

# Early Childhood Parents<sup>®</sup> make the difference!

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## Preschoolers learn valuable lessons when they create art

**W**hen preschoolers create art, they learn how to make decisions, such as which colors to use when creating a picture. They learn about cause and effect when they move a crayon on paper to make a mark. And, through art, they discover creative new ways to express themselves.

To help your preschooler get the most from making art:

- **Resist the urge** to tell your child what to create. The *process* of creating is more important than your child's final product.
- **Ask questions** to help your child get started. If your child wants to draw a kitten but doesn't know where to begin, ask, "What shape is a kitten's head?" "What are the different parts of a kitten?"
- **Provide a variety** of art supplies. Look for things around the house—glue, fabric scraps, coffee filters, egg cartons, catalogs, paper towel tubes, string and yarn.
- **Be sensitive and patient.** Some kids don't like to get their hands dirty or sticky, for example. That's OK. Introduce new art materials slowly.
- **Ask questions** about the artwork. How did your child make it? How does your child feel about it?
- **Offer specific feedback.** Describe what you see. Talk about the colors and materials your child used. Note what you like most. Don't just say, "That's pretty."
- **Proudly display artwork.** Put it on the wall or refrigerator. Send it to relatives.

## Take advantage of May learning opportunities



There's more to May than Mother's Day, Memorial Day and Victoria Day. Here are some other

occasions that offer fun learning opportunities for you and your preschooler:

- **May 1**—Mother Goose Day. Read some favorite Mother Goose rhymes together.
- **May 4**—National Weather Observers Day. Go outside and observe the clouds together. Ask your child to draw a picture about the weather or make a collage using weather-related pictures cut from magazines.
- **May 5**—Cinco de Mayo. Learn more about this celebration that honors the rich culture of Mexican-Americans and Hispanics, and enjoy some Mexican food!
- **May 18**—International Museum Day. Talk with your child about the value of museums. Visit a children's museum online or in person.
- **May 30**—Water a Flower Day. Celebrate by planting flowers outside or in containers together.

## Encourage your preschooler to think more independently



Your preschooler is experiencing amazing brain development in these early years. The extent of growth depends in part on how much nurturing your child's brain receives.

One way to promote brain development is to help your child learn to think independently. Here's how:

- **Choose toys carefully.** Electronic toys are fun, but some seem to do all the playing, while your child just sits and watches. Classic toys such as blocks, puzzles, toy vehicles and animal figures are better for encouraging creative play and thinking.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions.** Young children usually ask many questions, and sometimes it can try a parent's patience. But remember that the more

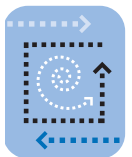
questions your child asks, the more your child learns and thinks.

- **Ask questions.** Avoid questions that have one-word answers, such as "Did you have fun today?" Instead, ask, "Can you tell me about the fort you built?" "What do you think you will play tomorrow?"
- **Give your child time to process.** After asking a question, wait a moment or two to allow your child to think about what to say. Young children aren't able to form their responses as quickly as adults can.

**"Try to learn something about everything and everything about something."**

—Thomas Huxley

## Strengthen your preschooler's kindergarten readiness skills



Summer is the perfect time to make sure your preschooler is on the path to kindergarten readiness.

When children enter kindergarten, they do better if they already have some basic skills. These include being able to:

- **Express themselves clearly.**
- **Listen and pay attention** for short periods of time.
- **Identify some colors.**
- **Compare and contrast** two objects.
- **Work with their hands.**
- **Locate print on a page** and know that it tells a story.

To help your child develop these skills:

- **Encourage talking.** Talk about the things your child sees throughout the day. Ask your child to name

common objects. Point out different colors. Ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going.

- **Take time to really listen.** Does your child state thoughts clearly? Can your child retell an event in the proper sequence?
- **Offer opportunities** to build fine motor skills, such as by painting and writing together. Show your child how to zip and button clothing.
- **Read together daily.** Encourage your child to hold books and turn the pages. Encourage your child to "read" to you, too.
- **Ask your child to sort objects.** Before you wash clothes, have your child put them in piles by type or color. Talk about how items are similar and how they are different.

## Are you making the most of your family mealtime?



Mealtime is full of opportunities for your preschooler to enjoy learning. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions

below to see if you're nurturing your child's brain and body:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you let your child help with food preparation**, including measuring, pouring and mixing?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you give your child a few responsibilities**, such as counting items and setting the table?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you sit with your child at the table**, discussing topics of interest and responding to what your child says?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you model table manners**, such as putting your napkin in your lap and saying *please* and *thank you*?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you mention concepts** that your child is learning? The plate is *round*. The milk is *cold*. The eggs are *yellow*.

**How well are you doing?**

If most of your answers are *yes*, you're using mealtimes to teach your preschooler important lessons. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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*make the difference!*

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# Teach your child the difference between *telling* and *tattling*



Preschoolers love to tattle on each other. Most parents, however, do not love to hear it. And teachers, who may

have 20 or more little tattlers in their classes, love it even less.

Here are some strategies you can use to break the tattling habit in your child:

- **Tell your child** you will listen only to *telling*, not to *tattling*. *Telling* is when your child comes to you with information that can keep another child from harm. For example, your child informs you that a sibling is playing with matches.

*Tattling* is when your child comes to you with information meant to get another child into trouble. For

example, your child informs you that a sibling went into the cupboard and ate the rest of the cookies.

