health services should be consulted.

What can you expect of the school?

The head teacher should:

- \* give parents a clear policy on taking medication during school hours.
- \* provide opportunities for staff to learn about medical emergencies.
- \* establish a resource file on health issues for teachers and staff to read.
- \* schedule building repairs, cleaning, or painting when students are out of the building during vacations or the summer.

The school nurse should:

- \* maintain health records on all students with chronic diseases.
- \* alert staff members about students with serious health conditions.
- \* inform parents if they suspect a serious health problem.
- \* administer medication according to school policy.
- \* Work with the parent/teacher organization to provide educational programs on medical conditions that affect a large number of students.

The teacher should:

- \* know the early warning signs of a medical emergency.
- \* develop a clear procedure for handling schoolwork missed due to illness.

- \* understand the side effects of medication, for example, drowsiness, anxiety, withdrawal.
- \* educate classmates about special medical conditions of students in the class, while respecting confidentiality.
- \* reduce health hazards in the classroom.
- \* encourage students with health problems to participate in classroom activities as much as possible.
- \* allow a student to do quiet activities if a medical condition prevents full participation.

These are just some of the actions that school personnel can take to make the school a safer and friendlier place for your child. Remember that when children are well and comfortable, they learn more.

### **What We Can Do To Help Our Children Learn:**

Listen to them and pay attention to their problems.

Read with them.

Tell family stories.

Limit their television watching.

Have books and other reading materials in the house.

Look up words in the dictionary with them.

Encourage them to use an encyclopedia.

Share favorite poems and songs with them.

Take them to the library—get them their own library.

Take them to museums and historical sites, when possible.

Discuss the daily news with them.

Go exploring with them and learn about plants, animals, and local geography.

Find a quiet place for them to study.

Review their homework.

Meet with their teachers.

Do you have other ideas?

### **Recommended Web Sites:**

MedlinePlus: Child and Teen Health Topics

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childandteenhealth.html>

Health: Wanna learn all about vaccines? What should you do after you touch raw meat? What are Antihistamines used for?

[http://www.kids.gov/k\\_health.htm](http://www.kids.gov/k_health.htm)

# **Helping Your Child Get Ready For School**

With Activities For Children From Birth Through Age 5

**Edited by Russell J. Hall**

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## FOREWORD

### “Why”

This is the question we parents are always trying to answer. It’s good that children ask questions: that’s the best way to learn. All children have two wonderful resources for learning—imagination and curiosity. As a parent, you can awaken your children to the joy of learning by encouraging their imagination and curiosity.

Helping Your Child Get Ready for School is one in a series of books on different education topics intended to help you make the most of your child’s natural curiosity. Teaching and learning are not mysteries that can only happen in school. They also happen when parents and children do simple things together.

For instance, you and your child can: sort the socks on laundry day—sorting is a major function in math and science; cook a meal together—cooking involves not only math and science but good health as well; tell and read each other stories—storytelling is the basis for reading and writing (and a story about the past is also history); or play a game of hopscotch together—playing physical games will help your child learn to count and start on a road to lifelong fitness.

By doing things together, you will show that learning is fun and important. You will be encouraging your child to study, learn, and stay in school.

This book is a way for you to help meet these goals. It will give you a short rundown on facts, but the biggest part of the book is made up of simple, fun activities for you and your child to do together. Your child may even beg you to do them.

As it has been said:

“The first teachers are the parents, both by example and conversation. But don’t think of it as teaching. Think of it as fun.”

So, let’s get started. I invite you to find an activity in this book and try it.

## LEARNING BEGINS EARLY

The road to success in school begins early. Good health, loving relationships, and opportunities to learn all help preschool children do well later in life. But many parents wonder, “How can I give these things to my child?”

This book is for all of you who have asked this question. It’s for parents, grandparents, and others who want to know what to do to help young children get ready for school. Throughout the pre-school years, you can do many simple things to help your child grow, develop, and have fun learning. This book:

- \* Describes the qualities and skills that youngsters need to get a good start in kindergarten or nursery school;
- \* Tells what to expect from pre-school children each year from birth to age 5;
- \* Suggests easy activities that help children grow and develop; and
- \* Explains how to encourage enthusiasm toward school and teachers and make it easier for children to adjust to nursery school.

Special sections in the back of the book tell how to monitor television viewing and find good programmers; and explain how to find suitable child care.

Parents and care-givers are busy people. Most of us have many responsibilities: jobs outside the home, laundry to wash, and groceries to buy. When we are tired and under stress, it’s often hard to feel we are being the best parents.

But however busy we may be, there are lots of things we can do to help our children get ready for school—little things that make a big difference. Many of them cost little or nothing and can be done as you go about your daily routines.

Mothers and fathers aren’t the only people who help children get ready for school. Entire communities share this job. Businesses, schools, government agencies, and religious and civic organizations help out. So do day-care providers, doctors and other health professionals, elected officials, relatives, and neighbors. But no one is more important than parents, because life’s most basic lessons are learned early and at home. The first 5 years are when the groundwork for future development is laid.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE READY FOR SCHOOL?

There is no one quality or skill that children need to do well in school, but a combination of things contributes to success. These include good health and physical well being, social and emotional maturity, language skills, an ability to solve problems and think creatively, and general knowledge about the world.

As you go about helping your child develop in each of these areas, remember

- \* Children develop at different rates, and
- \* Most children are stronger in some areas than in others.

Remember, too, that being ready for school depends partly on what the school expects. One school may think it's very important for children to sit quietly and know the alphabet. Another may believe it's more important for children to get along well with others.

Children who match the school's expectations may be considered better prepared. You may want to visit your child's school to learn what the head teacher and staff expect and discuss any areas of disagreement.

While schools may have different priorities, most educators agree that the following areas are important for success.

### GOOD HEALTH AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Young children need nutritious food, enough sleep, safe places to play, and regular medical care. These things help children get a good start in life and lessen the chances that they will later have serious health problems or trouble learning.

Good health for children begins before birth with good prenatal care. Visit a doctor or medical clinic throughout your pregnancy. In addition, eat nourishing foods, avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful drugs, and get plenty of rest.

Pregnant women who don't take good care of themselves increase their chances of giving birth to children who:

- \* Are low in birth weight, making them more likely to have lifelong health and learning problems;
- \* Develop asthma;
- \* Are mentally retarded;
- \* Develop speech and language problems;
- \* Have short attention spans; or
- \* Become hyperactive.

If your child already has some of these problems, it is a good idea to consult your doctor, your school district, or community agencies as soon as possible.

Good health for children continues after birth with a balanced diet. School-aged children can concentrate better in class if they eat nutritionally balanced meals. These should include breads, cereals, and other grain products; fruits; vegetables; meat, poultry, fish and alternatives (such as eggs and dried beans and peas); and milk, cheese, and yogurt. Avoid too many fats and sweets.

