

Family Connections Pre-K

Issue No. 1 – 30, 2005

Appalachia Educational Laboratory at Edvantia

Robert D. Childers, Patricia Penn and
Carla McClure, Editors

FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

A Special Message for Parents

Children love to learn. They want to make sense of their world. Parents and family members can help them. The learning guide you are reading is part of a series created especially for families. Each issue in this series includes the following:

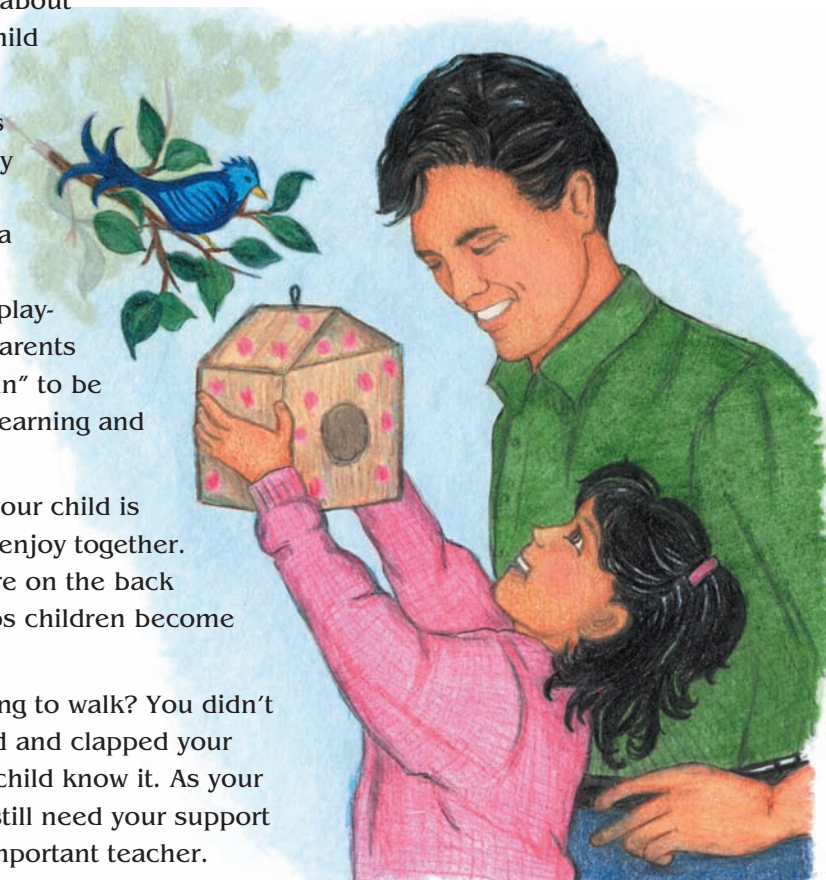
A message for family members who care for young children. Front-page messages talk about things like discipline, food choices, and child development.

Fun learning activities. These activities make use of items you have at home. They help children learn about basic ideas like size, shape, and color. They give children a chance to develop muscle skills and to imagine. (A cardboard box can become a playhouse—or, with your help, a birdhouse!) Parents might worry that such activities are “too fun” to be of value. But play is the starting point for learning and discovery. It is a child’s work.

A read-aloud verse. Reading aloud to your child is another “fun but serious” activity you can enjoy together. That’s why a verse and related activities are on the back page of every issue. Hearing you read helps children become ready and eager to become readers.

Remember when your child was learning to walk? You didn’t say, “No, don’t do it that way!” You smiled and clapped your hands. It was a big deal, and you let your child know it. As your children learn new words and skills, they still need your support and approval. You are your child’s most important teacher.

For years, families have used this series with their children. This new version has even more things you can do together. Not every child will enjoy every activity. Do those your child enjoys, and skip the others or try them later. (We may refer to a child as “him” in some places and “her” in others, but all activities are suitable for both boys and girls.) Enjoy!



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

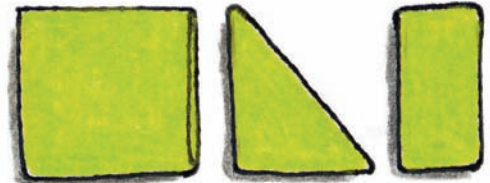
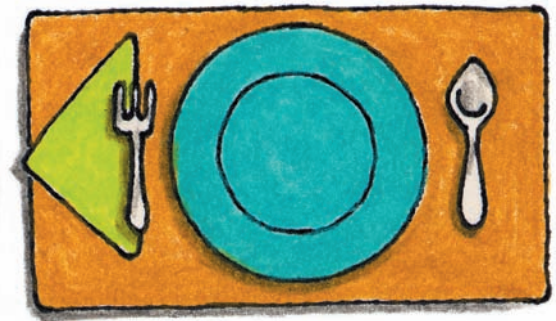
Let Your Child Help

Your child likes to be with you and to help around the house. Simple chores might take longer when your child is "helping," but important learning takes place. Children feel important when they help at home and hear your words of praise.

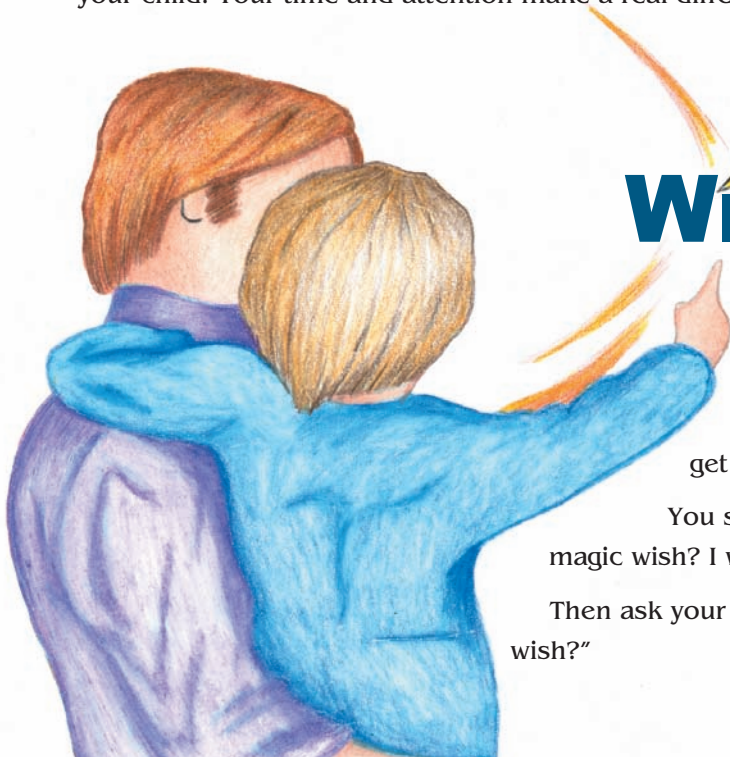
The next time you set the table for dinner, let your child fold a napkin for each place at the table. First, show how one fold can make a square napkin into a triangle. Let your child try it. Next, show how to make a rectangle. As you demonstrate, say the words (**square** or **triangle** or **rectangle**).

What's happening? The child is beginning to learn shapes, an important concept in mathematics. Once your child has mastered napkin folding, show him how to put a napkin on the left side of each place at the table and a spoon on the right. He will begin to see **left to right**, a component of learning to read.

The most important thing about such activities is that they occur naturally and are enjoyable to you and your child. Your time and attention make a real difference to your child's development.



square triangle rectangle

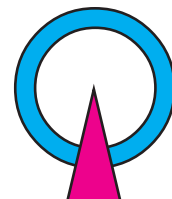
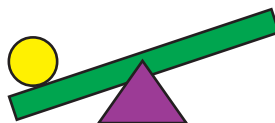
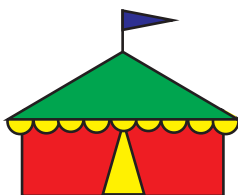


Wishing Together

This is a nice activity at bedtime. It will help develop your child's imagination and remind you of the magic of childhood. It will also help you and your child get to know each other better.

You say: "Do you know what I would wish for if I had one magic wish? I would wish for _____."

Then ask your child: "What would you wish for if you had one magic wish?"



Tell your child, "Five triangles are lost at the circus. Can you help me find them?"

