

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Delta Head Start / Early Head Start



April 2015

Developing responsibility takes effort—by children *and* parents

Responsibility isn't something a child learns overnight. But the more you support your child's efforts to be responsible, the more she will accomplish at school and at home. Your child will see that hard work gets results—and it feels great! To teach responsibility, it's important to:



- **Set expectations.** What rules and routines must your child follow? Why? What will happen if she doesn't? Help her understand her responsibilities and the consequences for not living up to them.
- **Assign responsibility.** Have your child help with age-appropriate chores, such as setting out forks and spoons for a meal. Let her make decisions, such as choosing between two shirts.
- **Allow mistakes.** Minor, safe challenges are good for children. While pouring a drink, for example, she may spill it. Relax. Discuss what she should do if that happens, so she can learn from it.
- **Be a role model.** Use your own actions to teach about responsibility. Be honest. Keep your promises. Take care of duties. Be on time. Apologize for mistakes and do what you can to fix them. Keep trying.
- **Encourage maturity.** As your child becomes more responsible, you will probably have to adjust some of your rules and expectations.
- **Compliment your child's efforts often!**

Source: M. Purcell, "Building Responsible Kids," PsychCentral, nswc.com/getresponsible.



To build math skills, count on fun

There's nothing like a little fun to motivate learning. If your child likes math at home, he'll take his enthusiasm to school, where it will help him learn even more! To build your child's math knowledge in enjoyable ways:

- **Ask questions** about counting. Make sure they interest your child. "How many books did we check out at the library?"
- **Notice numbers.** What numbers can your child find on signs? Houses? License plates?
- **Use math words** while playing. "Let's put the *triangle* block under the *square* block." "You have *more* blocks than I do."
- **Sort things** in many ways. For example, your child might arrange toys by size, shape or color.
- **Play games.** Toss pairs of socks though a hula hoop. Count how many your child gets in.
- **Cook.** Let your child measure ingredients, such as cups of water or pinches of salt.

Source: J. Uscher, "Reading, Writing, and Math Skills for Preschoolers," WebMD, nswc.com/funmath.

Involvement pays you back

One of the benefits of being involved in your child's preschool education is the opportunity to form relationships with other parents from her class.

Other families are wonderful resources. Some may have already been through an experience you are going through. Meeting at school may lead to new friendships for you and your child.

Spring into learning

Spring is bursting with seasonal opportunities for your child to learn facts and skills he can use in school. Try some of these:



- **Plant flowers** or herbs in pots. Your child will learn about growing things.
- **Admire baby animals.** Visit a farm or a zoo. Or ask your librarian to recommend books about animal babies.
- **Talk about the weather.** Ask your child if it's sunny, cloudy, windy or rainy. Discuss what to wear in different weather.
- **Play outside.** Play your child's favorite outdoor games.

Source: K.L. Keith, "Spring Learning Activities for Kids and Families," About.com, nswc.com/sprung.

Don't forget DEAR Day!

April 12 is Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Day. Here's one way you can celebrate:



1. **Have your child** bring you some of her favorite books.
2. **Find something** for yourself to read.
3. **Set a timer** for 30 minutes.
4. **For 15 minutes**, read to your child.
5. **For the last 15 minutes**, have her look at her books while you read yours.
6. **Talk about** how much you love reading.

Source: "D.E.A.R. Day, April 12th," Reading Rockets, nswc.com/DEARday.



What are some helpful ways to encourage writing?

Q: My son will be four this month. Lately he has been asking about writing his name as well as other words. I want to encourage him, but not to push. I would love some suggestions.

A: It's wonderful that your son wants to write. Learning to write a few letters, or even his name, is great practice for kindergarten and the years that follow.



Here are some guidelines and suggestions:

- **Set up a writing center** for your child. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. Just have paper to write on, crayons and thick pencils. Drawing is an important step toward writing, so let him draw there, too.
- **Show him how to write the first letter in his name.** When he is proficient, move on to his whole first name.
- **Encourage him to read and write at the same time.** As he learns to write his name, have him sound it out as he writes.
- **Write a story together.** He can draw pictures and tell you about them. You write his words underneath his pictures.
- **Help your child strengthen the small muscles in his hands** with fun activities such as stringing large beads and playing with clay or play dough.



Does your child behave respectfully?

Preschoolers are not too young to practice being respectful. They will need this skill to succeed in all parts of life, including school. Are you teaching your child to treat people and property with respect? Answer *yes* or *no*:

1. **Do you enforce** a few easy-to-understand, age-appropriate rules, such as "Keep your hands and feet to yourself"?
2. **Do you teach** basic manners, such as saying *please* and *thank you*, and use them every day?
3. **Do you ask** your child to show respect for belongings by putting away toys and taking care of library books?
4. **Do you help** your child consider other people's feelings? "Sara will be happy when you share your cookies with her."

5. **Do you offer praise** when your child shows respect?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you're setting a standard for respectful behavior. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

—attributed to Mahatma Gandhi

Give your child solar power

What does your preschooler know about the solar system? Try these activities to build his knowledge:



- **Read.** In *There's No Place Like Space*, for example, the Cat in the Hat tours the solar system.
- **Color.** Draw or print pictures of the sun and each planet. Look at books to find out the planets' colors, but let your child color them the way he likes.
- **Make a book.** Staple your child's pictures together. Label the planets.
- **Bake a solar system.** Let your child shape sugar cookie dough into "planets."

Energize preschool efforts

The school year may be winding down, but preschoolers have plenty of learning to do! To help your child make the most of each day:

- **Put preschool first.** With spring activities in full swing, it may be tempting to skip preschool. Don't! If necessary, put it on the calendar so nothing interferes.
- **Be positive.** When your child focuses on learning, compliment her!

Share the sound of music

Did you know music can help your child understand language? Consider this:

- **Music teaches your child** to listen for sounds, an important step toward reading.
- **Music can expose your child** to literary and poetic devices such as rhyming.
- **Music teaches new vocabulary.**
- **Music's repeated lyrics** help your child learn the words and become skilled at saying them. A similar pattern of learning happens in reading.

Source: C. Bollinger, "Using Music to Teach Early Reading Skills," *Songs for Teaching*, niswc.com/singread.

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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Phillip Wherry.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005