



Show your preschooler how to investigate using five senses

Does your child know about the five senses—*sight, hearing, touch, smell* and *taste*? These concepts are taught in preschool and kindergarten; however, it's never too early to introduce them to your child.

Read a book together about the five senses and then challenge your child to use them to investigate new things. For example, give your child a piece of fruit, such as an apple. Next, ask five questions:

1. **What do you see?** Have your child look at the apple and describe it in words. "It's yellow and spotted."
2. **What do you hear?** Apples don't make a noise, but have your child tap it with a spoon or a finger. What does it sound like?

3. **What do you feel?** Have your child touch the apple. Is it soft or hard? Is it rough or smooth?
4. **What do you smell?** Have your child describe the apple's scent. Does it smell sweet?
5. **What do you taste?** Have your child take a bite and describe the taste. Encourage your child to connect the senses, too. If the apple smelled sweet, did it taste sweet, too? What sound did it make when your child bit into it? Have your child choose other types of fruit to investigate using this same five-question method.

While this activity works well with food, it's important to remind young children *never* to put anything into their mouths without permission.

Playing board games teaches valuable skills



Board games can be beneficial for preschoolers' development. Beyond being

enjoyable, playing these games helps young children learn key skills that will set them up for success in school and life.

Playing board games teaches your child how to:

- **Take turns.** During a board game, everyone gets a turn—something that may not happen during casual play. Your child will learn to wait patiently while each player takes a turn.
- **Think strategically.** Board games can help improve problem-solving, decision-making and thinking skills.
- **Play fair.** Remind your child that cheating is never fair. How would your preschooler feel if you cheated in order to win? Playing fair teaches your child the importance of honesty.
- **Be a good sport.** Tell your child that while it can be fun to win, what really matters is that the players have fun. Discuss ways to be a humble winner and a gracious loser.

Your preschooler's mood and interests affect attention span



You may have noticed that your preschooler's attention span varies according to the situation.

Your child may spend 10 minutes listening to a story, but only 10 seconds listening to your instructions. While this can be frustrating, it's normal.

To increase attention span:

- **Consider your timing.** Is your child tired or hungry? If so, it's probably not the best time to introduce a challenging activity, such as learning a new game.
- **Limit distractions.** Create a quiet environment so your child can focus on the activity at hand.
- **Expand on interests.** If your child has a favorite television show, read stories about the characters together. If your child is excited about starting kindergarten next

fall, have some fun playing school together.

- **Plan "me too" activities.** Certain activities are not likely to hold a preschooler's attention—such as watching a sibling's sports game. So involve your preschooler in a related activity that requires focus, such as counting snacks for players.
- **Provide positive reinforcement.** Praise your child for staying focused.
- **Consult experts.** If you're worried about your child's attention span, talk to the preschool teacher or pediatrician.

"The simple act of paying attention can take you a long way."

—Keanu Reeves

Strengthen letter recognition by making tape art together



Young children who know many letters when they start kindergarten tend to have an easier time learning to read.

Your preschooler can practice making letters out of lots of different materials—yarn, clay, pasta, dough, glitter glue and even tape.

To make tape letter art:

1. **Collect supplies,** including paper, paint, a paintbrush and removeable tape. Try masking tape, drafting tape, blue painter's tape or transparent tape that pulls up easily.
2. **Use the tape** to "spell" your child's name on the paper. Help your child cut or tear the right-sized pieces and form the letters. The letter

A will need two long pieces and one short one. Curvy letters, such as S and P, may look a bit boxy or pointy, but that's OK.

3. **Have your child paint** a design on and around the tape, keeping in mind that the tape will be removed. The more paint on the page, the better. Then, help your preschooler carefully lift the tape and watch the name stand out!
4. **Think of additional ways** to use this art technique. Your preschooler could spell other words or use tape to make designs, such as a fence in front of a flower garden. When the tape is pulled up, the white space becomes the focus.

Are you helping your child build reading skills?



Reading together is one of the most effective ways to prepare your preschooler for school and build interest in

reading. Are you making the most of your reading time together? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___ 1. **Do you read together** every day at a time when your child is relaxed and interested, such as at bedtime?

___ 2. **Do you read books** your child likes, even if your child picks the same favorites over and over?

___ 3. **Do you visit the library** often to check out books and look for children's activities on their website?

___ 4. **Do you point out** common words to your child, such as *stop*, *go* and *the end*?

___ 5. **Do you ask your child** questions about the stories you read together and encourage your child to ask you some questions, too?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're actively promoting your preschooler's reading success. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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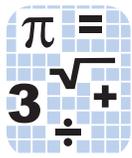
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Help your preschooler explore math concepts in everyday life



Early childhood is a great time to show children that math is not only fun, it's also a natural part of their daily lives.

Nearly everything children do involves math. For example, when kids get dressed, they follow a *sequence*. That's a basic math concept.

To promote your preschooler's awareness of math:

- **Look for numbers everywhere.** If your child doesn't recognize numbers yet, point them out. "That big sign has a number 2 and a number 5 on it!"
- **Have a "shape of the day."** In the morning, show your child a shape. "Look at your plate. It is a circle. We're going to have a circle hunt

today!" Throughout the day, point out circles where you see them.

