

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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

KID BITS



A conference plan

A parent-teacher conference lets you find out how your child is doing at school. If she's struggling with something, like listening in class or holding a pencil, leave the conference with a plan. Ask what you can do at home (play listening games, try a thicker pencil) and how to follow up with the teacher (phone, email).

Afraid of the dark?

To tame bedtime fears and let your youngster sleep better, help him get used to the dark. Sit together for a few minutes each night while he shines a flashlight around his room. This will help him see that there's nothing to be afraid of. *Tip:* Have him keep the flashlight by his bed in case he gets scared when you leave.

Memory booster

Try this easy game to sharpen your child's memory. Line up three or four of her favorite toys, and ask her to memorize their order. Then, tell her to cover her eyes while you rearrange them. Can she put them back in their original order? When it gets too easy, add another toy or two.

Worth quoting

"Play is the highest form of research."
Albert Einstein

Just for fun

Dad: Why are you jumping up and down?

Jacob: Because the orange juice carton says "Shake well before using."



The road to friendship

"I'm going to play with Evan today." When your youngster says something like this, he's showing that he's interested in friendship. And that's a good thing: children with friends have better attitudes toward school, and they learn about communication, cooperation, and kindness.

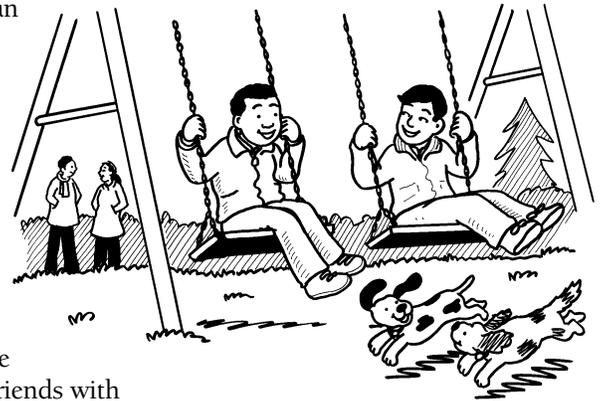
Guide your little one on the road to making and keeping friends with these ideas.

Introduce yourself

Have pretend conversations with your youngster to help him feel comfortable greeting other children. You might say, "Hi. I'm Conner. Do you want to play?" He can reply, "Hi. I'm Jack. Let's go swing on the swings!" Encourage him to try this at school and in your neighborhood. Can he say hello to someone new each week?

Find common ground

When your child makes a friend, let him invite the youngster home. Stick around while they play—sometimes new friends need a little help from a grown-up



while they learn to get along. You can suggest that your child ask his friend what he likes to do. Then, get them started with an activity they both enjoy (building with Legos, finger painting).

Keep friendships strong

Remind your youngster to treat others the way he wants to be treated. This will help him stay close to friends that he makes. Try this. Ask him to name things good friends do (share, help each other, use nice words). To remember his ideas, he could draw pictures. For instance, he might draw himself sharing play dough with a friend. ♥

Learning styles

Does your child learn best by seeing, listening, or moving around? If she's like most youngsters, she uses a variety of *learning styles*. Tap into them with activities like these.

- **Seeing:** Have her draw and color pictures of words she's learning (*house, cat, mom*). She can write each word on a separate index card and illustrate it.
- **Listening:** Give your youngster a voice recorder and let her record herself singing songs or telling stories. Or she might pretend to be a newscaster and "report" family news. She'll enjoy playing her recording to hear how she sounds.
- **Moving:** Let her practice counting with active games like hopscotch and basketball. Have her call out numbers that she hops on, or ask her to count baskets that she makes. ♥



Read with me

Every time you read to your child, you help her develop reading skills—and you spend cozy time together. Try these story-time tips.

Let your youngster help. Encourage her to focus on the story by giving her a part to play. Ask her to point to words she recognizes or to find all the words on the page that start with a certain letter. *Idea:* Choose a book with words or lines that repeat over and over. When you get to the repeating part, stop and have her fill it in.

Talk about illustrations. Pictures can help your child learn new words and ideas. Make sure she can see the illustrations



while you read, and call her attention to things you think will interest her. For instance, if you're reading a story about dinosaurs, you might say, "Look at that tyrannosaurus rex. It has sharp teeth."

Read and reread. Even after your youngster knows her favorite books by heart, keep reading them. Familiar stories help children fall in love with reading. *Idea:* Run your finger under the words as you say them. Soon, she'll be able to read them all by herself.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Gratitude box

This special box can help your youngster think about what he is thankful for.

Materials: shoebox, paper, tape, crayons, items from around the house



First, help your child cover a shoebox with colored construction paper. Then, let him use crayons to decorate the box with pictures of things that he's grateful for (family, puppy, toys).

Next, have him walk through the house and collect an object to go with each picture. He might get a photo of his family, a stuffed dog to represent his puppy, and a train for his toys.

Sit down together with his "gratitude box," and ask him to tell you about each item he chose. He can also share his collection with relatives who visit. *Idea:* Encourage other family members to make gratitude boxes, too.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Protecting the environment

In school, my son Logan learned about protecting the environment. His class took a "pledge"—they promised to do things like use both sides of the paper for writing or coloring and bring in recyclable items from home for craft projects.

Logan asked if we could make a pledge at home, too. So together, we listed ways to help the environment. I suggested using cloth towels and napkins instead of paper ones. Logan thought it would be a good idea to get reusable water bottles rather than buy plastic ones. We also agreed to shut off the water while we brush our teeth and to turn out lights when we leave a room. We put the list on the refrigerator to help us remember.

Our list makes it easier for the whole family to be more environmentally friendly. And Logan is proud to be doing his part.♥



Q & A

My culture, your culture

Q: Several families in our apartment building are from other countries. My daughter is curious about why they dress and talk differently. What should I say?

A: A good way for a youngster to learn about other cultures is to look at her own. When she asks about someone's clothing, you might tell her what it's called ("That's a sari") and then ask, "What kind of clothes does our family usually wear?"

Explain that where your family is from can affect how you dress, eat, and act. Can

she come up with examples of your family's customs?

You can also incorporate other cultures into your own life. Try shopping at an Asian market or eating in a Salvadoran restaurant. Look for library books set in other countries.

And try to pick up a few words so you can greet your neighbors in their native languages.

Tip: Let your daughter know you're happy to answer her questions at home but she shouldn't point or whisper when you're out.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
 540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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