You Are Somebody **Special**

Children need to know that they are important to their families. Have you told your child, "You are special to me?" Here is one way to say it:

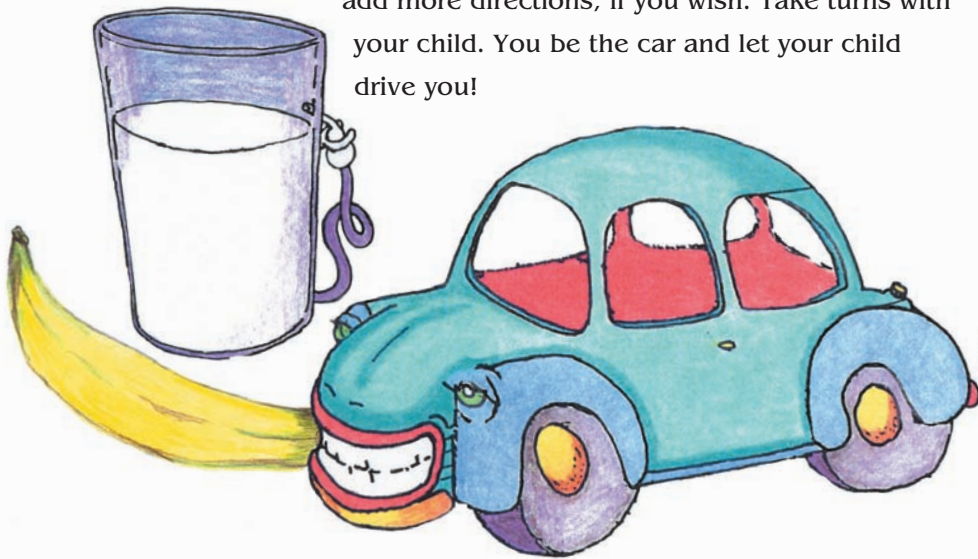
**Do you know who you are?
You are somebody special.
You're _____.**
(your child's name)

**There's nobody else just like you.
Think of it!
Nobody else like you in the whole, wide world.**



I Can Be a Car

Children love to pretend. Read "I Can Be a Car" aloud. Fill in the blank with your child's name. Then have your child follow the directions as you read the poem again. This time, pause to allow time for the "car" to start, stop, turn, and follow the other directions. You can add more directions, if you wish. Take turns with your child. You be the car and let your child drive you!



I can be a car,
_____**says.**
(your child's name)

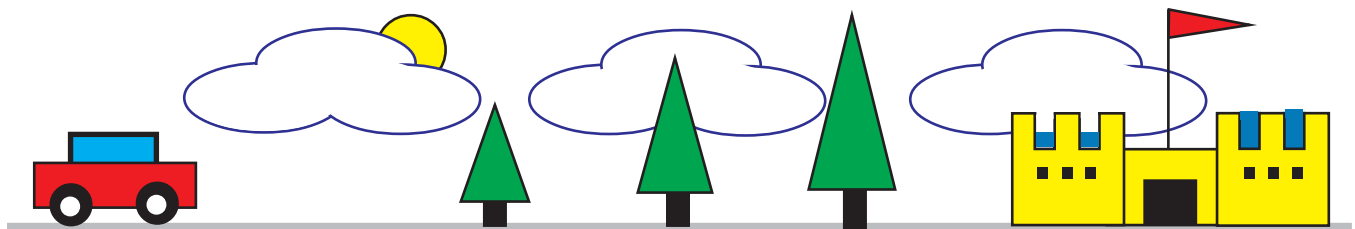
**You may drive me
If you're careful.**

**Tell me when to start,
When to stop,
When to turn,
and which way.**

**I can back up
and turn around.**

**I can go pretty fast!
I can go verrrry slow.**

**Milk and bananas
Will keep my engine
going.**



Point to the car and say, "Let's count the clouds together as we drive our car to the castle."

Read-Aloud RHYMES

Shadows on the Wall

**Shadows on the wall,
Shadows big and small,
Up and down,
All around,
They don't scare me at all.**

Carla Thomas McClure



Make Shadow Puppets

Do you remember making shadow puppets on the wall when you were a child? Now, it's your turn to show your child this magic trick! Use a bright lamp or a flashlight to cast light onto a blank wall, and use your hands to create interesting shapes. Some favorites are a barking dog and a flying bird. Your child will want to join the fun. You might think up new shapes, too. You can also put on a "puppet show" to go with the read-aloud:

Shadows on the wall,	<i>Make a shadow shape on the wall.</i>
Shadows big and small,	<i>Move hands toward the light source to make the shape bigger. Move hands toward the wall to make the shape smaller.</i>
Up and down,	<i>Move hands up and down.</i>
All around,	<i>Move hands in circles.</i>
They don't scare me at all.	<i>Stand in front of light source and make "muscle man" arms.</i>

Shadow Hunt

Go for a walk together, either indoors or outside. Hunt for interesting shadow shapes. Point out that buildings, trees, and people all make shadows. So do clouds and airplanes as they pass overhead. Show your child how to "catch" a shadow! Offer a piece of chalk and let your child trace your shadow on a sidewalk. (If indoors, use crayons and butcher paper or old newspapers.)

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Robert Childers, Senior Editor • Patricia Penn and Carla McClure, Editors • J. C. Mays, Royce Dunn, and Dawn Pauley, Illustrators
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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Reading Aloud Is Important

Reading aloud to your child is the single most important thing you can do to get your preschooler ready to read. Experts agree about this. Research shows that families give their children a big boost when they read to them.

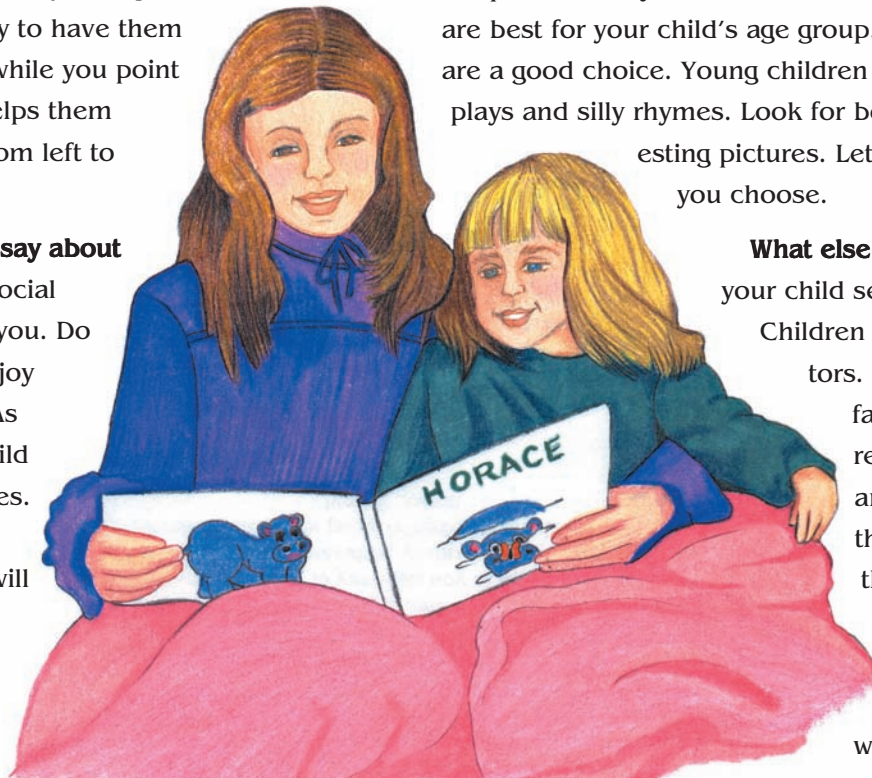
When should you start reading to children? It is never too early, and *now* is a good time! Young children enjoy sitting on your lap when you read to them. Try to have them sit on your left side while you point to the words. This helps them learn that we read from left to right.

What do experts say about it? Relax! Make it a social event for the two of you. Do not be in a hurry. Enjoy your time together. As you read, let your child talk about the pictures. Ask questions like "What do you think will happen next?" and "What would you do?" If your child asks you to read a

story again, please do (either now or later). Once children know a story well, they might pretend to read as you turn the pages. This is a good thing! It shows that they are starting to see how reading works.