Children aged 2-5 generally can eat the same foods as adults but in smaller portions. Your child's doctor or clinic can provide advice on feeding babies and toddlers under the age of 2.

Help is available for parents who need food in order to make sure their children get a balanced diet. For information and to find out if you are eligible, contact your local health department.

Pre-school children require regular medical and dental checkups and immunizations. It's important to find a doctor or a clinic where children can receive routine health care as well as special treatment if they are sick or injured.

Children need immunizations beginning around the age of 2 months to prevent nine diseases: measles, mumps, German measles (rubella), diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, Hib (Haemophilus influenza type b), polio, and tuberculosis. These diseases can have serious effects on physical and mental development. Regular dental checkups should begin at the latest by the age of 3.

Pre-school children need opportunities to exercise and develop physical coordination. To learn to control large muscles, children need to throw balls, run, jump, climb, and dance to music. To learn to control small muscles, particularly in the hands and fingers, they need to color with crayons, put together puzzles, use blunt-tipped scissors, and zip jackets. In nursery school, they will build upon these skills.

Parents of youngsters with disabilities should see a doctor as soon as a problem is suspected. Early intervention can help these children develop to their full potential.

### SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

Young children are often very excited about entering school. But when they do, they can face an environment that's different from what they are used to at home. In nursery school, they will need to work well in large groups and get along with new adults and other children. They will have to share the teacher's attention with other youngsters. The classroom routines may also be different.

Most 5-year-olds do not start school with good social skills or much emotional maturity. These take time and practice to learn. Nevertheless, children improve their chances for success in nursery school if they have had opportunities to begin developing these qualities:

**Confidence.** Children must learn to feel good about themselves and believe they can succeed. Confident children are more willing to attempt new tasks—and try again if they don't succeed the first time.

**Independence.** Children need to learn to do things for themselves.

**Motivation.** Children must want to learn.

**Curiosity.** Children are naturally curious and must remain so in order to get the most out of learning opportunities.

**Persistence.** Children must learn to finish what they start.

**Cooperation.** Children must be able to get along with others and learn to share and take turns.

**Self-control.** Preschoolers must understand that some behaviors, such as hitting and biting, are inappropriate. They need to learn that there are good and bad ways to express anger.

**Empathy.** Children must learn to have an interest in others and understand how others feel.

Parents, even more than child care centers and good schools, help children develop these skills. Here are some ways you can help your child acquire these positive qualities:

Youngsters must believe that, no matter what, someone will look out for them. Show that you care about your children. They thrive when they have parents or other care-givers who are loving and dependable. Small children need attention, encouragement, hugs, and plenty of lap time. Children who feel loved are more likely to be confident.

Set a good example. Children imitate what they see others do and what they hear others say. When parents exercise and eat nourishing food, children are more likely to do so. When parents treat others with respect, their children probably will, too. If parents share things, their children will learn to be thoughtful of others' feelings.

Have a positive attitude toward learning and toward school. Children come into this world with a powerful need to discover and to explore. Parents need to encourage this curiosity if children are to keep it. Enthusiasm for what children do ("You've drawn a great picture!") helps to make them proud of their achievements.

Children also become excited about school when their parents show excitement. As your child approaches nursery school, talk to him about school. Talk about the exciting activities in nursery school, such as going on field trips and making fun art projects. Be enthusiastic as you describe what he will learn in school—how to read and measure and weigh things, for example.

Provide opportunities for repetition. It takes practice to crawl, pronounce new words, or drink from a cup. Children don't get bored when they repeat things. Instead, repeating things until they are learned helps youngsters build the confidence needed to try something new.

Use appropriate discipline. All children need to have limits set for them. Children whose parents give firm but loving discipline are generally more skilled socially and do better in school than children whose parents set too few or too many limits. Here are some tips.

- \* Direct children's activities, but don't make unnecessary restrictions or try to dominate.
- \* Offer reasons when asking your child to do something (For example, say, "Please move your toy car off the stairs so no one falls over it"—not, "Do it because I said so.").
- \* Listen to your children to find out how they feel and whether they need any special support.
- \* Show love and respect when you are angry. Criticize a child's behavior but not the child (For example, say, "I love you, but it is not okay for you to draw pictures on the walls. I get angry when you do that.").
- \* Help your children make choices and work out problems (You might ask your 4-year-old, "What can we do to keep Kevin from knocking over your blocks?").
- \* Be positive and encouraging. Praise your child for a job well done. Smiles and encouragement go much further to shape good behavior than harsh punishment.

Let children do many things by themselves. Young children need to be closely watched. But they learn to be independent and to develop confidence by doing tasks such as dressing themselves and putting their toys away. It's also important to let them make choices, rather than deciding everything for them. Remember to give them a choice only when there really is one.

Encourage your children to play with other children and be with adults who are not family members. Preschoolers need these social opportunities to learn to see the point of view of others. Young children are more likely to get along with teachers and classmates if they already have had experiences with different adults and children.

## LANGUAGE AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

At nursery school, children participate in many activities that require them to use language and to solve problems. Children who can't or don't communicate easily may have problems in school.

There are many things you can do to help children learn to communicate, solve problems, and develop an understanding of the world. You can

Give your child opportunities to play. Play is how children learn. It is the natural way for them to explore, to become creative, and to develop academic and social skills. Play helps them learn to solve problems—for example, a toy lorry tips over, and children must figure out how to get it upright again. Children learn about geometry, shapes, and balance when they stack up blocks. Playing with others helps children learn how to negotiate.

Talk to your children, beginning at birth. Babies need to hear your voice. A television or the radio can't take the place of your voice because it doesn't respond to coos and babbles. The more you talk to your baby, the more he will have to talk about as he gets older. Talking with children broadens their understanding of language and of the world.

Everyday activities, such as eating dinner or taking a bath, provide opportunities to talk, sometimes in detail, about what's happening and respond to your child. "First let's stick the plug in the drain. Now we'll turn on the water. I see you want to put your rubber duck in the bathtub. That's a good idea. Look, it's yellow, just like the duck in your book."

Listen to your children. Children have their own special thoughts and feelings, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. As their language skills develop, encourage them to talk. Listening is the best way to learn what's on their minds and to discover what they know and don't know, and how they think and learn. It also shows children that their feelings and ideas are valuable.

Answer questions and ask questions, particularly ones that require more than a "yes" or "no" response. While walking in a park, for example, most 2- and 3-year-olds will stop to pick up leaves. You might point out how the leaves are the same, and how they are different. With older children you might ask, "What else grows on trees?"

