

Early Childhood Parents[®]

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make the difference!



Develop thinking skills, have your child make predictions

Making predictions may sound like something a fortune-teller does, but it's something we should all do to develop thinking skills. Your young child is no exception—even a preschooler can learn to make “educated guesses” based on what she knows.

Here's how to inspire your preschooler to predict:

- **Use books.** Predicting what will happen next in the story helps your child use her brain to better comprehend what you're reading to her. Before turning the page, ask questions like, “What will the bear eat?” or “After they get in the boat, where will they go?”

- **Use experiences.** “What will we see in the grocery store?” “Will it be hot or cold when we go outside?”
- **Use familiar routines.** “What will we do when we finish with dinner?” “What do you think you'll need for your bath?” “Mommy has her briefcase and she's ready to leave. Where is she going?”
- **Discuss prediction results.** “You said we would see apples and grapes in the grocery store. You're right! There they are. Look, I see bananas and strawberries, too.”

Source: Lilliann Alice Noda, June Mori-Shida & Nancy Chisato Adachi, *Off to A Great Start! Activities for Becoming Your Child's Best Teacher*, ISBN: 0-78024207-6 (The Wright Group, 1-800-648-2970, www.wrightgroup.com).

Have fun, share music with your preschooler



March is “Music in Our Schools Month.” Teachers know that music is especially

important for preschoolers.

Singing, dancing and playing instruments increases reasoning and motor skills.

Music lessons should be about fun and exploration. Your child should learn by imitation and fantasy. He shouldn't be asked to read music, perform or “do it right.”

To promote your child's development through music:

- **Make up songs** to sing when doing activities around the house—when picking up toys or getting ready for bed.
- **Sing the phrases** of fairy tales. “Mirror, mirror on the wall”
- **Let your child dance freely.**
- **Interweave movement** with sound. Do finger plays like *Where is Thumpkin?* Also try circle games, such as *Ring Around the Rosie*.

Source: Rahima Baldwin Dancy, *You Are Your Child's First Teacher: What Parents Can Do With and For Their Children from Birth to Age Six*, ISBN: 0-89087-967-2 (Celestial Arts, 1-800-841-2665, www.tenspeed.com).

Help your preschooler see that writing is fun and purposeful



Older preschoolers are usually ready to begin writing. This is good, as writing is an important part of the kindergarten curriculum. Just be sure, at this age, to let your child discover writing at his own pace.

You can:

- **Ask your child to “write”** about a picture he drew. Have him tell you what his “writing” says. Don’t worry about spelling or forming words. The only important thing now is that he is interested in communicating through writing.

- **Encourage your child** to show ownership of his drawings and other papers by writing his name on them. Help him practice the letters in his first name.
- **Ask him to write *with you*.** When writing a shopping list, give him paper to make his own list.
- **Involve writing in role-playing.** Have your child pretend he is a doctor writing you a prescription or a restaurant server writing down your order.

Source: Meri Wallace, *Keys to Parenting Your Four-Year-Old*, ISBN: 0-8120-9745-9 (Barron’s Educational Series, 1-800-645-3476, www.barronseduc.com).

Teach your preschooler how to be respectful, considerate of others



When you truly respect others, you think of their feelings, wants and needs. Being respectful and being considerate always go together.

A young child needs lots of help and practice with this concept. It’s natural for children to think only of themselves. You as a parent, along with teachers and other important adults in your child’s life, will have to teach your child the lifelong lesson of being considerate.

To teach consideration:

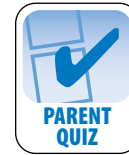
- **Talk specifically** about the needs of others. “This lady needs extra time to get through the door. We are going to stop here and wait until she passes by. Then we’ll go.”
- **Look and listen.** Looking at and listening to a speaker are critical ways to show respect and consideration. Do this for your child when she is talking. Then remind her when you speak to her: “Please look at me and listen to

what I am saying. When you talk, I will look and listen, too.”

- **Reinforce.** Notice when your child shows respect and consideration. For example, as you prepare to go out, she may get your bag or coat for you. This is a big step for her. Thank her and say, “That was so helpful and considerate.”

