

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

January 2013

Arroyo Grande United Methodist Children's Center
Ms. Maddy Quaglino, Director

KID BITS



Exploring the globe

At the library, take a moment to look at the globe with your youngster. Let her spin it around and touch a random spot when it stops. Then, help her read the name of the continent or ocean she's touching. If she does this during every library visit, she'll develop a sense of where different places are located. *Idea:* Check out a book about each spot.

Follow the steps

Encourage independence by making picture instructions for tasks your child is learning. For example, you might show him how to tie his shoes and take a photo of each step. Have him put the pictures in order on a piece of paper and use them to do the task on his own.

"Safe" strangers

If your youngster gets separated from you in public, does she know what to do? When you're out together, talk about "safe" strangers she can ask for help. Point out security guards and police officers or people working behind counters in stores and offices. *Tip:* Help her memorize your cell phone number so she can reach you.

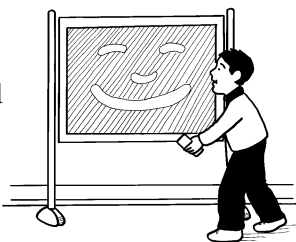
Worth quoting

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." *Mother Teresa*

Just for fun

Q: What is white when it's dirty and black when it's clean?

A: A blackboard!



Winter family fun

When you look back on your childhood, a few favorite memories probably stand out. Consider one of these ideas for making new memories with your child.

Family journal

Learn about family members' days by keeping a shared journal. Once or twice a week after dinner, pass around a notebook, and have each person write a sentence or two about something funny or interesting that happened recently. (If your youngster isn't writing yet, let him tell you what to write on his turn.) On the last day of each month, relive memories by reading the journal together.

Old-fashioned games

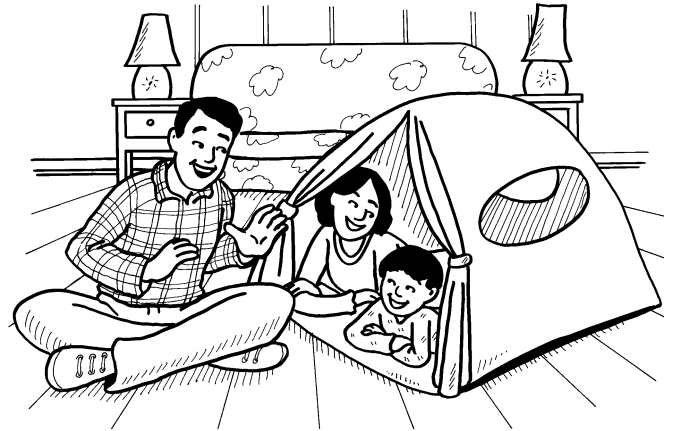
Introduce your child to traditional games like marbles, jacks, and croquet. You might ask older relatives to teach you their favorites, or get a book like *The Games Book: How to Play the Games of Yesterday* (Scholastic).

Snowy learning

Take advantage of your youngster's fascination with snow to help her learn skills that will come in handy at school. Here's how:

- Let her squeeze drops of red, yellow, and blue food coloring onto snow to see how they combine to make new colors. *Examples:* red + yellow = orange, yellow + blue = green.

- Help your child make paper snowflakes to discover symmetry. Show her how to fold a square of white paper in half and in half again. Have her cut out shapes along all the edges of the folded square. When she unfolds the snowflake, she will see that the shapes are symmetrical—each half is a mirror image of the other.♥



New places

Look for places your family has never been before. You could try a hobby shop, fire station, or different playground. Let your youngster keep a list of the places you like best so you can visit them again.

Weekend "campouts"

One weekend a month, hold a family campout. You can camp indoors when it's cold out and in your backyard during warmer weather. Set up a tent, or drape a sheet over some chairs for a makeshift fort. Then, put sleeping bags and pillows inside, and snuggle up to tell stories.♥



Pretend play

Imaginary play boosts your youngster's creativity, improves her language skills, and lets her practice "real life." Try these tips for encouraging her to make believe.

Start a prop box. Fill a box with dress-up clothes and costume jewelry, old pots and pans, and other items from around the house. As your child plays, ask questions to stretch her imagination. *Example:* "Where are you going in your fancy clothes?"

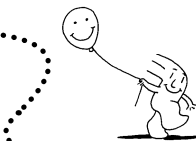


Make puppets. Help your youngster turn old socks into puppets that look like storybook characters (unicorn, pirate, dog). She can glue on buttons and yarn or draw with permanent markers. Keep the puppets with her books, and let her practice reading and speaking by staging puppet shows based on the tales. She might even make up new adventures for her puppets.

Turn work into play. Suggest that your child act out real-life scenarios. For example, she could pretend to run a restaurant while you cook dinner. Or she might act like a bus driver when you do errands. Playing different roles lets her explore how the world works.♥

How people feel

If your child knows how to talk about his emotions, he'll be able to control them better. He'll also find it easier to understand how others feel. Help him recognize and share his feelings with these suggestions:



- Together, make a list of emotions (surprised, excited, mad, disappointed). Then, look through magazines and photo albums, and talk about how people in the pictures might be feeling. Ask your youngster to explain why he picks each emotion. *Examples:* "The hockey player is *excited* because he won a trophy." "She is *upset* because she spilled chocolate milk on the carpet."

- Let your child hear you use specific words to describe family members' feelings. You might say, "I feel *grumpy* because I didn't sleep well," or "I know you're getting *frustrated* trying to teach the puppy tricks."♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

My own phone book

Making a phone book is a fun way for your youngster to practice writing names and numbers. He will also get a lesson in using alphabetical order.

Give him a small, inexpensive address book. Or staple together 26 sheets of lined paper, and let him label each page with a different letter of the alphabet.

To fill the pages, have your child ask friends and family members for their phone numbers. He can also copy numbers from your cell phone. Help him write the names and phone numbers on the correct pages. You might say, "What's the first letter of your friend Carlos's name? You're right. It's C. Let's write his name on the C page."

The next time you need a phone number, you can ask your youngster to look it up for you!♥



Getting your child's attention

Q: My daughter often doesn't seem to hear me when I speak to her.

How can I get her to listen?

A: If your child is daydreaming or playing, she might not hear you because she isn't paying attention. Try getting her to focus on you before you ask her to do something.

First, create a signal you will use to let her know it's time to listen up. You might call her by a special nickname or rest your hand gently on her shoulder.

Once you have her attention, get down on her level so you can make eye contact while you talk. It will be easier for her to focus when you are eye to eye. When you finish, have her repeat the message back to you so you know she heard ("Okay, so I need to wash my hands and brush my teeth").

If your youngster still doesn't seem to hear you, ask her pediatrician whether she should have a hearing test.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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