What books should you read? Your child's teacher can offer suggestions. You can also go to the public library and ask the librarian which books are best for your child's age group. Nursery rhymes are a good choice. Young children also like finger plays and silly rhymes. Look for books with interesting pictures. Let your child help you choose.

What else can you do? Let your child see *you* reading! Children are great imitators. When they see family members reading for fun and information, they get the idea that reading is important. It becomes something they want to do.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Homemade **Finger Paint**

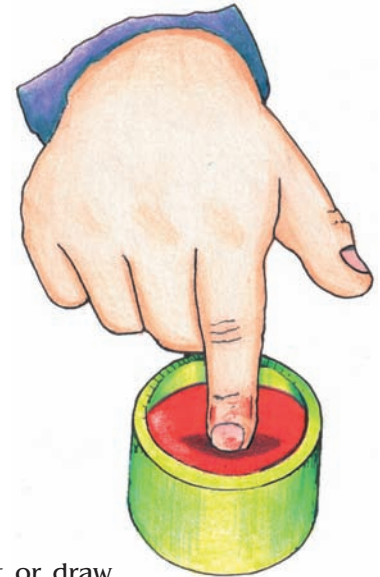
Most children enjoy using finger paints. You can buy them, or you can make your own with this recipe:

2 tablespoons cornstarch

2 tablespoons cold water

1 cup boiling water

In a small bowl, mix the cornstarch and cold water until it is smooth. Add the boiling water. Again, stir until smooth. (Caution: Let this mixture cool before you let your child use it.)



Get three small jars or bowls. Put a third of the finger paint in each jar. Add a few drops of red food coloring to one of the jars. Let your child mix it with a finger. Do a jar of blue and one of yellow. Give your child a piece of paper or cardboard to paint

on. Let the child paint or draw whatever he or she wants. Your child will have fun mixing paints to make new colors. Red and yellow make orange. Blue and yellow make green. All three primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—make brown.

The **Mirror** **ong**

To make your child feel safe and loved, sing this song with your child as you look at yourselves together in a mirror. It's to the tune of "Frere Jacques." (Are you sleeping, Brother John?)

We are special.

We are special.

Take a look.

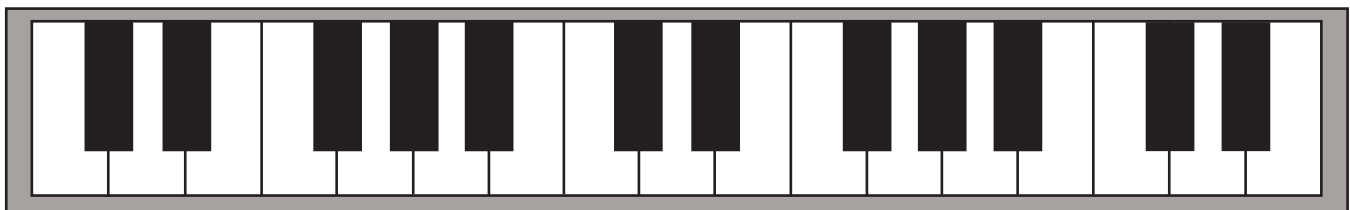
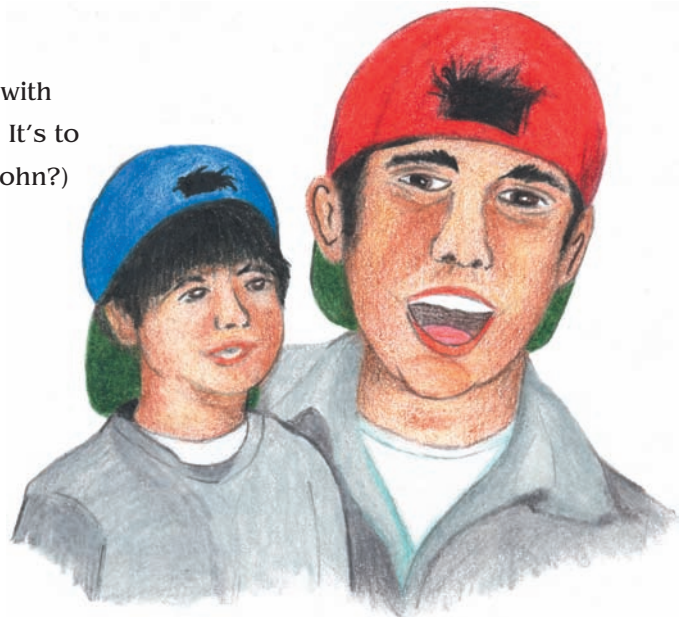
You can see.

We are very special.

We are really special.

You and me.

You and me.



Say, "Let's play the piano and make up our own song!"

















Opposite Words

Tell your child that you are going to play a game. You will say a word, and your child has to think of a word that is opposite. To show what “opposite” means, use the words in a sentence: “Turn the light **on**, then turn it **off**.”

Start the game by using one of the “opposite words” in a sentence. Then let your child finish your sentence. Like this: “If you throw the ball **up**, it will come back _____.”

After a while, you can just say a word and your child will give you an opposite.

Common opposites:

long		short
big		little
fast		slow
day		night
dark		light
happy		sad
old		new
up		down
rough		smooth
wet		dry
on		off
over		under
hot		cold
hard		soft
young		old
full		empty



Library Cards

It is never too soon—or too late—to get a library card for your child and yourself. Most public libraries will let children have their own card as soon as they can print their name. (But you might have to sign for it.) Many offer free children’s programs, such as author visits, story time, and arts and crafts. It seems like a simple thing, but having a library card can change your child’s life.

While you’re at it, why not check out some books for yourself? A cookbook? A car repair manual? A novel? Let your child see that you like to read, too!



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Five Little Ducks

Five little ducks

(Hold up five fingers.)

Swimming in the lake.

(Wiggle fingers.)

The first duck said,

“Watch the waves I make.”

(Make motions of waves.)

The second duck said,

“Swimming is great fun.”

(Make swimming motions.)

The third duck said,

“I like it in the sun.”

The fourth duck said,

“Let’s swim away.”

(Make swimming motions.)

The fifth duck said,

“Oh, no, let’s stay.”

Then along came the Mama duck:

“Quack, quack, quack!”

(Open fingers and thumb to “quack.”)

And five little ducks

Swam home to have a snack.

Finger Play

“Five Little Ducks” is a finger play. A finger play is a poem or song that includes hand and finger motions. Finger plays are great for young children. Making motions to go with the poem helps them pay attention. It also helps them remember the words. And they use different muscle skills.

As you read this finger play to your child, try to make your voice sound excited and happy. You might do different voices for the different ducks. When you get to the “Quack, quack, quack,” you might make your voice very loud. Be silly. Have fun. Look for other finger plays you can do together. Some well-known ones are “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider” and “Five Little Monkeys.”

What Do You Think?

Ask your child, “After the ducks swam home, what do you think they had for a snack?” Asking questions can help your child understand what is happening in the poem. It can also help children to picture a story in their heads.



FAMILY

Connect ions Pre-K

For the family of _____

Tell Me Why

Young children seem to ask a question a minute, and many of them are “why” questions. This is natural. The world is new to them, and they want to make sense of all they see.

One of the many important jobs you have as a parent is to answer questions. You do not have to know all the answers. It is fine to say “I don’t know” sometimes. Just do it with patience and respect.

Keep in mind that young children are interested in the purpose of things rather than how they work. For example, a child who asks “Why does it rain?” probably wants to know what the rain is for, not how it happens. A four-year-old might be content with an answer like “It rains so the flowers will grow.” The scientific explanation can come a little later.

How you handle questions is important. You want your child to keep looking for information. That is how children learn. If you say “Don’t bother me with dumb questions,” you teach them that questions are not good. This shuts off one of their best ways to learn.

Value your child’s questions. Try to give simple answers. When you do not know the answer, you

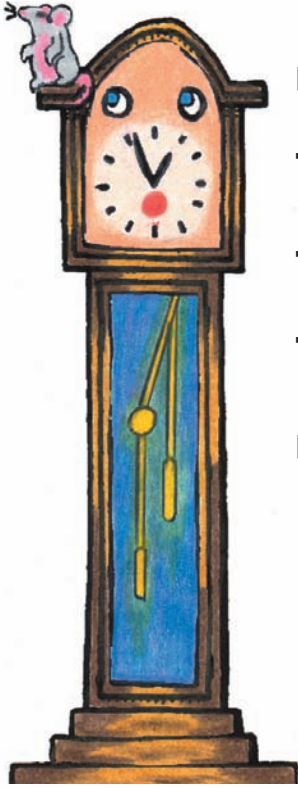


can say, “I don’t know, but that is a good question.” Sometimes, you might suggest a way the two of you could find an answer together. Let your child know that you are interested. “Why” might seem like a pesky word, but it will open your child’s world.