Questions can help children learn to compare and classify things. Answer your children's questions thoughtfully and, whenever possible, encourage them to answer their own questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Then together with your child try to find the answer.

Read aloud to your children every day. Reading can begin with babies and continue throughout the preschool years. Even though they don't understand the story or the poem, reading together gives children a chance to learn about language, enjoy the sound of your voice, and be close to you. You don't have to be an excellent reader for your child to enjoy this time together. You may also want to take your child to a local library that offers special story hours.

Make reading materials available. Children develop an interest in language and in reading much sooner if they have books and other reading materials around their homes.

Monitor television viewing. Next to parents, television may be our children's most influential teacher. Good television can introduce children to new worlds and promote learning, but poor or too much TV can be harmful.

Be realistic about your children's abilities and interests. Children usually do best in school when parents estimate their abilities correctly. Parents must set high standards and encourage their pre-school children to try new things. Children who aren't challenged become bored. But ones who are

pushed along too quickly, or are asked to do things that don't interest them, can become frustrated and unhappy.

Try to keep your children from being labeled. Labels such as "stupid" have a powerful effect on a child's confidence and school performance. Remember to praise your child for a job well done.

Provide opportunities to do and see things. The more varied the experiences that children have, the more they learn about the world. No matter where you live, your community can provide new experiences. Go for walks in your neighborhood, or go places on the bus. Visit museums, libraries, zoos, and other community resources.

If you live in the city, spend a day in the country (or if you live in the country, spend a day in the city). Let your children hear and make music, dance, and paint. Let them participate in activities that help to develop their imaginations and let them express their ideas and feelings. The following activities can provide your children with these opportunities.

## ACTIVITIES

The activities in this section are simple and are designed to prepare children for school. Most of them grow out of the routine things parents do everyday.

Each section is organized by ages. An age grouping begins with “What to expect”—a list of qualities and behaviors typical of these children. This is followed by “What they need”—a list of things that help these children grow and learn. In a box near the end of each activity are explanations for those who want them. As you go through this section, it is good to remember these points:

Children learn at their own pace. Most move through similar developmental stages, but they have their own timetables. Therefore, the “What to expect” and the “What they need” sections, as well as the ages suggested for the activities, will vary from child to child. An activity listed for a youngster between the ages of 2 and 3 may be fine for one who is younger. Or it may not interest another until he has passed his third birthday.

Some of these activities, while listed under a particular age, are important for all young children. Reading and listening to music, for example, can benefit children from the time they are born. By modifying an activity, you can enable your child to continue to enjoy it as he grows and develops.

Find activities that interest your child. If the one you picked out is too hard, your child may get discouraged. If it’s too easy, he may get bored. Or if your child seems uninterested, try another time. Often children’s interests change as they grow and develop. Try to give toddlers and older children a choice of activities so they learn to think for themselves.

The activities are meant to be fun. Be enthusiastic and avoid lecturing to pre-school children on what they are learning. If your child enjoys the activity, his excitement for learning will increase.

Finally, be sure to make safety a top priority. With that caution in mind, flip through the following pages and find some activities that you and your child can enjoy together.

### BIRTH TO 1 YEAR

#### What to expect

Babies grow and change dramatically during their first year. They begin to:

- \* Develop some control over their bodies. They learn to hold up their heads; roll over; sit up; crawl; stand up; and, in some cases, walk.
- \* Become aware of themselves as separate from others. They learn to look at their hands and toes and play with them. They learn to cry when parents leave, and they recognize their name.
- \* Communicate and develop language skills. First babies cry and make throaty noises. Later they babble and say mama and dada. Then they make lots of sounds and begin to name a few close people and objects.
- \* Play games. First they play with their hands. Later they show an interest in toys, enjoy “putting in and taking out” games, and eventually carry around or hug dolls or stuffed toys.
- \* Relate to others. First they respond to adults more than to other babies. Later they notice other babies but tend to treat them like objects instead of people. Then they pay attention when other babies cry.

#### What they need

Babies require:

- \* A loving care-giver who can respond to their cries and gurgles;
- \* Someone who gets to know their special qualities;
- \* Someone to keep them safe and comfortable;
- \* Opportunities to move about and practice new physical skills;
- \* Safe objects to look at, bat, grab, bang, pat, roll, and examine;
- \* Safe play areas; and
- \* Opportunities to hear language and to make sounds.

### Developing Trust

Newborn babies need to become attached to at least one person who provides security and love. This first and most basic emotional attachment is the start for all human relationships.

What you'll need

Loving arms

Music

What to do

1. Include happy rituals in your baby's schedule. For example, at bedtime, sing the same song every night, rock her, or rub her tummy.
2. Pick up your crying baby promptly. Try to find out what's wrong. Is she hungry?. Wet? Bored? Too hot? Crying is your baby's way of communicating. By comforting her you send the message that language has a purpose and that someone wants to understand.
3. Gently move your newborn's arms and legs. Or tickle her lightly under the chin or on the tummy. When she starts to control her head, lie on the floor and put her on your chest. Let her reach for your nose or grab your hair. Talk to her and name each thing she touches.
4. Sing and cuddle with your baby. Hold her snuggled in your arms or lying face up on your lap with her head on your knees. Make sure the head of a newborn is well-supported. Sing a favorite lullaby.

To entertain your baby, sing an active song. For example:

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands! If you're happy and you know it, and you want the world to know it, If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!

If you don't know lullabies or rhymes for babies, make up your own!

5. Dance with your baby. To soothe her when she's upset, put her head on your shoulder and hum softly or listen to recorded music as you glide around the room. To amuse her when she's cheerful, try a bouncy tune.

Feeling your touch, hearing your voice, and enjoying the comfort of physical closeness all help a baby to develop trust.

Touch and See! Babies are hard at work whenever they are awake, trying to learn all about the world. To help them learn, they need many different safe things to play with and inspect. Objects you have around your home offer many possibilities.

What you'll need

A splinter-free wooden spoon with a face drawn on the bowl

Different textured fabrics, such as velvet, cotton, corduroy,

terry cloth, satin, burlap, and fake fur

An empty toilet paper or paper towel roll

Pots, pans, and lids

An old purse or basket with things to put in and take out

Measuring cups and spoons

Boxes and plastic containers

Large spools

Noisemakers (rattles, keys, a can filled with beans)

What to do

1. Put one or two of the items to the left in a safe play area where your baby can reach them (more than two may confuse him).
2. Let your baby look at, touch, and listen to a variety of objects. Ones that are brightly colored, have interesting textures, and make noises are particularly good. Be sure that any item you give your baby will be safe in his mouth, since that's where it probably will end up.
3. Use these items for all age groups. Many of them will continue to interest toddlers and older pre-school children. For example, babies love to inspect a paper towel roll. But with a 4-year-old, it can become a megaphone for talking or singing, a telescope, or a tunnel for a toy car.