Source: Barbara A. Lewis, *Being Your Best: Character Building for Kids 7-10*, ISBN: 1-57542-063-5 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-866-922-2068, www.freespirit.com).

Are you raising a preschooler who is eager to learn?



Children are born with a desire to explore their world. They are curious, and it is important that they remain so if they are to learn and grow.

Take this quiz to see if you’re doing the kinds of things that will help keep your preschooler’s natural curiosity alive. Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the statements below:

___ **1. I model being curious.** I wonder about things out loud. I try to find answers when I don’t know something.

___ **2. I encourage my child** to ask questions. When she does, I say, “That’s a good question!”

___ **3. I give my child things** she can explore, take apart and put back together.

___ **4. I help my child** use a small magnifying glass to examine things—bugs, flowers, newsprint, walls, carpet, dirt!

___ **5. We take “adventure walks”** to see how many new things we can spot.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you’re keeping your child’s spirit of investigation and wonder active. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

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Research shows certain skills can keep your child away from drugs



Research confirms: There are certain skills and traits you can help your preschooler develop *now* that will help her say no

to drugs later. Be sure your child:

- **Feels secure.** Have her draw a picture of herself. Tell her how happy she makes you feel. Point out police officers and other adults she can trust to help her.
- **Knows how to solve problems.** Break small tasks down into even smaller steps.
- **Feels responsibility** toward others. Encourage her to feed the cat and do chores to “help the family out.”

- **Is self-confident.** Find a talent or trait that makes her feel special. Give her tasks she can do successfully. Tell her what a big help she is.
- **Understands the need for rules.** Explain why she shouldn't handle medicines in your home. Make sure she knows what will happen if she breaks rules.
- **Knows the difference** between fantasy and reality. Ask your child if the characters and actions in books or cartoons are real or pretend.

Source: Laura J. Colker, *Helping Preschoolers Grow Up Alcohol and Drug Free: Building Blocks Guide for Parents*, ED#459964 (American Council for Drug Education, U.S. Department of Education, 1-877-433-7827, www.ed.gov/about/pubs.jsp).

Spend time with your child doing creative St. Patrick's Day activities



Most preschoolers enjoy fantasy and make-believe, which is why St. Patrick's Day can be so much fun for them.

Here are a few activities you can try with your preschooler:

- **Have a scavenger hunt for gold.** Place gold stickers on five of your child's toys and other items. Hide them (in fairly easy-to-find places) and encourage your child to find them. When he comes back with all his gold, celebrate with a “green” treat—such as vanilla yogurt or pudding with a few drops of green food coloring.
- **Turn a green pepper** into a green shamrock! Cut a green pepper evenly in half length-wise. Scoop out the insides, leaving the shell. Dip the open side of a pepper half into green paint. Show your child how to stamp it onto white paper. Then show him how to turn three

stamps into a shamrock shape. (One stamp on top, two on the sides.) Have him draw a stem and then color his shamrock anyway he wants to.

- **Try a sensory hunt for gold.** Put beans, rice or sand in a large pan. Mix in gold “coins” (inexpensive at dollar stores). Let your child pick out the gold. Be sure to supervise to keep small items out of his mouth and off of the floor!
- **Read a themed book** with your child. Try *Jack and the Leprechaun* by Ivan Robertson.

“Children who are talked to and listened to, and who hear rhymes and songs from the earliest age, are confident and secure ... and are well prepared for school and learning.”

—Jane Davidson

Q: At home, my five-year-old son only needs to share attention with one other child, his sister. It is not usually a problem. At preschool, though, his teacher says he gets upset when other children receive attention. How can I work with him before kindergarten, when he will have to share attention with even more children?

Questions & Answers

A: Sharing attention is difficult. Your son may fear that his teacher likes best only those children to whom she is paying attention at that moment. Of course this is not true, but it's a hard concept for a young child to understand.