Nursery Rhymes

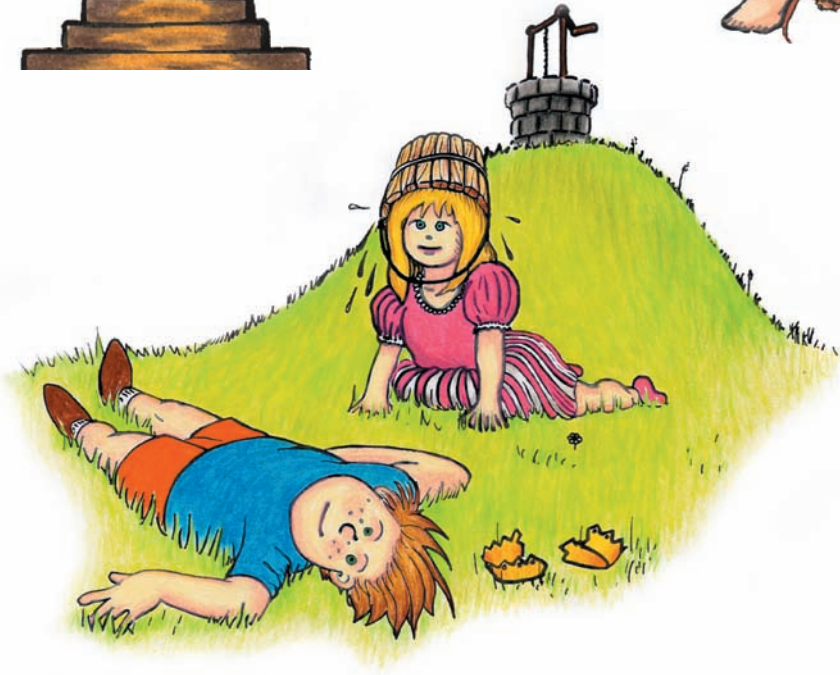
Nursery rhymes help children learn the sounds and rhythm of language. Some experts say children will be better readers, later on, if they are familiar with nursery rhymes by the time they are three

years old. Besides, nursery rhymes are just plain fun! Read them to your children often. Have them say the words along with you. Here are three that many children love.



**Hickory, dickory,
dock.
The mouse ran up
the clock.
The clock struck
one,
The mouse ran
down.
Hickory, dickory,
dock.**

**Little Boy Blue,
Come blow your horn.
The sheep's in the meadow,
The cow's in the corn.
Where is the little boy
who looks after the sheep?
He's under the
haystack,
fast asleep.**



**Jack and Jill
Went up a hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down,
And broke his crown,
And Jill came
tumbling after.**

Say to your child, "On this page, can you find a mouse? a pail? a pitchfork?"

Riddles and Questions

Four-year-olds can become very good at guessing **riddles**. By the time children are five, they may be able to make up their own. Riddles that are related to parts of the body attract young children. Try these:

- What has four legs and no feet? (A table)
- What has a head and a foot, but no face? (A bed)

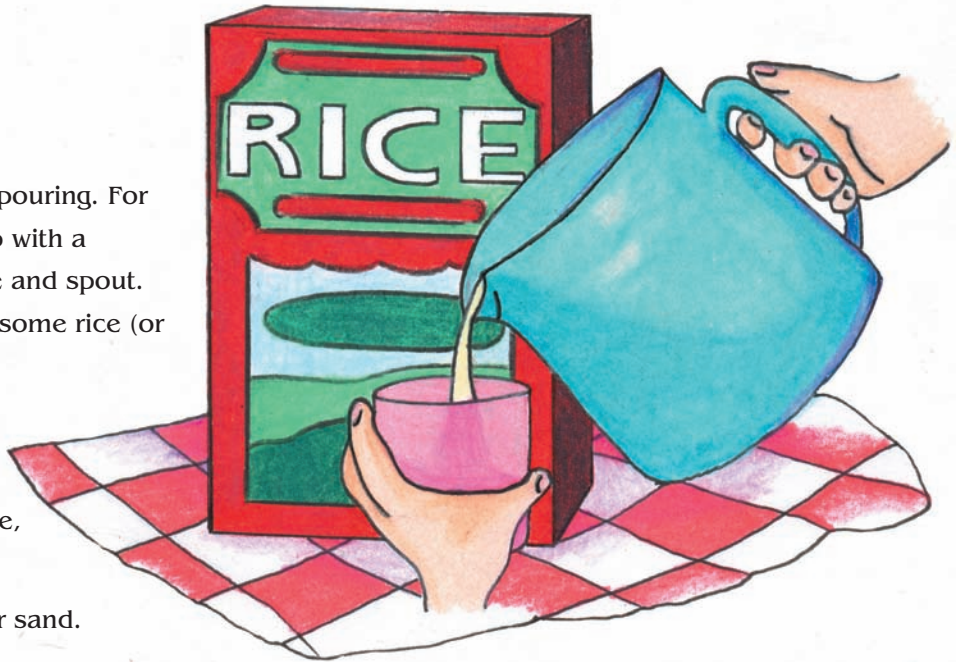
You can also make up **questions** about a story and its pictures as you read books aloud. Here are a few that go with the nursery rhymes in this issue:

- Who went up a hill to get water?
- Where is the little boy who looks after sheep?
- Who ran up the clock?

Pouring

One skill that uses small muscles is pouring. For this activity, you need a measuring cup with a handle or a small pitcher with a handle and spout. You also need some smaller cups and some rice (or dry sand). Follow these steps:

1. Say the names of the different objects and their parts as you point to them (cup, pitcher, handle, spout, and so on).
2. Fill the pitcher half full with rice or sand.
3. Have your child hold the pitcher by the handle.
4. Have your child take the cup in the other hand.
5. Tell him to pour the rice or sand from the pitcher to the cup.



When your child can pour rice or sand without spilling, practice with water. Show how to wipe up spills.

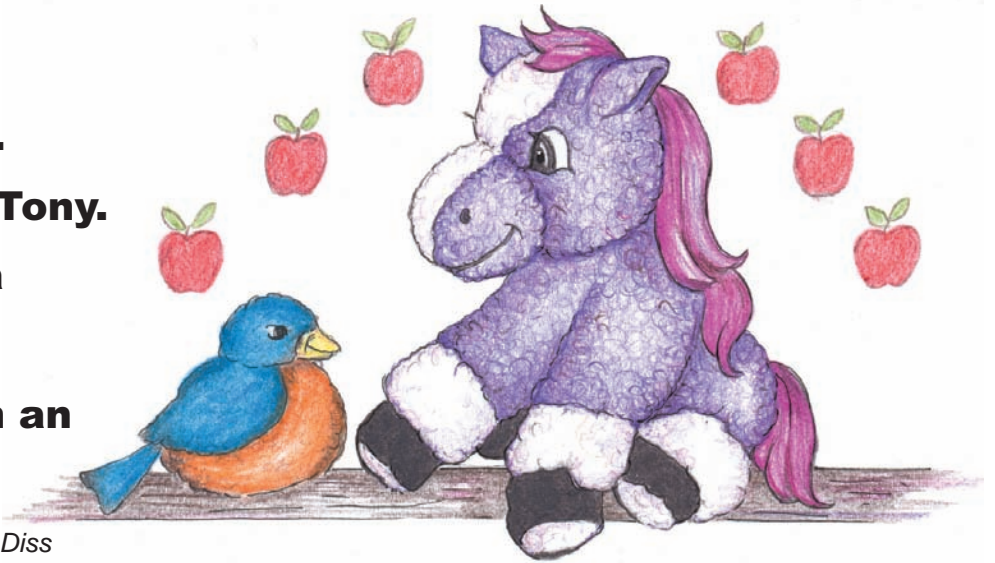


Count the footprints. Ask your child to point to the big ones, then to the small ones.

Silly Tony

**I saw a purple pony.
His name was Silly Tony.
He liked to fly like a
bumblebee,
And sit like a bird in an
apple tree.**

Ron Diss



What If . . . ?