Babies begin to understand how the world works when they see, touch, hold, and shake things.

Inspecting things also helps them coordinate and strengthen their hand muscles.

## **1 TO 2 YEARS**

What to expect

Children this age are

- \* Energetic (walk more steadily, run, push, pull, take apart, carry, and climb on and grab things);
- \* Self-centered; and
- \* Busy (like to flip light switches, pour things in and out of containers, unwrap packages, and empty drawers).

Between their first and second birthdays, they

- \* Like to imitate the sounds and actions of others (by pretending to do housework or gardening, for example);
- \* Want to be independent and do it themselves (and express this by saying "No!");
- \* Can be clingy;
- \* Can have relatively short attention spans if not involved in an activity;
- \* Add variations to their physical skills (by walking backwards or sideways, for example);
- \* Begin to see how they are like and unlike other children;
- \* Become more sensitive to the moods of others;
- \* Play alone or alongside other toddlers; and

- \* Increase their vocabularies from about 2 or 3 words to about 250 words and understand more of what people say to them.

#### What they need

Children this age require

- \* A safe environment for exploring;
- \* Opportunities to make their own choices (“Do you want the red cup or the blue one?”);
- \* Clear and reasonable limits;
- \* Opportunities to use big muscles (in the arms and legs, for example);
- \* Opportunities to manipulate small objects, such as puzzles and stackable toys;
- \* Activities that allow them to touch, taste, smell, hear, and see new things;
- \* Chances to learn about “cause and effect”—that things they do produce certain results (when a stack of blocks gets too high it will fall over);
- \* Opportunities to develop and practice their language skills; and
- \* Chances to learn about kindness and caring.

#### Shop till You Drop

Shopping is just one of many routines that can help your child learn. It’s especially good for teaching new words and introducing pre-school children to new people and places.

#### What you’ll need

A short shopping list

Shopping is one of many ways to surround children with meaningful talk. They need to hear a lot of words in order to learn to communicate themselves. It’s particularly helpful when you talk about the “here and now”—things that are going on in front of your child.

#### What to do

1. Pick a time when neither you nor your child is hungry or tired.
2. At the supermarket, put your child in the trolley so that he faces you. Take your time as you walk up and down the aisles.
3. Talk about what you are seeing and doing: “First, we’re going to buy some cereal. See, it’s in a big red and blue box. Listen to the great noise it makes when I shake the box. Can you shake the box? Now we’re going to pay for the groceries. We’ll put them on the counter while I get out the money. The cashier will tell us how much we have to pay.”
4. Let your child feel the items you buy—a cold carton of milk, for example, or the skin of an orange. Talk to your child about the items. “The skin of the orange is rough and bumpy. Can Anna feel the skin?”
5. Be sure to name objects you see on a shopping trip.
6. Let your child touch a soft sweater or try on a hat or a mitten. Find a mirror so he can see himself. Talk as you go. “Feel how soft the sweater is. Who’s that in the mirror? Is that Michael?”
7. Let your child practice his “hello’s” and “bye-byes” on shop staff and other shoppers on your outings.
8. Keep talking, keep moving, and let your child “help”. “In this shop we need to buy some buttons. You can hold the cloth next to the buttons so I can find the right color.” Putting your toddler’s hands in the right position can help him learn to understand your directions.
9. Leave for home before your child gets grumpy.

#### Puppet Magic

Puppets can be fascinating. Children know that puppets are not alive. And yet, they move and talk like real living things. Try making one at home.

What you'll need

An old clean sock

Buttons (larger than 1 inch in diameter to prevent swallowing)

Needle and thread

Red fabric

Ribbon

An old glove

Felt-tipped pens

Nontoxic glue

Yarn

What to do

1. Sock puppet. Use an old clean sock. Sew on buttons for eyes and nose. Paste or sew on a piece of red fabric for the mouth. Put a bow made from ribbon at the neck.
2. Finger puppets. Cut the ends off the fingers of an old glove. Draw faces on the fingers with felt-tipped pens. Glue yarn on for hair.
3. Have the puppet talk to your child. "Hello. My name is Susan. What a great T-shirt you have on! I like the rabbit on the front of your T-shirt." Or have the puppet sing a simple song. Change your voice when the puppet talks or sings.
4. Encourage your child to speak to the puppet.
5. Put finger puppets on your child to give him practice moving his fingers one at a time.
6. The next time you want help cleaning up, have the puppet make the request: "Hello, Diane. Let's put these crayons back in the box and these toys back on the shelves. Can you get me the ball?"

Puppets provide another opportunity to talk to children and encourage them to speak. They also help children learn new words, use their imaginations, and develop their hand and finger coordination. Children will make many mistakes when they learn to talk. Instead of correcting them directly, reply by using the right grammar. For example, if your child says, "Michael done it," reply, "Yes, David, Michael did it." Speak slowly and clearly so that your child can imitate your speech. Use full, but short sentences, and avoid baby talk.

Moving On

Toddlers love to explore spaces and climb over, through, and into things.

What you'll need

Stuffed animal or toy

Large cardboard boxes

Pillows

A large sheet

A soft ball

A large plastic laundry basket

Elastic

Bells

What to do

1. Pillow jump. Give your toddler some pillows to jump into.  
Toddlers usually figure out how to do this one on their own!
2. Box car. Give your toddler a large box to push around the room. He may want to take his stuffed animal or toy for a ride in it. If the box isn't too high—you'll most likely find your toddler in there, too!
3. Basketball. Sit about 3 feet away from your toddler and hold out a large plastic laundry basket. Let him try throwing a ball into the basket.
4. Table tent. Cover a table with a sheet that's big enough to reach the ground on all sides. This makes a great playhouse that's particularly good for a rainy day. Watch out for bumped heads!
5. Jingle bells. Sew bells onto elastic that will fit comfortably around your child's ankles. Then watch (and listen to) the fun while he moves about or jumps up and down.

These skills help children gain control over their large muscles. They also help children learn important concepts such as up, down, inside, outside, over, and under.

## 2 TO 3 YEARS

What to expect

Children this age are

- \* Becoming more aware of others and their own feelings;
- \* Often stubborn and may have temper tantrums;
- \* Developing a great interest in other children and enjoy being near them (although they are usually self-centered);
- \* Able to jump, hop, roll, and climb;
- \* Developing an interest in pretend play—playing at keeping house, for example, or pretending to cook and care for a baby;
- \* Expanding their vocabularies (from about 250 to 1,000 words during the year); and
- \* Putting together 2-, 3-, and 4-word sentences.

