

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Arroyo Grande United Methodist Children's Center
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KID BITS



Mystery shapes

Try this hands-on idea to help your youngster recognize shapes. While he's not looking, use paper and crayon to trace around small household objects like a round cup and a rectangular cereal box. Place the actual items where he can see them, and ask him to name each shape as he matches it to the object.

Let's explore!

Art, music, sports... your community is full of new things for your child to discover. Consider museum or library programs that let her explore a variety of art materials or musical instruments. Or see if your local community center or parks and recreation department offers open gym sessions where she can try tumbling and play with different types of sports equipment.

A family flag

Let your youngster make a flag showing favorite family pastimes. On poster board, he can draw symbols to represent them (a tent for camping, a cake for baking together). Then, hang the flag in your house. *Tip:* You might first show him a real flag and explain what the parts stand for, such as 50 stars for 50 states.

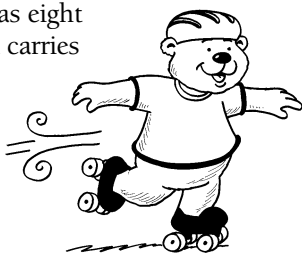
Worth quoting

"You cannot open a book without learning something." *Confucius*

Just for fun

Q: What has eight wheels but carries only one passenger?

A: A pair of roller skates.



Creative discipline

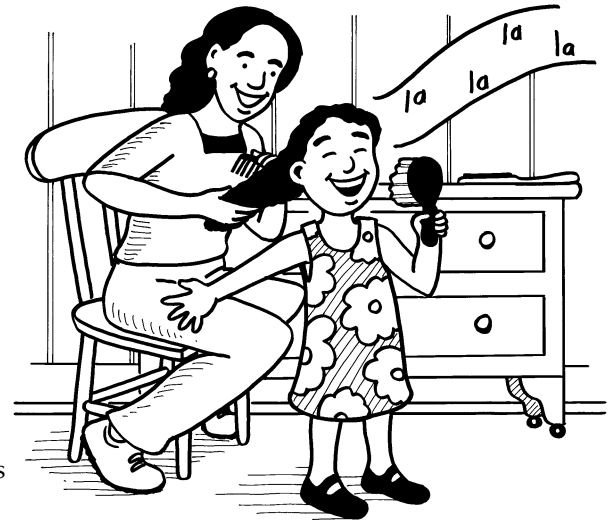
Some days, getting your youngster to behave can be a struggle. On those days, try being creative! Thinking "prevention" instead of "punishment" can help avoid meltdowns and power struggles. Try these ideas.

Be playful

Turn everyday chores into playful adventures. For example, if picking up toys makes your child act out, suggest that she pretend she's tucking them in for the night. If brushing her hair is a wrestling match, you might have her act like a rock star, singing into her hairbrush "microphone" while you work out the tangles with a comb.

Count down

A little advance warning can smooth the way when it's time to change from one activity to another. Set a kitchen timer 10 minutes before your youngster needs to stop what she's doing. You might let her know how much time she has left as the timer ticks down ("Five



minutes left until bedtime," "Two minutes to go"). When the buzzer goes off, she'll be prepared—and more likely to switch activities without complaint.

Look ahead

Knowing what will happen next can motivate your child to do something she doesn't particularly want to do. When possible, give her something to look forward to. You might say, "As soon as the crayons are put away, we can take a photo of your drawing and email it to Grandma!" ♥

Storytelling made easy

Spark your child's imagination and build his language skills with these storytelling games:

- Introduce each other to imaginary friends. Your youngster can describe his friend and tell a story about him. *Example:* "Meet Squiggly, the polka-dotted snake. He smells like ice cream. We like to wiggle around the yard together." Then, you can tell a story about a "friend" of yours.
- Pass an object back and forth, and take turns adding lines to a story about it. The first player makes up a new way to use the item. For an umbrella, you could say, "This is my magic flying machine." Then, your child adds an idea ("I'm going to open it and fly to Mars"). Continue until you agree the story is over—and play again. ♥



Time for nature

Turn the great outdoors into a learning lab. Here are three ways to teach your child about science and nature while he plays outside.

1. Make silly soup. Give him a large plastic bowl and spoon. He can take your order for “nature soup” and then “cook” some in his bowl. If you order “nut soup,” for example, he might fill the bowl with acorns and hickory nuts from around the yard or a nearby park. Name each ingredient for him—he’ll stir up some fun while he learns to identify different natural items.

2. Be a copycat. Take a walk so your youngster can see which animals live in your neighborhood. Ask him to listen



carefully for animal sounds. When he hears one, have him imitate the noise and guess what kind of creature made it (frog, squirrel, robin). Together, see if you can spot the source of the sound.

3. Go on a treasure hunt.

Use this activity to help your child identify similarities among objects. Have him draw a circle on the sidewalk with chalk and fill it with three things that are alike in some way. Let him tell you how they’re related (“They all have stems”). Next, you put in three items and ask him what they have in common (“All three are red”).♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Where in the community am I?

This guessing game is a fun way to help your youngster discover the kinds of businesses that make up your community.



First, choose a place that your child will recognize (grocery store, barber shop, fire station). Tell her, “I’m visiting a place in our town. Can you guess where I am?” While she watches, pretend you are in that place, and act out things people do there. If you are pretending to be at the grocery store, you might act like you are pushing a cart and filling it with food. If you’re imagining that you’re at the fire station, you could make a siren noise and pretend to drive a fire engine.

Once your youngster figures out where you are, it’s her turn to act out a place for you to guess.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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PARENT TO PARENT

The “do over” game

My twins, Ashley and Emma, have different personalities. Ashley shakes off mistakes pretty easily, but Emma gets upset if she can’t do something right. I’ve tried different things to help Emma be more resilient. Then one day, I bought a toy xylophone at a yard sale and accidentally invented the “do over” game.

While playing a song on the xylophone, I hit a few wrong notes. I made a silly face and said, “Do over!” before I tried again. Emma thought it was funny, so she did the same thing. Soon the “do over” game spread to other activities. Now we make faces and call, “Do over!” when we mess up while tying shoes or hanging a picture, for instance.

It sounds silly, but turning our goofs into a game has helped Emma learn to let go of mistakes. She may not always succeed, but she has more fun trying.♥

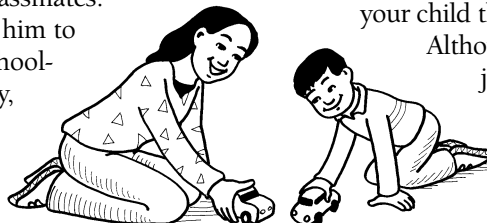


Q & A Siblings at home

Q: My son begs to stay home from school because his little sister gets time alone with me. What can I do?

A: It’s normal for your son to be jealous of your time with his sister. But it’s also important for him to go to school every day so he doesn’t miss out on learning and playing with classmates.

First, encourage him to take pride in his schoolwork. You might say, “You’re such a big boy the way you’re learning to write your name.”



Also, try setting aside time for just the two of you. For example, you might drive toy cars or play with action figures together while his sister naps. Or you could have a neighbor watch your daughter while you take your son to the playground.

The extra attention will remind your child that he’s important.

Although he still might feel jealous, the fun he has with you will probably help him feel better about going to school.♥