Are ponies purple? Can they really fly? Of course not! But children enjoy thinking about magical things. "What if?" is a fun game you and your child can play anytime, anywhere. It helps your child learn to use words. It gives you chances to talk together. Try it the next time you take a trip in the car.

To start, say, "Close your eyes and let's pretend." Then ask questions that call for magical answers. For example, "What would you do if you had silver wings on your shoes?" Show how the game works by telling your answer: "If I had shoes with silver wings, I would fly to Alaska to see a polar bear."

Some other questions:

- What if your chair turned into a cloud?
- What if your crayon became a magic wand?
- What if you were taller than our house?

Pretending to Read

Short rhymes like "Silly Tony" are easy to remember. After you have read it to your child a few times, try something new. Read the first line, pointing to the words as you read, but don't say the last word: "I saw a purple ____." Pause and let your child fill in the blank. This will help your child get the idea that the print on the page is related to the words you are saying.

FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Children Learn by Playing

When children play, they are not wasting time. Play helps them build healthy minds and bodies. Every time they throw a ball, draw a picture, or play dress-up, they develop skills and learn about their world. A child's play really is a child's work.

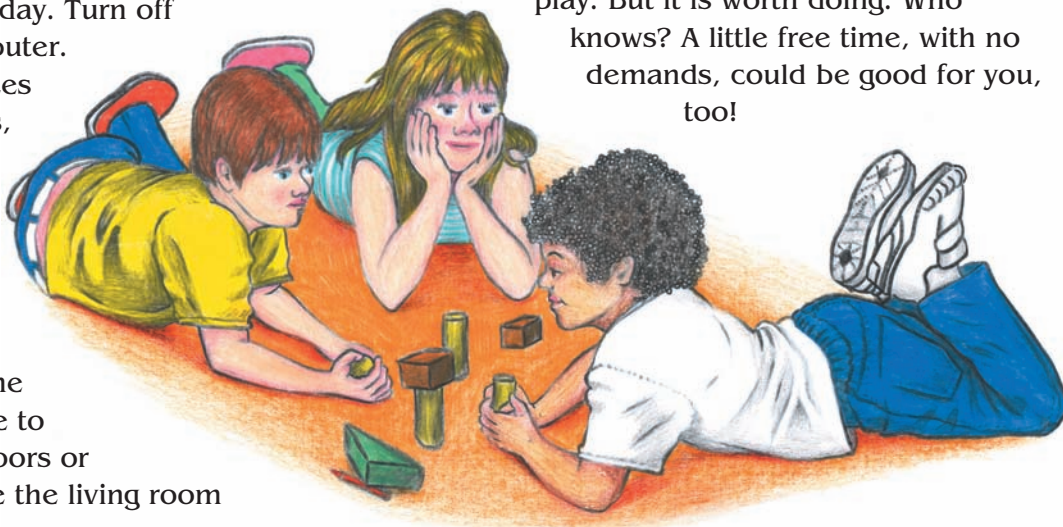
Why is play important? Research shows that children do better mentally and physically when they play. They are healthier. They have less stress. When children play with other children, they also learn social skills. They learn to share, solve problems, and follow rules. They get to practice using language.

What can I do? Give your child time and space to play, every day. Turn off the TV and the computer. Children need chances to move their bodies, to use their hands and fingers, to daydream, to pretend. You do not have to plan exactly what your child will do. Just provide some free time and a place to play. It could be indoors or outdoors. It could be the living room

floor or a park. It could be alone or with other children who are about the same age. Offer a variety.

Also, offer toys and other objects that let children be creative. Paper and crayons. A box of sand. Building blocks. Let them play dress-up and make-believe. Take your children outside, where they can experience wind, dirt, water, and the seasons. Take them to a playground. Give them time to just watch the sky and its changes.

Both children and adults often have busy schedules. It might take some planning to create regular "down time" for free and active play. But it is worth doing. Who knows? A little free time, with no demands, could be good for you, too!





What a Reaction!

Here is a simple activity that will amaze your child. All you need is a little baking soda and vinegar, two empty jars or glasses, and water.

Fill one jar half full with cold water. Fill the other half full with hot tap water (not boiling). Ask, "What do you think will happen when we add baking soda to the jars?" Guess together. Then let your child add a teaspoon of soda to each jar. Watch what happens.

The volcanic reaction will interest your child. Notice that the action is faster in the hot water. When the bubbling stops, add a teaspoon of vinegar to each jar. Let your child smell what is in the jars and talk about the experience. This activity can get children interested in science.



Safety note: Be sure to store vinegar out of the reach of children.

See What I Mean?

Children like to give wordless messages. Ask your child to think of ways to "say" these things without talking:

- Come here, please.
- Go away.
- Take my hand.
- I don't know.
- I'm sleepy.
- My tummy hurts.
- I love you.

You can think of more messages. Try taking turns. Give a wordless message, and let your child guess what you are saying.

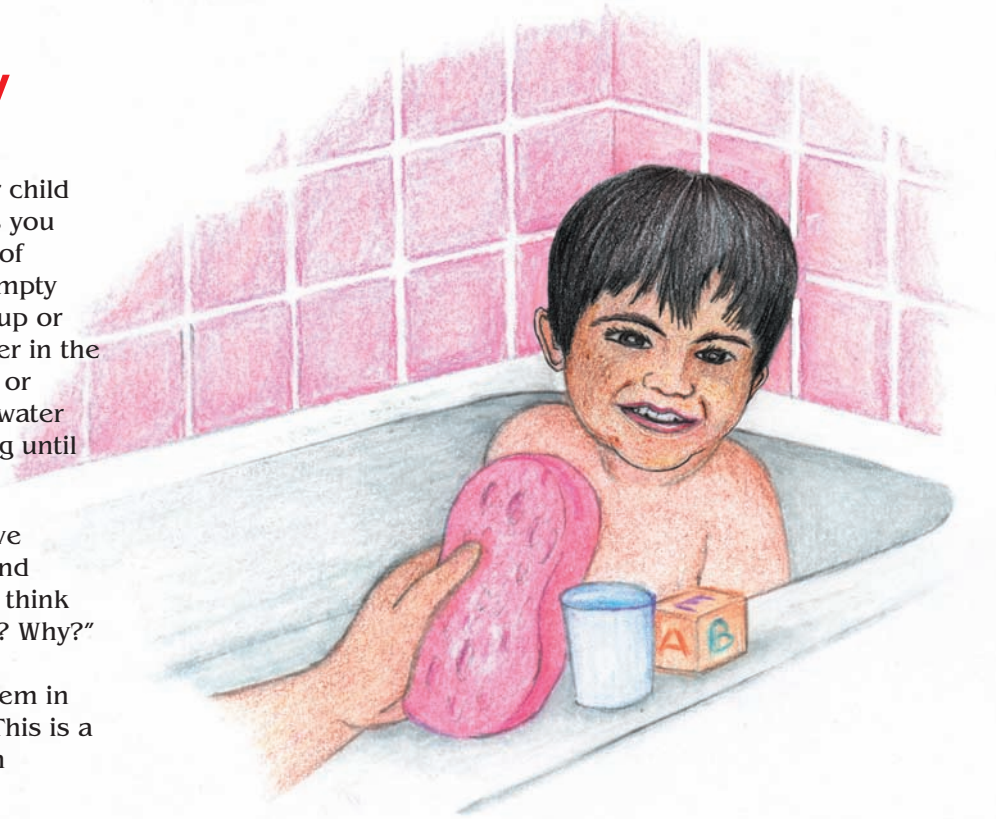


Say, "Count the happy faces. Count the sad faces. Now you make a happy face!"

Water Play

Gather some objects that your child can have in the bathtub. Objects you might use are a sponge, a block of wood, a bar of soap, rocks, an empty plastic bottle, and a Styrofoam cup or plate. At bath time, put bath water in the tub as usual, but don't add soap or bubble bath. (Or, you could put water into a large pan instead of waiting until bath time.)

Bring out the objects you have gathered. One item at a time, hand them to your child. Ask, "Do you think this will float on top of the water? Why?" Listen to the answer. Encourage guesses. Let your child put the item in the water to see what happens. This is a simple way to interest children in science.