What they need

Children this age require opportunities to

- \* Develop hand coordination (with puzzles or large beads to string or by scribbling, for example);
- \* Do more things for themselves, such as putting on clothing;
- \* Sing, talk, and develop their language;
- \* Play with other children;
- \* Try out different ways to move their bodies; and
- \* Do things in the community, such as taking walks and visiting libraries, museums, informal restaurants, parks, beaches, and zoos.

Read to Me!

The single most important way for children to develop the knowledge they need to succeed in reading is for you to read aloud to them—beginning early.

What you'll need

Good books

A children's dictionary (preferably a sturdy one)

Paper, pencils, crayons, markers

What to do

1. Read aloud to your child every day. From birth to 6 months your baby probably won't understand what you're reading, but that's okay. You can get her used to the sound of your voice and used to seeing and touching books.
2. To start out, use board books with no words or just a few words. Point to the colors and the pictures and say their names. Simple books can teach children things that will later help them learn to read. For example, they learn about the structure of language—that there are spaces between the words and that the print goes from left to right.
3. Tell stories. Encourage your child to ask questions and talk about the story. Ask her to predict what will come next. Point to things in books that she can relate to in her own life: "Look at the picture of the penguin. Do you remember the penguin we saw at the zoo?"
4. Look for reading programmers. If you aren't a good reader, programmers in your community (check your local library) can provide opportunities for you to improve your own reading and to read with your child. Friends and relatives can also read to your child.
5. Buy a children's dictionary—if possible, one that has pictures next to the words. Then start the "let's look it up" habit.
6. Make writing materials available.
7. Watch educational TV. Programmers such as "Blue Peter" and "Sesame Street".
8. Visit the library often. Begin making weekly trips to the library when your child is very young. See that your child gets a library card as soon as possible. Many libraries issue cards to children as soon as they can print their names (you'll have to countersign for them).
9. Read yourself. What you do sets an example for your child.

The ability to read and understand makes for better students and leads to better job opportunities and a lifetime of enjoyment.

Music Makers

Music is a way to communicate that all children understand. It's not necessary for them to follow the words to a song. It makes them happy just to hear the comfort in your voice or on the recording or to dance to a lively tune.

What you'll need

Your voice

Music

Music makers (rattles, a can filled with beans or buttons, empty toilet paper rolls, pots, pans, plastic bowls)

What to do

1. Sing a lullaby to a grouchy infant.

2. As children approach their first birthdays, they begin to like making music themselves. Have them try banging a wooden spoon on pots, pans, or plastic bowls; shaking a large rattle or shaking a plastic container filled with beans, buttons, or other noisy items (make sure the container is securely closed); and blowing through empty toilet paper rolls.
3. As toddlers pass their first birthdays, they can actively participate in nursery rhymes, even if they can't recite the words. They can imitate hand movements, clap, or hum along.
4. As pre-school children become more physically coordinated, encourage them to move to the music. They can twirl, spin, jump up and down, tiptoe, or sway.
5. Here are some tips for getting young children to sing:

\* Sing yourself. Sing fairly slowly so children join in and enjoy themselves. Discourage shouting.

\* Start with simple chanting. Pick a simple melody, such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and sing "la, la, la." Add the words later.

Introduce music to your children early. Listening to you sing will help them learn to make their voices go up and down—even if you can't carry a tune! Music and dance teach pre-school children to listen, to coordinate hand and finger movements, and to express themselves creatively.

#### Play Dough

Young children love to play with dough. And no wonder! They can squish and pound it and form it into fascinating shapes. Here's a recipe to make at home.

#### What you'll need

2 cups flour

1 cup salt

4 teaspoons cream of tartar

2 cups water

2 tablespoons cooking oil

Food coloring

Food extracts (almond, vanilla, lemon, or peppermint)

1 medium saucepan

Things to stick in the dough (lollipop sticks, straws)

Things to pound with (like a toy mallet)

Things to make impressions with (jar lids, plastic biscuit cutters, or bottle caps)

#### What to do

1. Add the food coloring to the water. Then mix all of the ingredients together in a pan.
2. Cook over medium heat, stirring until it forms a soft ball.
3. Let the mixture cool. Knead slightly. Add food extracts to different chunks of the dough if you want different smells.
4. Give some to your toddler or pre-school child, so he can pound it, stick things in it, make impressions in it, and create all kinds of things.

Play dough is a great way to develop hand muscles and be creative. And cooking together, with all the measuring, is the perfect way to begin learning mathematics. Letting your child handle some dough

while it is still slightly warm and some when it has cooled off is a terrific way to teach him about temperatures. Play dough can be made ahead of time and stored in an air-tight bag or container.

### 3 TO 4 YEARS

What to expect

Children this age

- \* Start to play with other children, instead of next to them;
- \* Are more likely to take turns and share;
- \* Are friendly and giving;
- \* Begin to understand that other people have feelings and rights;
- \* Like silly humor, riddles, and practical jokes;
- \* Like to please and to conform;
- \* Generally become more cooperative and enjoy new experiences;
- \* Are increasingly self-reliant and probably can dress without help (except for buttons and shoelaces);
- \* May develop fears (“Mummy, there’s a monster under my bed.”) and have imaginary companions,
- \* Are more graceful physically than 2-year-olds and love to run, skip, jump with both feet, catch a ball, climb downstairs, and dance to music;
- \* Are great talkers, speak in sentences, and continue to add more words to their vocabularies; and
- \* Have greater control over hand and arm muscles, which is reflected in their drawings and scribblings.

What they need

Children this age require opportunities to

- \* Develop their blooming language abilities through books, games, songs, science, and art activities;
- \* Develop more self-help skills—for example, to dress and undress themselves;
- \* Draw with crayons, work puzzles, build things, and pretend;
- \* Play with other children so they can learn to listen, take turns, and share; and
- \* Develop more physical coordination—for example, by hopping on both feet.

Kitchen Cut-Ups

Here are some recipes popular with pre-school children. Things always seem to taste better when you make them yourself!

