

# Parents®

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## WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

### Get involved now to ensure academic success



Educational research shows that parental involvement from an early age helps your child do better in school.

Being involved can help your child build critical skills, such as reading. But most of all, it tells your child that education is important to you and your family. That attitude is likely to stick with him.

Other benefits for children of involved parents, according to research, include:

- Better school attendance.
- Better behavior at school.
- More confidence about school.

Here are some important ways to get involved:

- **Attend back-to-school nights** or parent presentations.

- **Get to know your child's** teachers.
- **Check with teachers** to see how your child is doing in school.
- **Read to, talk with and play** with your child.
- **Spend time** in your child's class as your schedule permits.

Source: "Getting Involved in Your Child's Education," National Education Association, [www.nea.org/parents/index.html?mode=print](http://www.nea.org/parents/index.html?mode=print).

## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Show your child that attendance is a top priority



It may be a year or so before your preschooler attends an academic school program. But good habits begin early. The most important good school habit is regular attendance.

Show your child that attending school is a top priority by:

- **Being excited** about your child's preschool. Talk about how much fun he has there and how much he is learning.
- **Trying not to interrupt** the school day. Schedule doctor's appointments and vacations during non-school times.
- **Helping your child** get enough rest so he can be fresh for school the next day. Preschoolers need about 11 hours of sleep.

Source: "School attendance: It matters more than you may think!," Parent Spot, Mohonasen (New York) Central School District, [www.mohonasen.org/03parents/MSParent/Attendance.htm](http://www.mohonasen.org/03parents/MSParent/Attendance.htm).



Illustrated by Joe Mignella

### Explore different cultures through the world of books

**O**pen a book with your child and the two of you may go anywhere you please. Books are a great way to see new places and things. They can also help you "introduce" your child to people who may have different family traditions.

To find books:


- **Ask your child's preschool** teacher for suggestions.

- **Visit your local library** and ask a librarian for suggestions.
- **Search the Internet.** You can start with this book list from the Madison, Wisconsin, public library at [www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/youth/booklists/multicultural.html](http://www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/youth/booklists/multicultural.html).

Source: "Guidelines for Choosing Multicultural Books," Reading is Fundamental, [www.rif.org/parents/articles/choosing\\_multicultural\\_books.mspx](http://www.rif.org/parents/articles/choosing_multicultural_books.mspx).

**BUILDING ATTENTION SPAN**

# Turn off the TV to help your preschooler focus

 U.S. children watch about four hours of television a day. TV is fast-paced and jumps from image to image. It does not require children to concentrate.

Too much TV viewing can make it hard for your child to develop a normal attention span, yet growing minds must learn to focus to succeed in school.

Here are guidelines for TV watching and choosing better options:

- **Limit TV viewing.** Five to seven hours a week is ideal.
- **Select programs** that move more slowly—similar to the real-world pace.
- **Give your child a puzzle** or game that requires him to focus.

- **Turn off the TV** if no one is watching. Background sounds and images can distract your child.
- **Select audio cassette books.** These will help your child increase his attention span. He'll also have to use his imagination for the visuals.
- **Avoid filling each minute** of your child's time. "Down time" is critical for developing attention span, initiative and imagination.

Source: Gloria DeGaetano, "Visual Media and Young Children's Attention Spans," Media Literacy Review, University of Oregon, <http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/readings/articles/degaetano/visualmedia.html>.

## Get your free e-zine

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**BUILDING CHARACTER**

## Encourage your child to be caring in all actions



Caring, showing concern and kindness for others, is important to instill in your preschooler. A caring child is more likely to respect adults—including teachers—and get along with peers. He is also more likely to be happy, since most people will return his kind treatment by treating him kindly, too.

- Encourage your child to:
- **Use kind words.** Many will judge your child's character by what he says. Mannerly words such as "please" and "thank you" show caring. So do words that reflect concern for how others are feeling. Examples: "That's a cool truck," when a friend has a new toy. Or, "Are you okay?" when a classmate falls.
  - **Have kind actions.** Most preschoolers are still selfish—this is developmentally appropriate. It may be harder for them to have kind actions than to speak kind words. Start with sharing and doing small jobs. When your child allows a friend to look at his new book, or takes his plate to the sink after a meal, he is displaying the kind actions that will make him a caring person.