Here are some ways to teach this message:

- **Share and take turns at home.** Bring a toy to the table and pass it around. Whoever has the toy may speak. When it is not your child's turn, say, “I know it's hard to wait, but your sister's words are important to me. It will be your turn soon, and I will pay attention to you because your words are also important.”
- **Attend events** such as library story hour. Point out that the librarian is reading to *all* the children, including your child. Later, everyone will get a chance to ask a question. She will take turns spending time with each child, just like his teacher does at school.
- **Visit a family-friendly restaurant** with your child. Show your child how the server has to take care of many tables. She cares about each table, but cannot take care of them all at once. Each person at the restaurant must wait his turn for attention.

—Maria Koklanaris,
The Parent Institute

The Kindergarten Experience

Ignite your child's desire to attend school every day



Your child will be more eager to go to school if she has learned to love learning.

Kimberly Oliver—a kindergarten teacher and the 56th National Teacher of the Year—says, “Parents can help keep children excited about learning by making learning fun.”

To do that, she says, use games to help your child learn. Play together. Also try to incorporate your child's interests into the learning process. If she likes dinosaurs, sing dinosaur songs to build language skills. Count dinosaurs to build math skills. And so on.

Other things you can do to foster a love of learning:

- **Engage your child** in lots of hands-on activities.
- **Go to museums**, plays, concerts, zoos and other fun learning places.
- **Speak positively** about learning, teachers and school.
- **Ask your child** every day to tell you what she learned at school. Listen attentively and ask lots of questions about what she shares.
- **Help your child connect** what she learns to the real world.
- **Provide toys and props** that inspire imagination.
- **Model lifelong learning.** Let your child see you read and do research to learn.
- **Display your child's** academic work, as well as her artwork.

Source: “Supporting Your Child's Education: Ask the Expert—Kimberly Oliver,” Education/Parental Involvement, VideoJug, www.videojug.com/user/USEX0048.

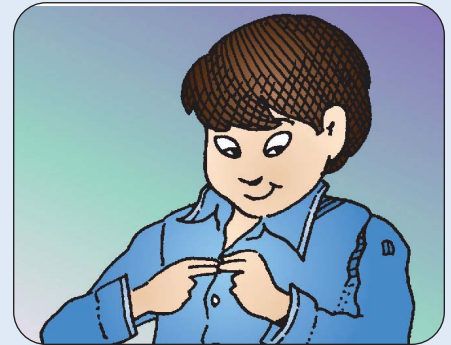
Be patient as your child attempts to take on more responsibility

You want your child to do more for himself and to be an independent learner. But sometimes it seems easier to do things for him.

He'll learn from this, too—but the lesson will be that you'll come to his rescue any time a task is challenging.

Consider following these guidelines instead:

- **Mistakes are okay!** Remind yourself of this as you see your child working to master a new task. He may make many mistakes before he gets it right.
- **Remember time and place.** The morning weekday rush, with three minutes to spare before everyone must be out the door, is not the best setting for your child to practice tying his shoes. Pick a quieter, less stressful time.



- **Share the job.** If your child is struggling with six small buttons, have him do two and you do four. After a few days, you do three and he does three. Soon he will be able to do them all himself.

Source: The Riverside Mothers Group, *Don't Forget the Rubber Ducky! The Ultimate Book of Lists for Parents of Young Children*, ISBN: 0-671-51125-4 (Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-323-7445, www.simonsays.com).

Make learning to read playful and fun for your kindergartner



Most kindergartners are excited about learning how to read. You can keep your child's desire to read strong, with

playful ideas like these:

- **Collect “Favorite Words.”** Every day, write down on a card a word your child likes—*dog, ball, pizza*. Draw a picture of the word on the card. After you have a stack of words, get your child to sort them by starting/ending sounds or number of syllables.
- **Encourage your child** to pretend to read by retelling a favorite story.

- **Be dramatic when you read** with your child. Make noises. Adopt different voices. Act out scenes with abandon.
- **Read the world.** Everywhere you go, point out words. The “Stop” and “Walk” signs. “Library.” See if your child can find the letters of his name in signs.
- **Attend story hours** at your public library. Let your child check out a few books.

Source: Jill Frankel Hauser, *Wow! I'm Reading: Fun Activities to Make Reading Happen—Ages 3 to 7*, ISBN: 1-885593-41-4 (Williamson Publishing Co., 1-800-234-8791, www.williamsonbooks.com).