Sing the Days of the Week



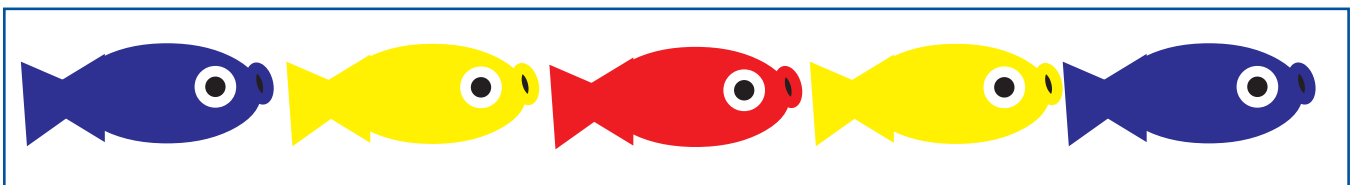
Remember the song "Yankee Doodle"?

Yankee Doodle went to London,
Riding on a pony.
Stuck a feather in his cap,
And called it macaroni.

It is a tune many children love. If yours does not know it yet, you will enjoy learning it together. Then, you can use the tune to learn the days of the week:

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday, Saturday.
Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

See how well the days fit the tune? Familiar tunes are a great way to learn information like days of the week and telephone numbers.



**Say, "Let's count the fish on this page."
Write the number above the fish as your child says the number.**

Read-Aloud RHYMES

Pink Pickles

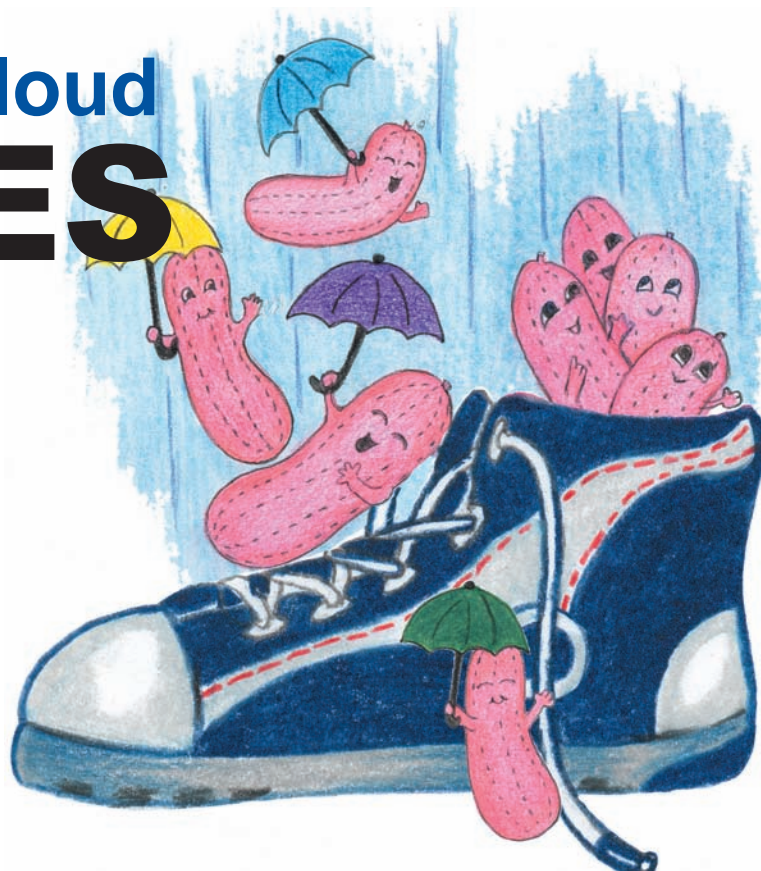
If it's raining **pink** pickles,
What should you do?

Should you catch them
and eat them,
or stuff them in your shoe?

When it's raining **pink** pickles,
Here's what I do:

I cook them in a giant pot
And eat **pink** pickle stew!

Patricia Penn



Food Colors

The next time you have a snack together, help your child notice food colors. You could say, "These pickles are not **pink**! What color are they?" At dinner time, you could say, "Let's take a bite of a **green** food!" At first, younger children may need help naming the colors in their foods.

Tongue Twisters

Say this line aloud, as fast as you can: "Put the **pink** pickles in the **pot**." It is not so easy to do, because of all the "p" sounds. Sayings like this are called tongue twisters. Children think they are funny. Your child might enjoy hearing them and saying them. Saying tongue twisters helps with speech skills. Here are a few to get you started:

Peter Piper picked a **peck** of **pickled** **peppers**.

Sally sells **seashells** by the **seashore**.

How much wood could a **woodchuck** **chuck** if a **woodchuck** could **chuck** **wood**?

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For the family of _____

Your Child's First Drawings

Give your child crayons and paper, and you will get pages of scribbles. Those scribbles are important. They are the first steps in learning to draw. Drawing gives children a new way to express themselves. It lets them explore colors and shapes. It also helps develop small muscle skills.

Jumbo crayons are easier for younger children to use. If your child has trouble holding the paper in place, tape the corners to the table or floor.

After scribbling, what comes next?

Soon, your child will learn to control the direction of the lines. At first, the lines might go from side to side. Before long, they will turn and curve, and go up and down. Shapes and patterns begin to appear.

As children gain more control, they try to draw things they know and understand. Their first drawings might be wobbly stick figures with arms, legs, and a head. The heads might have eyes or a mouth. These are the body parts that are most important to a child.

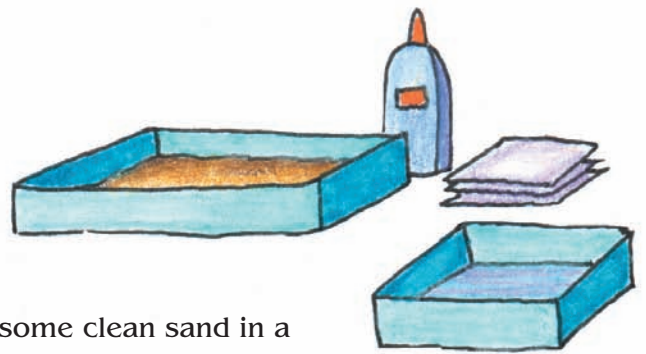
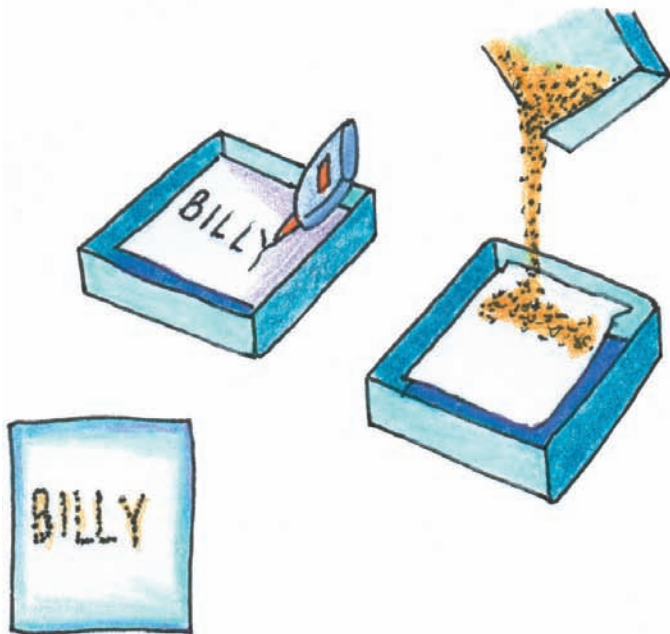


How should I react? Praise the pictures. Write your child's name on them while the child watches. Encourage your young artist to tell you about a drawing. If your child says it is a picture of Mommy planting flowers, you could write those words to make a label for the drawing. Ask questions like "What do you like best about it?" Put your child's drawings on the refrigerator door or hang them on the wall for others to see. Your child's self-esteem will grow.

Offering crayons and paper instead of coloring books is a good way to help your child grow. Remember, there is no "one right way" to draw anything. It is best to let children draw whatever they want, however they want to do it. For most children, drawing is a natural, happy activity. Enjoy it with your child.

Tip: Inside you will find activities you and your child can do together. Not every child will enjoy every activity. That is all right. Do the ones your child likes and skip the others or try them later.

Sandy Letters



Put some clean sand in a small, flat cardboard box. If you do not have any sand, you can use fine-grain kitty litter. Help your child make capital letters with glue on plain white paper. Children often enjoy making the letters of their name.