Source: Barbara A. Lewis, *Being Your Best*, ISBN: 1-57542-063-5 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)).

**PARENT QUIZ**



## How well do you & your child handle separation anxiety?

Separating from you isn't easy. But it's necessary to your child's development. Adjusting to your absence will build her confidence and ability to handle future changes in her life.

You can help your child deal with separation while she stays with her childcare provider or preschool teacher. Take this quiz to see if you're doing the right kinds of things. Answer *yes* or *no*.

- \_\_\_ **1. I acknowledge** my child's feelings. I listen and tell her I understand how she feels.
- \_\_\_ **2. I don't let her see** my fear or sadness at separating. I know my child can pick up on my feelings.
- \_\_\_ **3. I tell my child** what she'll be doing when I'm away.
- \_\_\_ **4. I let my child know** when I'll pick her up or return. I show she can count on me by arriving on time.
- \_\_\_ **5. I smile, tell her I love her** and hug her goodbye. I don't linger over the parting too long.

### How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child to handle separation from you.

DISCIPLINE

## Refrain from reasoning when disciplining your preschooler



When it comes to discipline, you may find that the less said, the better.

Research shows that it may not be a good idea to try to reason or use a great deal of verbal instruction when you are disciplining a preschooler. You will probably not see a change in behavior. You may even encourage undesirable behavior.

Reasoning and verbal instruction may not work because:

- **Preschool children** do not yet have the higher-level thinking skills needed to understand reasoning. For example, they can't understand why they should make a change just because you think it is a good idea.
- **The more you talk** and reason with your preschooler when he misbehaves, the more attention you pay him. Your child may keep misbehaving just to get the attention. Save most of your

attention for times when your child is behaving well.

Instead of a lot of talking during misbehavior, try:

- **Giving a short, direct sentence**, then a consequence. "Chairs are for sitting, not standing." Then, place the child's bottom on the chair.
- **Using consistent consequences.** For example, show your child that pulling hair will always result in a time-out.
- **Saving explanations for later.** Wait for a time when your child is calm and behaving well. Then reinforce that behavior with a cuddle, and, if you wish, an explanation of why you stopped his earlier behavior.

Source: Nathan J. Blum, "Disciplining young children: the role of verbal instructions and reasoning," *Pediatrics*, www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\_m0950/is\_n2\_v96/ai\_17407757/print.

WELLNESS

## Focus on healthy eating habits to prepare your child for school



According to a recent study, the number of overweight children ages six to 11 has doubled between the years 1980 and 2000. Experts now believe childhood obesity is a serious health issue.

Well-nourished children are better prepared for school. Their bodies are healthier. They adjust better socially. Their minds are alert. Give your child these advantages!

To develop healthy eating habits:

- **Learn if your child is eating** the right kinds and amounts of food. Ask your doctor.
- **Model good eating habits.** Serve and eat healthy, balanced meals.

- **Make mealtime a fun**, relaxing time for the family.
- **Don't bribe or reward** your child with "treats."
- **Don't force him** to clean his plate when he may not be hungry.
- **Offer a variety of foods.** Involve your child in menu planning to give him choices.
- **Set limits** on your child's food choices. Don't let your child order a la carte. If he doesn't eat what's served, it's okay to send him to bed with a growling tummy.

Source: Robin F. Goodman, Ph.D., "Developing Healthy Eating Behaviors," NYU Child Study Center, www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/eatingtips.html#what.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



**Q:** My daughter has loved her summer schedule. How are we going to make the transition to a five-day pre-kindergarten program that begins at 8:30 a.m.?

**A:** Going from the carefree days of summer to a set routine will be easier if you start practicing about two weeks before school starts. Follow the steps below and see if they don't lead you right out the door on time.