- **Reinforce the difference** between *telling* and *tattling* by always asking the same two questions when your preschooler tattles:
  1. *Is somebody hurt?*
  2. *Is somebody going to get hurt?*
 If the answers are *no*, simply say, “No tattling,” and turn your attention to something else.
- **Offer empathy.** You can acknowledge your child’s feelings about what a sibling did without punishing that child for something you didn’t see. “I can tell how upset you are that Tracy ate all of the cookies. I’d like to hear you use your words to tell Tracy instead of me.”

# Don’t let screen time take over your preschooler’s summer!



During the school year, you probably structure your routine around the time your child spends in preschool. As summer approaches, it’s time to think about what will occupy the hours your child will not be in school?

Guard against filling the time gap with television and other screen-based activities. It is important to limit these activities because:

- **Too much screen time** robs your child of a great summer gift—nice weather and long days spent in active play.
- **Studies using brain scans** show that the beneficial white matter in the brains of children who spend hours in front of screens doesn’t develop as fast as it does in children who don’t.

To keep summer screen time in check:

- **Set limits.** Most pediatricians say kids ages two to five should have no more than one hour of screen time each day. Video chatting with family is not included in this time.
- **Give your child a job** when you are busy instead of handing over a digital device. Have your child sort socks, pick up toys or help you put lightweight groceries away.
- **Create an “I’m Bored Box.”** With your preschooler, make a list of fun activities that your child can do independently. Activities can include things such as coloring, sorting items, looking at a book, and playing with puppets. Stock all of the items needed for the tasks in the box.

Source: S. Reinberg, “Too Much Screen Time May Stunt Toddlers’ Brains,” HealthDay News.

**Q:** My preschooler speaks well and is able to communicate wants and needs. However, kindergarten begins next fall, and I’d like to help my child build language skills even further. What are some things I can do?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Strong language skills are directly connected to learning to read and write. The more you talk with your child, the stronger those skills will become.

Here’s what you can do:

- **Have a time every day** when your child knows you are available to talk. Many families use a mealtime or the few minutes right before bed.
- **Ask your child** to pick something to talk about, and then discuss it together.
- **Encourage your child** to ask questions and give age-appropriate answers.
- **Talk to your child** about your day and ask about your child’s day.
- **Let your child finish** speaking and then ask some questions about what was said.
- **Talk about things** your family is going to do in the next few days, or things you’d like to do as a family.
- **Use new words** your child may not have heard before. Synonyms are useful here. Try saying *rapid* or *quick* instead of *fast*.
- **Provide context clues** so your child can guess the meaning of new words. For example, “We haven’t eaten in hours! I’m *famished*, aren’t you? I think I can hear your stomach growling!” From this, your child can guess that *famished* means hungry.



# The Kindergarten Experience

## Find out if your kindergartner mastered skills



Studies show that it's critical for students to keep learning over the summer. Summer learning is especially important for kindergarten students who may not have mastered all of the skills introduced during the school year.

Below are some of the skills rising first graders should be able to do:

- **Write and recognize** upper and lowercase letters.
- **Write their name.**
- **Find a specific word in a text.** Say, "Look at this paragraph and find the word *cat*."
- **Identify words that rhyme.**
- **Identify words that start or end** with the same sounds—such as, *boat/bird* or *dog/frog*.
- **Use pictures to guess** about a story.
- **Retell familiar stories**—with a beginning, middle and end.
- **Ask and answer questions** about a story you have read aloud.
- **Write using** phonetic or invented spelling.
- **Add and subtract** numbers 1 through 10.
- **Use objects or draw pictures** to help show addition and subtraction.
- **Answer simple questions** about quantities: *how many, how many more, less, all, some, none*.
- **Have an interactive conversation** by listening and taking turns talking.

Talk to your child's teacher to learn ways to strengthen these skills over the summer.

## Engage in summer activities that combine learning and fun

**K**indergartners have worked hard all year, and families want their children to retain what they have learned. But families also want summer to be relaxing.

The good news is that there are many ways to combine learning and fun. Here are just a few:

- **Have a family spelling bee.** Give each family member words that match that person's skill level.
- **Read together** and discuss what you read. Choose books, poems and other material your child will enjoy.
- **Ask questions** about science and nature: "What would happen if we mixed red and yellow paint?" "Why does that toy float in the bath?" "What kind of bug is that?"



Then look for the answers together at the library or online.

- **Make math part of your day.** Have your child count steps, measure ingredients, and look for numbers everywhere.

## Summer reading keeps your child's literacy skills sharp



Your child learned many new reading skills in school this year. But when students don't continue reading over the summer, their reading skills can suffer.

Get in the habit now of making reading activities part of your child's summer fun. Here's how:

- **Read books together** about your summer activities. If you go to the zoo, read your child a book about zoo animals.
- **Enroll your child** in the summer reading program at your local library. Many libraries offer author

readings, prizes and internet access. Hard to get to the library? See if there's a Bookmobile that stops in your neighborhood or complex.

- **Engage your child** in online reading activities. There are many literacy websites and apps that offer reading lists, free online interactive books and print-out activities. Search "free literacy activities" to get started.
- **Bring books everywhere.** See how many places you and your child can find to read. Read on a walk, at bath time, during dinner and with relatives you visit.