- **Look for patterns.** Help your child find patterns on sheets, curtains and clothing. "Your shirt has a red stripe, then a yellow stripe, then a red stripe, then a yellow stripe. That's a pattern."
- **Estimate.** Say, "I think you can finish your sandwich in 10 bites. Let's see." Then, help your child count the bites it takes.
- **Sequence.** Preschool children love daily routines and knowing what's going to happen next. Talk about the course of the day. "First, I'll drop you off at preschool. After preschool is over, Grandma will pick you up. Then, you will go back to her house to play."

Preschoolers need to develop self-control for school success



Nearly every child has a meltdown now and then. But once kids get to kindergarten, they will need to know how to control themselves most of the time.

To help your preschooler develop self-control:

- **Keep surprises to a minimum.** Why do teachers print out daily schedules and tape them to the wall? Because children love—and need—routines. Offer a little advance warning when a big change is coming. Your child will behave better after having a bit of time to get used to the idea.
- **Offer choices.** Allow your child to make decisions within acceptable limits. This fosters a sense of control.
- **Offer a hug.** Sometimes upset children just want to know that someone cares about their feelings. A hug can help dry tears in a hurry. Then, encourage your child to use words to *tell* you what's wrong instead of kicking and screaming in frustration.
- **Remain calm.** If your child has a tantrum in public, remove your child from the situation. Remind your child that throwing a fit is not an acceptable way to get your attention.
- **Reward mature behavior.** Offer praise when your child manages to keep it together when frustrated. When your child uses words to express anger—instead of yelling and throwing toys like in the past—say you are proud.

Q: My four-year-old has a hard time telling the truth. How should I react when my preschooler tells me something that I know isn't true?

Questions & Answers

A: Young children are still learning the difference between fantasy and reality. When preschoolers say something that they wish were true, but couldn't be, it's not *really* lying. Instead, it's practicing make-believe—which is an important part of preschoolers' development.

Telling the truth is a quality that young children develop over several years. To encourage honesty:

- **Be truthful.** Your child may not always listen to you. But your child *will* mimic you.
- **Tell the truth for your child.** You walk into the kitchen and see crumbs on the table. If you ask, "Did you get a snack without permission?" your child will probably say *no* right away. Instead, supply the truth. "I know you don't want to be in trouble, but there are crumbs everywhere, including on your face. I think you ate a snack. It's OK to tell me."
- **Appreciate honesty.** Pushing your child to tell the truth will backfire if you punish your child after doing so. At this stage, your child should be praised for telling the truth. Then, calmly say what you expect your child to do the next time. "The next time you want a snack, please ask me first."

Staying calm when your child is honest will also pay off during the teenage years—when telling the truth can become a matter of safety.

The Kindergarten Experience

Activities can reinforce key school lessons



The kindergarten journey is filled with exciting discoveries.

To reinforce what your child is learning in school, incorporate related activities into your home routine—everything from reading and math to history, geography and science.

Try some of these activities with your kindergartner:

- **Read and tell.** With your child, choose a book and read it aloud. Afterward, have your child tell you the story. This is an effective way to check understanding and build thinking skills. Ask questions such as, “What happened next?” and “What would you have done?”
- **Play matching games.** Collect similar objects of various shapes and colors. Then, have your child match or sort them. “Let’s put all the white socks in one pile.” “Can you arrange the blocks from smallest to biggest?”
- **Discuss different countries.** Name a country you would like to visit. Find it on a map or a globe. Together, research the country’s climate and culture. Plan an imaginary trip, including meals and activities.
- **Observe nature.** Together, make a list of things in nature that you both find fascinating, such as trees, insects, flowers and birds. Together, spend time looking at them, drawing them and describing them. Ask your child, “What do you see?” This simple question may lead to exciting discoveries!

Support your kindergartner’s emerging independence

Can you believe there are only a few months left in the kindergarten year? You may be noticing a big change in your child. Many children seem so much more mature after months of kindergarten instruction and responsibilities.

To encourage this new-found independence, expect your child to:

- **Get dressed independently.** It’s OK to help with difficult tasks like buttoning buttons and tying shoes.
- **Help prepare breakfast or lunch.** Your child can pour dry cereal into a bowl, get the milk out of the refrigerator and peel a banana. For lunch, your preschooler can make a simple sandwich.
- **Clean up.** Your child should put books and toys away when finished with them.
- **Hang up jackets** and put shoes away.



- **Get things independently.** Provide a sturdy step stool. Store things your child needs, like cups for water, in low drawers that are easily reached.

March is the perfect month to investigate the wind together



Does your kindergartner know that there is more than just air blowing in the wind? To help your child find out what else is being blown around, conduct an experiment together. On a windy day:

1. **Gather some plastic lids**, string and petroleum jelly.
2. **Punch a hole** near the edge of each lid. Tie one end of the string to the lid through the hole.
3. **Rub petroleum jelly** on one side of each lid.
4. **Go outdoors and hang the lids** from tree branches in different places where they can blow in the wind.
5. **Wait 30 minutes.** Then, go back outside and check the lids.
6. **Use a magnifying glass** to investigate. What did the wind blow into the lids? Your child may find bits of leaves, dirt, paper and even insects stuck in the petroleum jelly.
7. **Ask why** your child thinks these things are in the wind. Explain that the wind is strong enough to pick them up and carry them along.