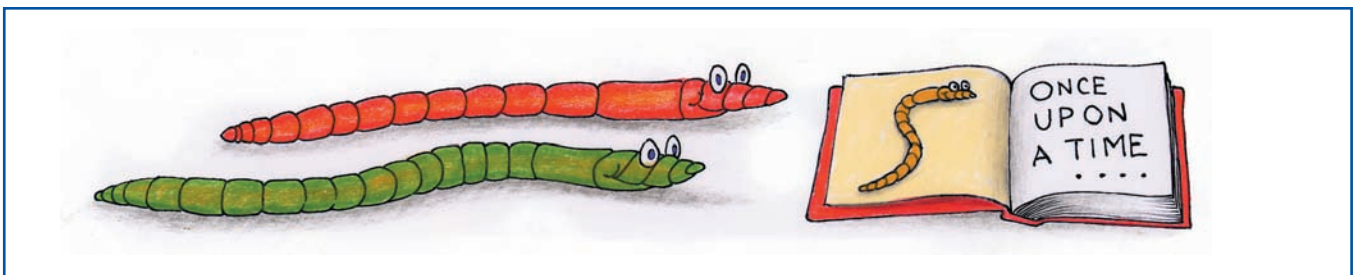
Put the paper in another small, flat box. Pour sand on the glue and shake the box gently to spread the sand over the letters. Pour the extra sand back into the sand box.

This activity is also fun with simple drawings, such as the outline of an apple. It can be messy, but do not worry about it until you are finished. Then let your child help clean up.

Playing with Magnets

Buy a magnet if you do not have one. Let your child find out which things the magnet will attract. Encourage guesses. "Do you think the magnet will attract this book? What about the spoon? Will it pick up this key?"

This activity will awaken your child's curiosity. It gives the two of you a chance to talk together. You could also have your child sort the objects into two piles (things a magnet attracts and things it does not attract).



Ask a riddle: "What do you call a worm who likes to read?" (A bookworm!)

Collages

A collage (rhymes with “ole dodge”) is a picture made by pasting small objects onto a piece of cardboard or a paper plate. Some objects that work well are bits of paper or cloth, cotton balls, toothpicks, string, yarn, buttons, and pictures cut out of magazines. Or you could use items from nature—sticks, leaves, acorns, flowers, grass, pebbles, sand, and seashells.

Young children love to make collages. You might be amazed at the work of art your child creates. Put it on the wall!

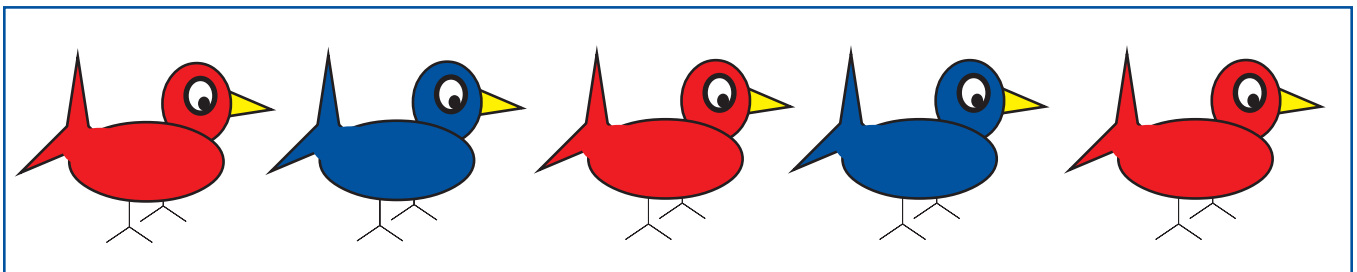
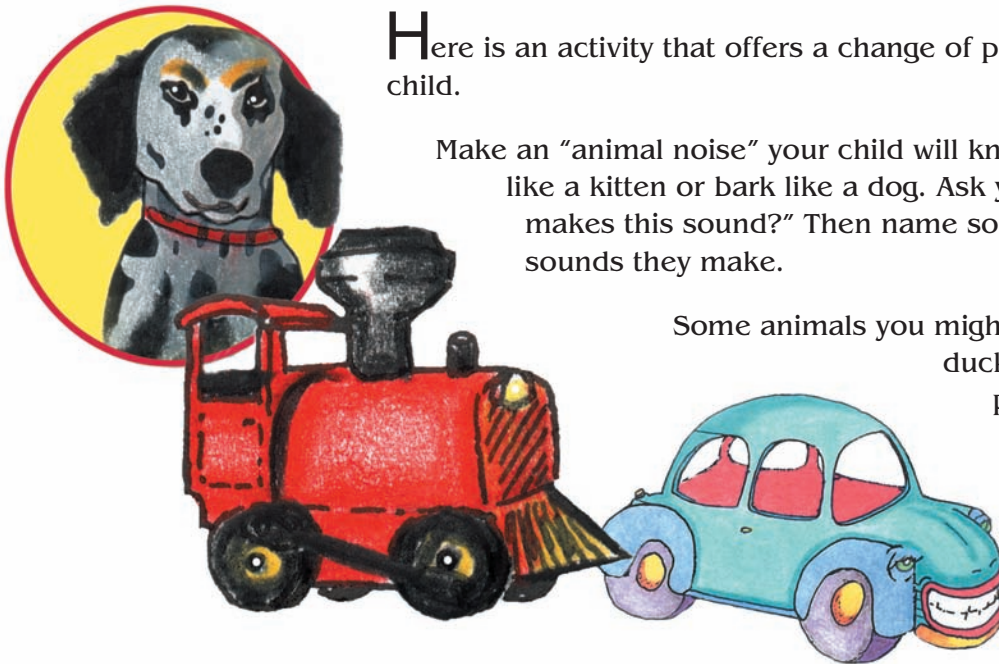


What Sounds Like This?

Here is an activity that offers a change of pace for you and your child.

Make an “animal noise” your child will know. For example, meow like a kitten or bark like a dog. Ask your child, “What animal makes this sound?” Then name some animals and ask what sounds they make.

Some animals you might name are a chicken, duck, cow, horse, sheep, and pig. You can also have fun with the sounds of vehicles: a train, a plane, or a car.



Ask, “How many red birds are there? How many blue birds?”

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

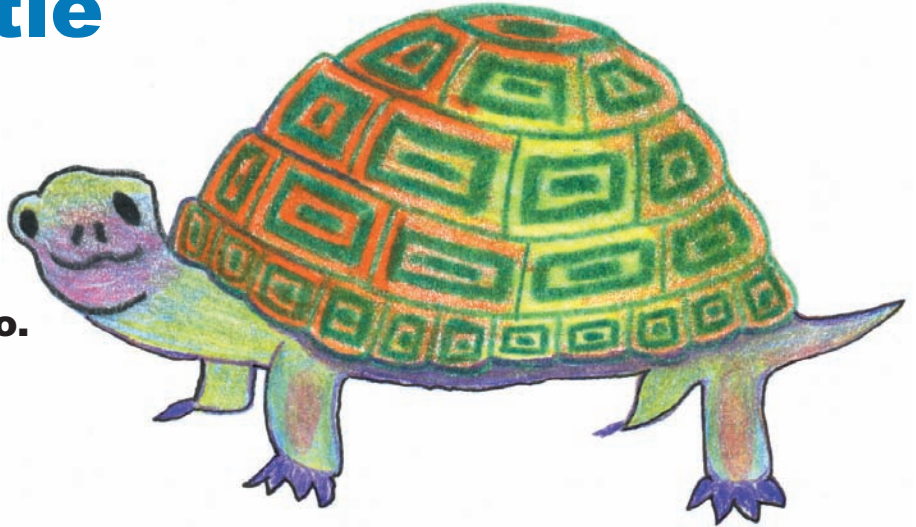
The Little **Turtle**

**There was a little turtle.
He lived in a box.
He swam in a puddle.
He climbed on the rocks.**

**He snapped at a mosquito.
He snapped at a flea.
He snapped at a minnow.
And he snapped at me.**

**He caught the mosquito.
He caught the flea.
He caught the minnow.
But he didn't catch me!**

Vachel Lindsay



Turtle, Rabbit, Snowman

Explain to your child that turtles move very slowly and rabbits move very fast. Say, "Let's play a game called *Turtle, Rabbit, Snowman*. Start by marching in place. When I say *Slow like a Turtle*, show me how slowly you can march. When I say *Fast like a Rabbit*, show me how fast you can go." Later, you can add another part: "When I say *freeze*, stop moving and freeze in place like a snowman." Other actions to try are crawling, dancing, hopping, drumming, or saying a rhyme or tongue twister.