What you’ll need

Knife

For applewiches: 1 apple, cheese slices

For funny-face sandwich: 1 piece of bread; peanut butter, cream cheese, or egg salad; green pepper, celery, radishes, carrot curls; olives; nuts; hard-boiled egg slices; tiny shapes of cheese; apples and raisins

For fruit lollipops: fruit juice (any kind), an ice cube tray or small paper cups, yogurt, mashed or crushed fruit, lollipop sticks

For bumps on a log: celery, peanut butter, raisins

### What to do

1. Choose a safe spot to cook where you won't have to worry about making a mess.
2. Tell your child what the ingredients are. Talk about what you are doing as you go along. Ask and answer questions.
3. Let him smell, taste, and touch as you go. Let him (with your help) pour, stir, measure, and help clean up.
4. Applewiches. Core an apple. Cut the apple crosswise into thick slices. Put cheese slices between the slices. Cheddar cheese is particularly good. Eat like a sandwich.
5. Funny-face sandwich. Cut the bread into a circle. Spread with cream cheese, peanut butter, or egg salad. Decorate using green pepper, celery, radishes, carrot curls, olives, nuts, hard-boiled egg slices, tiny shapes of cheese, apples, or raisins for eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.
6. Fruit lollipops. Pour the fruit juice into small paper cups or an ice cube tray. Place a lollipop stick in each cup or compartment before the juice is completely frozen. Return to the freezer until frozen solid. For variations, mix yogurt with the juice before freezing for a creamier lollipop, or add mashed or crushed fruit such as strawberries, pineapple, or banana.
7. Bumps on a log. Spread peanut butter on the celery stalks. Decorate with raisins. Great snacks!

Cooking helps children learn new words, measuring and number skills, what foods are healthy and what ones aren't, and the importance of completing what they begin. It also teaches about how things change, and it can teach children to reason better. ("If I want a cold fruit juice lollipop, then I'll have to put it in the freezer.")

### Scribble, Paint, and Paste

Young children are natural artists. Here are some activities that introduce pre-school children to scribbling, painting, and pasting.

#### What you'll need

For scribbling: crayons, water-soluble felt-tipped markers, different kinds of paper (including construction paper, cartridge paper), and tape

For finger-painting: shop-bought finger-paint or homemade finger-paint made with soap flakes, water, food coloring or powdered tempera; an eggbeater or fork; a bowl; a spoon; an apron or smock; newspapers or a large piece of plastic to cover the floor or table; cartridge paper; and tape

For collages: paper, paste, blunt-tipped scissors, fabric scraps or objects that can be glued to paper (string, cotton wool balls, sticks, yarn)

### What to do

1. Scribbling. Give your child different kinds of paper and different writing materials to scribble with. Coloring books are not needed. Fat crayons are good to begin with. Water-soluble felt-tipped marking pens are fun because your child doesn't have to use much pressure to get a bright color. Tape a large piece of paper onto a table top and let your pre-school child scribble to her heart's content!
2. Finger-painting. Use shop-bought finger-paint, or make your own by mixing soap flakes (not detergent) in a bowl with a small amount of water. Beat the mixture with a fork or eggbeater. Add powdered tempera paint or food coloring. Spread out newspapers or a large piece of plastic over a table or on the floor and tape a big piece of paper on top. Cover your child with a large smock or apron, and let her finger-paint.

3. Collages. Have your child paste fabric scraps or other objects such as yarn, string, or cotton wool balls to the paper (in any pattern). Let her feel the different textures and tell you about them.

Here are a few tips about introducing your pre-school children to art:

- \* Supervise carefully. Some children would rather color your walls than the paper. Some also like to chew on crayons and markers or try to drink the paint.
- \* Don't tell them what to draw or paint.
- \* Don't fix up their pictures. It will take lots of practice before you can recognize their pictures—and that often doesn't happen until after they are in nursery school.
- \* Give them lots of different materials to work with. Parents can demonstrate new types of art materials.
- \* Find an art activity that's at the right level for your child, then let him do as much of the project as possible.
- \* Ask your pre-school child to talk about his picture.
- \* Display your child's art prominently in your home.

Art projects can spark young imaginations and help children to express themselves. These projects also help children to develop the eye and hand coordination they will later need to learn to write.

#### Chores

Any household task can become a good learning game and can be fun.

What you'll need

Jobs around the home that need to get done, such as:

Doing the laundry

Washing and drying dishes

Carrying out the rubbish

Setting the dinner table

Dusting

What to do

1. Tell your child about the job you will do together. Explain why the family needs the job done. Describe how you will do it and how your child can help.
2. Teach your child new words that belong to each job. "Let's put the placemats on the table, along with the napkins."
3. Doing laundry together provides many opportunities to learn.

Ask your child to help you remember all the clothes that need to be washed. See how many things he can name. Socks? T-shirts? Pyjamas? Have him help you gather all the dirty clothes. Have your child help you make piles of light and dark colors.

Show your child how to measure out the soap, and have him pour the soap into the machine. Let him put the items into the machine, naming them. Keep out one sock. When the washer is filled with water, take out a sock. Let your child hold the wet sock and the one you kept out. Ask him which one feels heavier and which one feels lighter. After the wash is done, have your child sort his own things into piles that are the same (for example, T-shirts, socks).

Home chores can help children learn new words, how to listen and follow directions, how to count, and how to sort. Chores can also help children improve their physical coordination and learn responsibility.

## 4 TO 5 YEARS

What to expect

Children this age:

- \* Are active and have lots of energy;
- \* May be aggressive in their play;
- \* Can show extremes from being loud and adventurous to acting shy and dependent;
- \* Enjoy more group activities because they have longer attention spans;
- \* Like making faces and being silly;
- \* May form cliques with friends and can be bossy;
- \* May change friendships quickly;
- \* May brag and engage in name-calling during play;
- \* May experiment with swear words and bathroom words;
- \* Can be very imaginative and like to exaggerate;
- \* Have better control in running, jumping, and hopping but tend to be clumsy;
- \* Are great talkers and questioners; and
- \* Love to use words in rhymes, nonsense, and jokes.

What they need

Children this age need opportunities to:

- \* Experiment and discover within limits;
- \* Use blunt-tipped scissors, crayons, and put together simple jigsaw puzzles;
- \* Practice outdoor play activities;
- \* Develop their growing interest in academic things, such as science and mathematics, and activities that involve exploring and investigating;
- \* Group items that are similar (for example, by size);
- \* Stretch their imaginations and curiosity; and
- \* See how reading and writing are useful (for example, by listening to stories and poems, dictating stories, and by talking with other children and adults).

“Hands-on” Math

Real-life, hands-on activities are the best way to introduce your pre-school child to mathematics!

What you’ll need

Optional:

Blocks, dice or dominoes

What to do

1. Talk a lot about numbers and use number concepts in daily routines with your pre-school child. For example:

- \* Cooking. “Let’s divide the cake dough into two parts so we can bake some now and put the rest into the freezer.”
- \* Home projects. “We’re going to hang this picture 6 inches above the bookshelf in your room.”
- \* Home chores. “How many plates do we need on the table? One for Mummy, one for Daddy, and one for Trish.”

It’s best not to use drills or arithmetic worksheets with young children. These can make children dislike math because they don’t fit with the way they learn math naturally.

2. Talk about numbers that matter most to your pre-school child  
 -- her age, her address, her phone number, her height and weight.