Remember, school mornings begin the night before:

- **Lay out clothes** for the next day. Help your child do the same. Prepare lunch or snack.
- **Pick a spot** for her backpack, and anything you'll need for morning. You might also want to tape a note to the backpack reminding you to get the lunch out of the refrigerator.
- **Follow a bedtime routine**—bath, pajamas, brushed teeth and story. Get your child to bed at a time that will allow her to get 11 hours of sleep.

When morning comes:

- **Wake your child** about an hour before it's time to leave. Expect her to be grumpy for the first few mornings—that's why it's important to begin your new routine two weeks in advance!
- **Have breakfast.** Choose fruit, whole grains (such as whole wheat toast), and protein (such as eggs.) Avoid sugary foods.
- **Help your child get dressed** and brush teeth. As the days go on, slowly withdraw your help. Encourage her to do as much as she can herself.
- **Go to your storage spot** and gather your belongings. Go out the door, even if it's just for practice.
- **Have a great day!**

—Maria Koklanaris,  
The Parent Institute

## Especially for Fours

### READING READINESS

## Improve how you read aloud to your preschooler



There's nothing more important than reading aloud to children. It's the best way to build the skills children need to learn to read.

Reading aloud to your child is an art that you can improve with time-tested practices. Follow this advice:

- **Begin with simple picture books.** As your child develops, read more complex stories.
- **Select a book** that is slightly above your child's level of understanding, sometimes. Your librarian can help you.
- **Read with expression.** Change the tone and pitch of your voice. Slow or quicken your speed to match the story.
- **Stop reading** if the book wasn't a good choice. If your child seems bored or fidgets more than usual, pick another book.
- **Allow time** before and after reading. Talk about what you're going to read. Ask your child to guess what the book might be about. Afterward, encourage her to ask questions.
- **Give your child the chance** to read aloud to you, or practice reading aloud on her own. "Reading" can mean just looking at pictures and making up a story.

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*“Parents are the first and the most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area; they are educators because they are parents.”*

—Pope John Paul II

### MAKING TIME COUNT

## Find ‘teachable moments’ in your child’s everyday activities

**C**hildren learn a lot when they are exposed to “teachable moments” throughout each day. A teachable moment is possible whenever your child shows an interest in learning more about a task.

You can find many teachable moments in activities like these:

- **Shopping for learning.** Take your child grocery shopping with you. Let him name and choose fruits and vegetables. Explain the different uses and tastes of cabbage and lettuce, grapefruit and cantaloupe. Let him weigh produce.
- **Watching the weather.** Chart the daily weather on a calendar. Have your child draw the sun, clouds or rain each day. At month's end, help him count the number of sunny and rainy days.
- **Doing laundry.** Have your child put a different colored sticker on a basket for each person in your



Illustrated by Joe Mignella

family. Let him help you take the clothes out of the dryer and place them in the right basket for each person. Show him how to match socks and fold washcloths.

Source: Carolyn Ross Tomlin “Quantity Versus Quality Parent Time: How Child Care Providers Can Help,” *Early Childhood*, [www.earlychildhood.com/Articles/index.cfm?A=284&FuseAction=Article](http://www.earlychildhood.com/Articles/index.cfm?A=284&FuseAction=Article).

### BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

## Praise & peers can help your preschooler learn social skills



Help your child improve her social skills by giving her opportunities for social interaction. Here's how:

1. **Ask her preschool teacher** to suggest children in the class who might make good playmates for your child.
2. **Invite a friendly child** to your home to play with your child.
3. **Provide simple toys** for the children to play with. Try dolls, balls and kitchen playthings.
4. **Stay near the children** at first in case your child needs your help.

If the other child asks your child a question and your child does not respond, you can prompt, “Lauren, Carrie asked you your doll's name. Can you tell her your doll's name?”

5. **Praise your child** for successful interactions. “I liked the way you invited Emma into your fort. That made her feel happy.”

Source: Barbara Lowenthal, “Teaching social skills to preschoolers with special needs,” *Childhood Education*, [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3614/is\\_199604/ai\\_n8738246](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3614/is_199604/ai_n8738246).