

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**



Balloon Ping-Pong

This homemade version of Ping-Pong lets your child practice hand-eye coordination while getting some exercise. Help him make paddles by taping craft sticks to the backs of paper plates. Then, bat a balloon back and forth, and see how long you can keep it in the air.

Calming down

When your youngster needs to settle down, try this trick. Sing a song together several times. Each time you repeat the song, get a little quieter, until you are singing in a whisper. You'll probably notice that your child is calmer. *Tip:* Suggest that she try this by herself when she is angry or upset.

Substance safety

How should you start talking about drugs with your youngster? Try simply introducing the idea that some substances can be harmful. For example, explain that vitamins are good for him, but taking more than what you give him can make him sick. Or when you use cleaning products, point out that you're careful to keep them away from your mouth and skin.

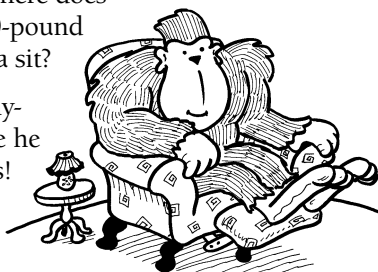
Worth quoting

"Each day of our lives, we make deposits in the memory banks of our children." *Charles R. Swindoll*

Just for fun

Q: Where does a 400-pound gorilla sit?

A: Anywhere he wants!



Growing a vocabulary

Between the ages of 3 and 5, your child will add more than 3,000 new words to her vocabulary! And she'll learn most of them while she's playing and talking with you. Try simple activities like these to build her vocabulary.

Look at pictures

Story time is the perfect opportunity to introduce new words. After you read each page, take turns naming three things in the picture. When it's your turn, try to use words your youngster may not know—*chef* instead of *cook* or *saxophone* instead of *horn*, for example.

Describe objects

This game is a fun way for your child to learn descriptive words, or adjectives. Pick one, such as *flat* or *bright*, and ask her to find items that it describes. She might notice that paper and stickers are flat and her orange jacket and light bulbs are bright. Then, let her choose an adjective for you (*sparkly*), and you can look



for objects that are unfamiliar to her (crystal, rhinestone).

Talk about homonyms

Children this age are just starting to understand that a word can be a *homonym*, or have more than one meaning. For instance, your youngster hears with her *ears* and she eats *ears* of corn, and she can ride a *train* or *train* her dog. Help her discover new homonyms by pointing them out whenever you can, and encourage her to do the same ("I see a *coaster* on the table. That makes me think of a roller *coaster!*").♥

Money smarts

"How much does that cost?" "Why can't I buy it?" Youngsters have a lot to learn about money! Here are ways to help your child understand:

- Start a change jar to teach him about saving money. Get a small, clear container, and let him put your change into it. Explain that when it's full, you'll count the coins together, and he can use a handful of them to buy something.
- Talk about needs and wants. A simple way to do this is to make a grocery list together. Say, "Let's write everything we *need* first. Then, we can add what we *want*." Start with necessities like milk, bread, and fruit. At the bottom, he might put ice cream or cookies.♥



Pay attention to bullying

Bullying can start as early as pre-school. By being aware of what bullies do and how to react, you can play an important role in preventing bullying. Consider these tips.

Understand what bullying is. It's normal for little ones to occasionally tease or argue. But bullying is a pattern of behavior. If your child and his friends frequently exclude, tease, or hurt a particular youngster, they may be crossing the line into bullying. Because most bullying



happens when adults aren't looking, stay close by when your child plays with others. If he's being a bully, let him know it's unacceptable rather than dismissing it as just "kids being kids."

Encourage your youngster to help. Even if your child doesn't bully others, he will probably witness bullying at some point. Discuss ways he can step in if someone is being bullied. For example, if one classmate knocks another down, he could help him up and take him to the teacher.

Tip: If your youngster is bullied, talk to his teacher. Children this age shouldn't be expected to handle bullying by themselves.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

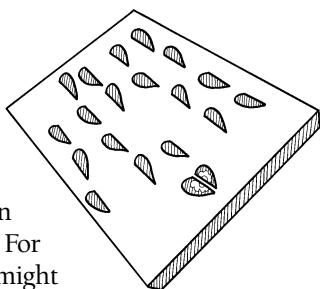
Matched pairs



Matching games boost your child's memory, and they help her pay attention to small differences. Here's a game you can make and play together.

Materials: red paper, scissors, crayons

Help your youngster cut 10 same-sized hearts out of red paper. Draw a different design on each heart. For instance, you might put stars on one heart, and your child could make zig-zags on another. After all the hearts are decorated, cut them in half vertically.



Mix up the pieces, and lay them face-down in rows. Flip one over, and have your child flip another to try to find its other half. If she gets it, she can keep the matching pair. If not, turn both pieces back over. Then, have her pick a half, and you try to make a match. When you've made all the matches, mix up the pieces, and play again.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Family history book

Last month, my daughter's class had a family history celebration. Cynthia had to ask her parents and grandparents questions like, "What was your favorite toy when you were little?" Then, she drew pictures of our answers—a house made of Lincoln Logs for her grandfather, roller skates for me, and a dollhouse for herself. We helped her staple the pictures together to make a book she shared in class.



Cynthia enjoyed the project so much that we've kept it going. Whenever our family gets together, she asks us more questions and draws pictures to add to her book. So far she has drawings of favorite birthday cakes, pets, and books. The project has helped Cynthia grow closer to her older relatives, and we've learned a lot about each other.♥

Q & A

Exploring the library

Q: When I was little, I loved the library. Any tips for getting the most out of it with my son?

A: Visiting the library is a great way to encourage a love of reading. Show your son the different sections where he can choose books to take home. He might try picture books, audio books, nonfiction, and magazines.

Then, find a cozy spot, and read together. At the checkout, sign

him up for his very own library card—he'll feel like he belongs at the library.

Also, get a calendar of events, and pick a few to attend. In addition to story hour, many libraries have arts and crafts, board game nights, and sing-alongs. These activities will let him practice skills he's learning in school, and they'll give him fond memories of the library like the ones you have.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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