Focusing on these personal numbers helps your child learn many important math concepts, including:

- \* Time (hours, days, months, years; older, younger; yesterday, today, tomorrow). To a young child, you might say, “At 2 o’clock we will take a nap.” When you plan with an older pre-school child (4 or 5 years old), you could point out, “It’s only 3 days until we go to Grandma’s house. Let’s put an X on the calendar so we’ll know the day we’re going.”
- \* Lengths (meters, centimeters; longer, taller, shorter). “this ribbon is too short to go around the present for Aunty Ann. Let’s cut a longer ribbon.”
- \* Weight (ounces, pounds, grams; heavier, lighter; how to use scales). “You already weigh 30 pounds. I can hardly lift such a big girl.”
- \* Where you live (addresses, telephone numbers). “These shiny numbers on our door are 2-1-4. We live in house number 214.” Or “When you go to play at Lorraine’s house, take this note along with you. It’s our phone number: 201698. Some day soon you will know our phone number so you can call me when you are at your friend’s.”

3. Provide opportunities for your child to learn math. For example:

- \* Blocks can teach children to classify objects by color and shape. Blocks can also help youngsters learn about depth, width, height, and length.
- \* Games that have scoring, such as throwing balls into a basket, require children to count. Introduce games such as dominoes or rolling dice. Have your child roll the dice and count the dots. Let her try to roll for matches. Count favorite toys.
- \* Books often have number themes or ideas.

### Getting Along

Learning to get along with others is very important. Children who are kind, helpful, patient, and loving generally do better in school.

What you’ll need

No materials required

What to do

1. Let your child know that you are glad to be his mummy or daddy. Give him personal attention and encouragement. Set aside time when you and your child can do fun things together. Your happy feelings toward your child will help him feel good about himself.
2. Set a good example. Show your pre-school child what it means to get along with others and to be respectful. Say “please” and “thank you.” Treat people in ways that show you care what happens to them. Ask for things in a friendly way. Be kind to and patient with other people.

3. Help your child find ways to solve conflicts with others. Help your child figure out what will happen if he tries to settle his mad feelings by hitting a playmate: “James, I know that Tiffany took your toy car. But if you hit Tiffany and you have a big fight, then Tiffany will have to go home, and the two of you won’t be able to play any more today. What is another way that you can let Tiffany know you want your car back?”

James might decide to tell Tiffany that he’s angry, and that he wants his truck back. Or he might let Tiffany play with his truck for 5 minutes with the hope that Tiffany will then give it back. Listening to your children’s problems will often be all that is needed for them to solve their own problems.

4. Make opportunities to share and to care. Let your child take charge of providing food for hungry birds. When a new family moves into the neighborhood, let your pre-school child help make biscuits to welcome them.
5. Be physically affectionate. Children need hugs, kisses, an arm over the shoulder, and a pat on the back.
6. Tell your child that you love him. Don’t assume that your loving actions will speak for themselves (although those are very important). Teach your child the international hand sign for “I love you.” You can “sign” each other love as your child leaves home for the first day of nursery school.

Children need good social skills. Teachers and other children will enjoy your youngster’s company if he gets along well with others.

#### My Book

Most 4-year-olds like to talk and have a lot to say. They generally can’t write down words themselves, but they enjoy dictating a story to you.

#### What you’ll need

Paper

A paper punch

Blunt-tipped scissors

Pencil, pen, crayons

Knitting wool, pipe cleaners, or staples

Paste

#### What to do

1. Make a booklet of five or six pages. Your child can help punch holes close to one edge and thread wool through the holes to keep the pages together. You can also bind the book with twisted pipe cleaners, or staple the pages together.
2. On the outside cover, write your child’s name. Explain to him that this is going to be a book about him.
3. Let your child decide what will go on each page. Write it down. Examples: Other people in my family. My favorite toys. My favorite books. My friends. My pet. My neighborhood. My home (or my bedroom). My own drawings.

Making this book will help your child develop his language skills and give him more practice using the small muscles in his hands. Your 4-year-old will also love having your undivided attention.

## WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?

The activities in this book can help your child from birth to age 5 get ready for school. As the first day of school approaches, however, you may want to do extra things to make the school seem a friendlier place for both you and your child.

Find out as much as you can about the school before your child enters it. You will want to learn

- \* The head teacher's name;
- \* The nursery school teacher's name;
- \* When to register for nursery school and what forms need to be filled out;
- \* What immunizations are required for school entry;
- \* A description of the nursery school program;
- \* The nursery school yearly calendar and daily schedule;
- \* Transportation procedures;
- \* Food service arrangements; and
- \* How you can become involved in your child's education and in the school.

Some schools will send you this information. Or they may hold an orientation meeting in the spring for parents who expect to enroll their children in nursery school the following autumn. If they don't, you can call the head teacher's office to ask or to arrange a visit.

Find out in advance what the school expects from entering nursery school students. If you know a year or two ahead of time, you will be in a better position to prepare your child. Sometimes parents and care-givers don't think the expectations are right for their children. If that is the case, you may want to meet with the nursery school teachers to talk about the expectations and ways to change the nursery school program.

Visit the school with your child so your child can become familiar with it, and it won't seem scary. Walk up and down the hallways to learn where things are. Observe the other children and the classrooms.

Talk with your child about school. During your visit, make positive comments about the school—your good attitude will rub off! (“Look at all the boys and girls painting in this classroom. Doesn't that look like fun!”) Tell your child about what the children do when classes begin.

Talk about the teachers, and how they will help your child learn new things. Encourage your child to look at the teacher as a wise friend toward whom children should be courteous. Explain to your child how important it is to go to class each day.

If possible, consider volunteering to help out in the school. The staff may appreciate having an extra adult to help do everything from passing out paper and pencils in the classrooms to supervising on the playground. Volunteering is a good way to learn more about the school and to meet its staff and other parents.

When the long-awaited first day of nursery school arrives, go to school with your child (but don't stay too long). And be patient. Many young children are overwhelmed at first because they haven't had much experience in dealing with new situations. They may not immediately like school. Your child may cry or cling to you when you say goodbye each morning, but with support from you and the nursery school teacher, this can rapidly change.

As your child proceeds through school, you will need to continue your encouragement and involvement. But for now, celebrate all that you have accomplished as a parent. Share your children's enthusiasm. Let them know how proud you are as they leave home for their first day of nursery school. Let them know you believe they will succeed.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: Good Television Habits

Children in the West have watched an average of 4,000 hours of television by the time they begin school. Most experts agree that this is too much. But banning television isn't the answer, because good television can spark curiosity and open up new worlds to children. Monitoring how much and what television children watch helps them, starting at an early age, to develop good viewing habits.

