

# 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



### Following directions

Help your child practice following directions while you play with blocks together. Give him simple instructions such as, "Stack the blue block on top of the red one," or "Place the green block behind the yellow one." Then, let him tell you which blocks to pick up and where to put them.

### Holiday bedtimes

Keep winter break from interrupting your youngster's normal sleep routine. Whenever you can, stick to her regular bedtime, and wake her up at her usual time. That way, when it's time to go back to school, she won't have to make a big adjustment.

### Our year

What did your family do in 2012? Tell stories about the year that's ending to give your child a sense of family history. Have everyone select a few of this year's favorite photos. Pass them around, and let each person share a memory ("I remember feeding those ducks at the park!").

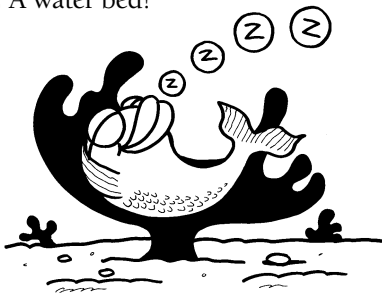
### Worth quoting

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." *Dalai Lama*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What kind of bed did the goldfish buy?

**A:** A water bed!



## Think like a detective

Good detectives need sharp observation and thinking skills—two of the same ingredients that your child needs for school success! Encourage her to be a detective with these fun guessing games.

### Texture hunt

Together, list household items with different textures (carpet, vent, colander). Tell your youngster to cover her eyes while you make a crayon rubbing of one of the objects. (Hold a piece of paper on the item, and rub the paper lightly with the side of a crayon so the texture appears.) Ask your child to find the item you chose. Then, show her how to make a rubbing for you to guess.

### What's different?

Let your youngster be "it." While everyone else closes their eyes, she gets to change one thing in the room. She might hide a pillow or move a knick-knack to a different table, for example. Then, everyone looks for what's different. The first person to spot the change gets to be the new "it."

### "I love my school!"

Help your youngster have a positive attitude toward school with these suggestions:

- Let him hear you say good things about his teacher and his school. *Example:* "Mrs. Jackson always has such fun projects for your class to do."
- Attend special events as part of your family's routine. Going to class parties and on field trips helps your child see school as an important part of his life.
- Volunteer when you can. You might help with school carnivals, book fairs, and fund-raisers if you have time. If your schedule is tight, look for quick ways to show support, like saving magazines for class projects or sending in fruit for a snack.♥

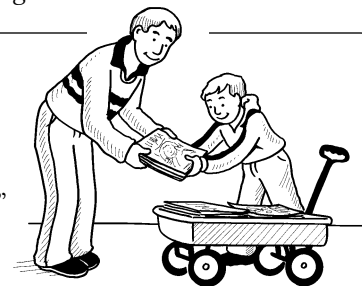


### Pillowcase mysteries

Place a small item or toy inside a pillowcase. Have your child feel the item through the pillowcase and try to guess what it is. Offer clues if she needs help. For a comb, you might say, "You need it to make a ponytail." After she guesses, let her make a pillowcase mystery for you to solve.

### Gadget guessing

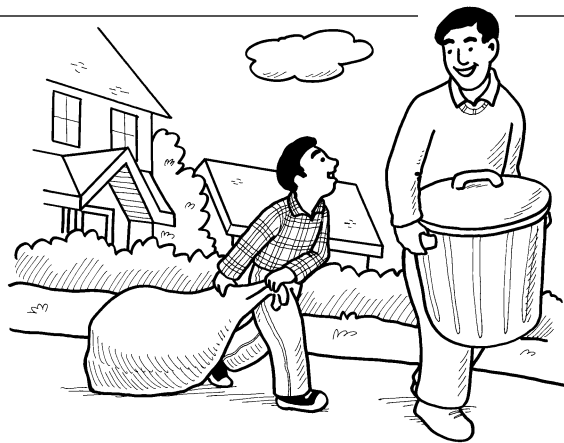
While shopping, browse the kitchen gadgets or camping supplies. Choose something that looks interesting (mixer, lantern) and ask your youngster how it might work and what it could be used for. Remember, thinking carefully about the answer is more important than getting it right.♥



## You can count on me

How can you raise a dependable child? Here are some ways to help him understand and practice reliable behavior.

**Talk about it.** Take turns naming things that people in your family can be counted on to do. Then, talk about what would happen if they didn't do them. "We count on Daddy to take out the trash. What if he didn't?" (The house would fill up with stinky garbage.) "The dog counts on you to play with him. What if you forgot?" (He'd be bored.)



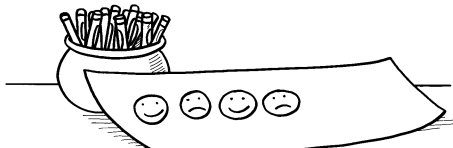
**Show it.** Let your youngster see how you keep promises. If you water a neighbor's plants or drive a grandparent to the doctor, you can explain that those people are depending on you. Watching you follow through is a simple way to encourage him to do the same.

**Draw it.** Help your child write "Count on me!" at the top of a piece of paper. Then encourage him to draw pictures of things that people depend on him for. Perhaps his teacher relies on him to change the classroom calendar, or his baby sister counts on him to push her on a swing. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER Face patterns

Playing with patterns is fun—and it helps your youngster with math. Here's a simple drawing activity to try.

1. Use crayons to draw a pattern of faces. *Example:* smiley face, sad face, smiley face, sad face.



2. Ask your child to continue your pattern. She can add two more faces to show what comes next (smiley face, sad face).

3. Let her draw a pattern of faces for you to continue. She might give them different colored eyes (blue, brown, blue, brown), or she could make a pattern with three elements (blond hair, brown hair, red hair, blond hair, brown hair, red hair).

*Variation:* Draw different symbols and objects (hearts, stars, moons). Make longer or more complicated patterns (heart, star, star, heart, star, star), or even leave out a symbol in the middle of a pattern so your youngster can fill it in. ♥

### 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

### Invent a holiday

Last month, my daughter Rosa's class learned about opposites by celebrating "Opposite Day." She wanted to continue the fun at home—when we got in the door, she said, "Watch me put on my shoes," as she took them off. And at bedtime I said, "Time to wake up!"

Rosa had so much fun learning about opposites this way that it gave me an idea to help her learn other things, too. The next week, I declared it "Favorite Color Day." We each named our favorite color. Rosa's dad likes blue, I love yellow, and Rosa likes green. Each time we spotted something in our favorite color, we pointed it out.

Since then, we've had a great time turning new learning experiences into special "holidays." This week we're celebrating the number 4. We're watching for the numeral on signs and mailboxes, and making a special snack with four ingredients! ♥



## Q & A Technology tips

**Q:** My son loves to play games on the computer and on our phones. Is this okay?

**A:** The best way for your son to learn about the world at this age is through hands-on play and exploration. Even so, technology is such a big part of daily life that it's hard to avoid it completely. Your best bet is to limit his screen time to no more than one hour per day and to keep it as interactive as possible.

For example, you might let him look through family

photos online or make a video call to relatives who live far away. Or let him use your phone to take and share photos of interesting things he sees on a walk. You could even help him explore Google Maps. Can he find your continent, country, state, city, neighborhood, and house? He can also search for places where relatives live or ancestors came from.

Consider combining technology with hands-on fun. Go online together and find crafts to try or songs to sing, or learn something new, like card tricks or the sign language alphabet. ♥