Too much television can be harmful because

- \* It can expose children to too much sex and violence;
- \* Children can be unduly influenced by junk food and toy commercials;
- \* It can give children a poor model for good behavior before they have developed a clear idea of right and wrong;
- \* Young children do not have the experience and wisdom to understand complicated plots or scary scenes; and
- \* Sitting passively in front of the set for extended periods of time can slow young children's social and intellectual development.

Here are some tips to help children develop good television-viewing habits.

Keep a record of how many hours of TV your children watch, and what they watch. Generally, it's good to limit the amount to 2 hours or less a day, although you can make exceptions for special programs.

Learn about current TV programs and videos and select good ones. As parents, you know your children best. So, select TV programs and videos that are meaningful to your family.

If you have a VCR, you may wish to seek out good children's videos. Of course, videos vary in quality, but versions of classic children's books, such as Babar or Snow White, make be a good place to start.

Plan with your children (starting at age 3) what programs to watch. After selecting programs appropriate for your children, help them decide which ones to watch. Turn the TV on when these shows start, and turn the set off when they are over.

Watch television with your children so you can answer questions and talk about what they see. Pay special attention to how they respond so you can help them understand what they're seeing, if that's needed.

Follow-up TV viewing with activities or games. You might have your child tell you a new word he learned on television that you can look up together in the dictionary. Or you might have him make up his own story about one of his favorite TV characters.

Include the whole family in discussion and activities or games that relate to television programs. Older siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents can all contribute.

Make certain that television isn't regularly used as a babysitter. Instead, try to balance good television with other fun activities for your child.

## APPENDIX 2: Choosing Child Care

More and more children are in pre-school or other child care settings before they enter school.

Choosing the right child care is important because it can affect how prepared your child is for school.

Some tips to guide you:

Think about the kind of care you want for your child. Possibilities include (a) a relative; (b) a family day care provider, usually a woman who takes care of a small group of children in her home; (c) a child care center; and (d) a care-giver who comes into your home.

Figure out what suits your budget and what you can expect to spend in your community.

Recognize that there are many ways to find good care. Ask friends and neighbors. Look in the Yellow Pages of your telephone book under “Child Care Centers.” Look in the classified ads of your local newspaper, or place an ad of your own. Put up notices on your church bulletin board, in supermarkets, local community centers, or at the employment office of local colleges or universities. Look for notices that other people have put up.

If you are looking for a family day care provider, a local licensing agency can provide you with local listings. Many communities have resource and referral agencies that help parents identify the options that best meet their needs.

Start looking early, particularly if you have a special program for your child in mind. Some programs have long waiting lists. Some may even require you to get on a waiting list before your child is born.

Gather information. If you are looking for a family day care provider or for a person to come into your home, interview the person at length and check references. Before you meet with them, develop a list of questions. If you are looking at day care centers, visit them—more than once, if possible. Just because a person or a program worked for someone else doesn’t mean it’s right for you. With any kind of child care, check references.

No matter what kind of child care you are considering, look for care-givers who:

- \* Are kind and responsive. Good care-givers are affectionate, enjoy children, are energetic enough to keep up with your pre-school child, patient, and mature enough to handle crises and conflicts.
- \* Have experience with pre-school children and like them. Find out how long they have worked with pre-school children, why they are in the early child care field, and whether they provide activities that are appropriate for your child’s age. Observe the care-givers with children. Do the children seem happy? How do the care-givers respond to them?
- \* Recognize the individual needs of your child. Look for care-givers who are considerate of different children’s interests and needs and who can provide your child with enough attention.
- \* Share a child-rearing philosophy that is similar to yours. Find out what kind of discipline is used and how problems are handled.

Be certain that the child care facility is clean and safe and is filled with things to explore that are appropriate for your child’s age.

## APPENDIX 3: Ready-for-School Checklist

This checklist, although not exhaustive, can help to guide you in preparing your child for school. It’s best to look at the items included as goals toward which to aim. They should be done, as much as possible, through everyday life or by fun activities you’ve planned with your child. If your child lags

behind in some areas, don't worry. Remember that all children are unique. They grow and develop at different rates—and no one thing guarantees that a child is ready for school.

### Good Health and Physical Well-Being

My child:

- \* Eats a balanced diet.
- \* Receives regular medical and dental care and has had all the necessary immunizations. Gets plenty of rest.
- \* Runs, jumps, plays outdoors, and does other activities that help develop large muscles and provide exercise.
- \* Works puzzles, scribbles, colors, paints, and does other activities that help develop small muscles.

### Social and Emotional Preparation

My child:

- \* Is learning to be confident enough to explore and try new things.
- \* Is learning to work well alone and to do many tasks for himself.
- \* Has many opportunities to be with other children and is learning to cooperate with them. Is curious and is motivated to learn.
- \* Is learning to finish tasks (for example, picks up own toys).
- \* Is learning to use self-control.
- \* Can follow simple instructions.
- \* Helps with family chores.

### Language and General Knowledge

My child:

- \* Has many opportunities to play.
- \* Is read to every day.
- \* Has access to books and other reading materials.
- \* Has his television viewing monitored by an adult.
- \* Is encouraged to ask questions.
- \* Is encouraged to solve problems.
- \* Has opportunities to notice similarities and differences.
- \* Is encouraged to sort and classify things (for example, by looking for red cars on the highway).
- \* Is learning to write his name and address.
- \* Is learning to count and plays counting games. Is learning to identify shapes and colors.
- \* Has opportunities to draw, listen to and make music, and to dance.
- \* Has opportunities to get firsthand experiences to do things in the world—to see and touch objects, hear new sounds, smell and taste foods, and watch things move.

## APPENDIX 4: Notes

What We Can Do To Help Our Children Learn:

Listen to them and pay attention to their problems.

Read with them.

Tell family stories.  
Limit their television watching.  
Have books and other reading materials in the house.  
Look up words in the dictionary with them.  
Encourage them to use an encyclopedia.  
Share favorite poems and songs with them.  
Take them to the library—and get them their own library cards.  
Take them to museums and historical sites, when possible.  
Discuss the daily news with them.  
Go exploring with them and learn about plants, animals, and geography.  
Find a quiet place for them to study.  
Review their homework.  
Meet with their teachers.  
Do you have other ideas?

## APPENDIX 5: Online Sources

Parent Magazine Features Insights into Parenting and Child Development - A lot of helpful information. They publish also a newsletter : Family Matters!

<http://www.parenting-child-development.com/>

Parent Information - Story Time (United Kingdom)

This section is about the benefits of spending time reading to your child, including useful information from and links to other sites.

[http://www.speechteach.co.uk/p\\_resource/parent/storytime.htm](http://www.speechteach.co.uk/p_resource/parent/storytime.htm)

**Get your complete copy of “How I Help My Child with a Smile” at**

<https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=10497-6>

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