Read Like Actors Do

When actors read their lines, they do more than say the words. They use voice and movement to make the page come to life. You can do the same! Try different voices—high or low, squeaky or with a growl. When you read about swimming and climbing, do the motions. Each time you read the word "snapped" you could clap your hands together. When you say the word "caught" make a grabbing motion. Encourage your child to make the motions with you, or to make up new ones.

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Robert Childers, Senior Editor • Patricia Penn and Carla McClure, Editors • J. C. Mays, Royce Dunn, and Dawn Pauley, Illustrators
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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

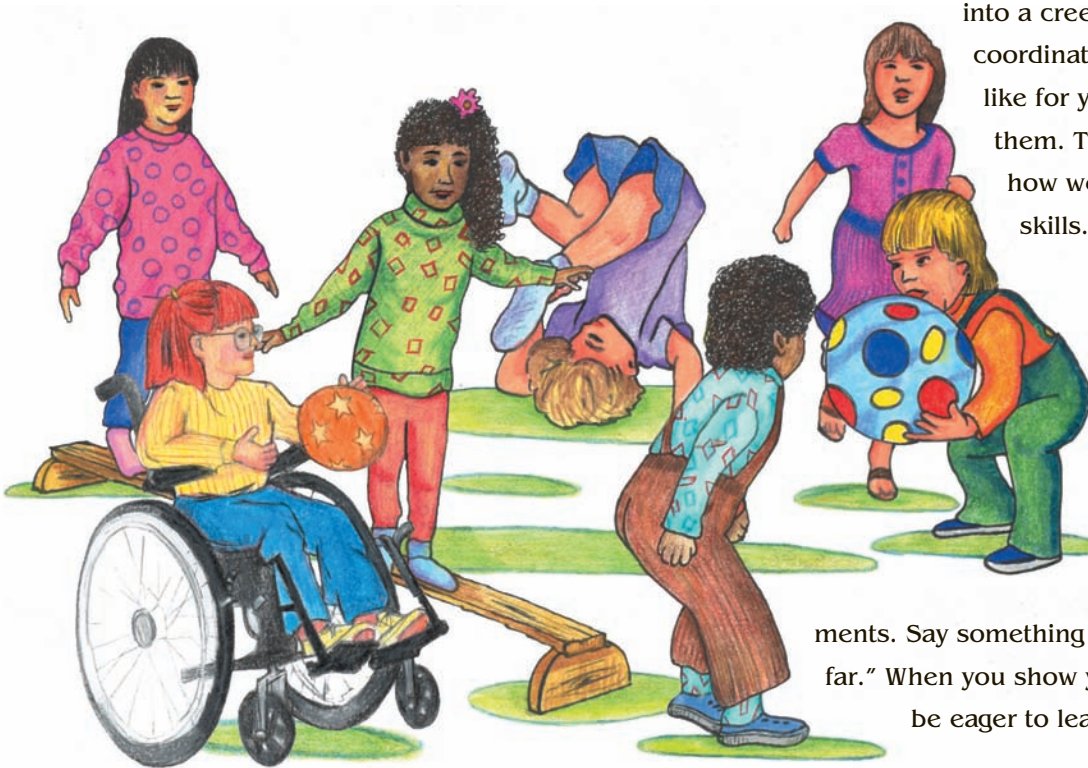
Hop, Skip, and Jump for Development

Children need to move their bodies to develop muscles. They need to run, hop, skip, jump, climb, and throw things. They enjoy doing these things with other children. Give your child plenty of chances to move around, both indoors and outside.

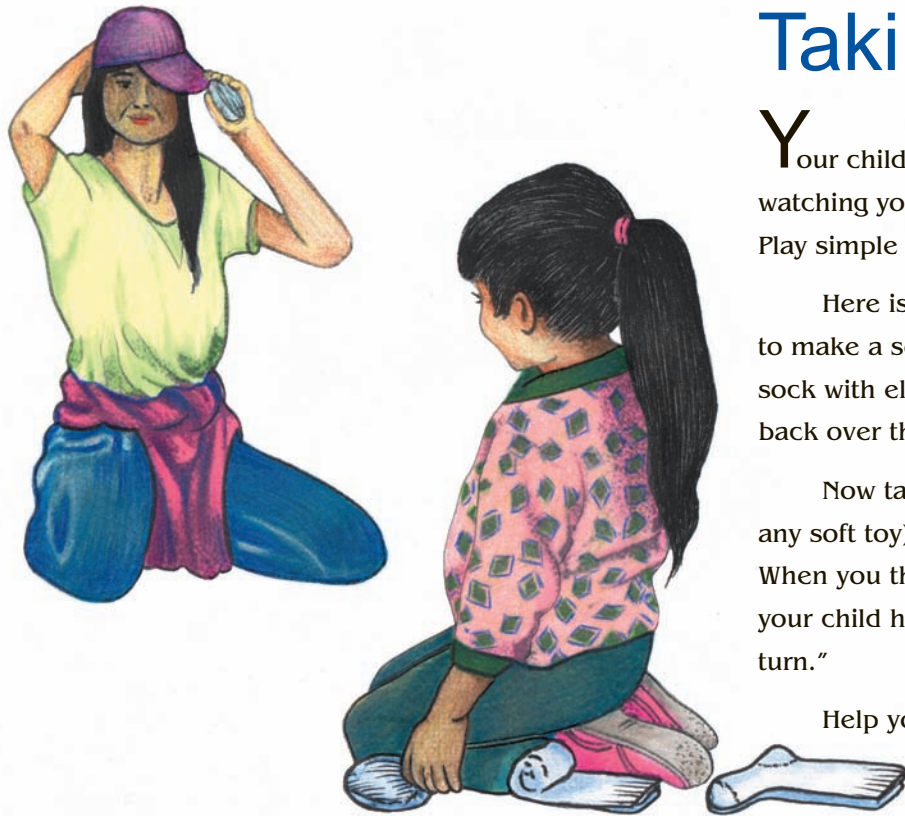
What things do young children do? They love to try to walk on the edge of things. This might be hard at first. You can draw a line in the dirt or with chalk on the sidewalk so your child can practice balancing.

Bouncing a ball, climbing stairs, throwing rocks into a creek—all help children to coordinate their movements. They like for you to do these things with them. They also like to show you how well they are learning new skills.

Say "Wow!" Three- and four-year-olds need to succeed when they try new things. It is best to stay away from games and contests that have winners and losers. Encourage with compliments. Say something like "You threw that ball far." When you show your interest, your child will be eager to learn more new skills.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children



Taking Turns

Your child can learn to take turns by watching you and taking turns with you. Play simple games to practice taking turns.

Here is one idea. Show your child how to make a sock ball. Find an old, large-sized sock with elastic in the top. Turn the top back over the rolled sock.

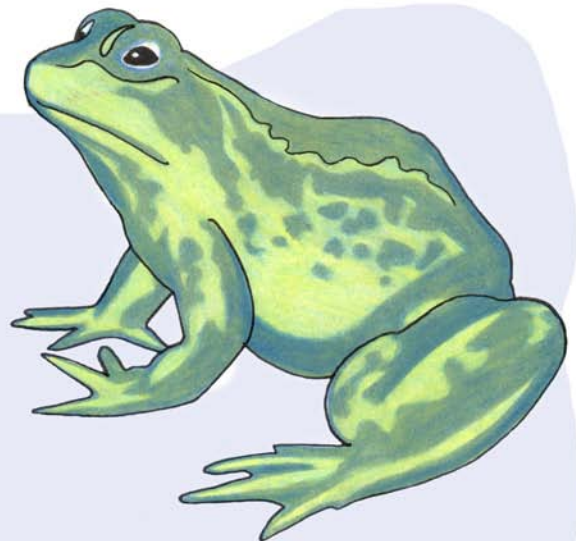
Now take turns throwing the ball (or any soft toy) back and forth with your child. When you throw it, say, "It's my turn." When your child has the ball, say, "Now it's your turn."

Help your child practice taking turns with others, too.

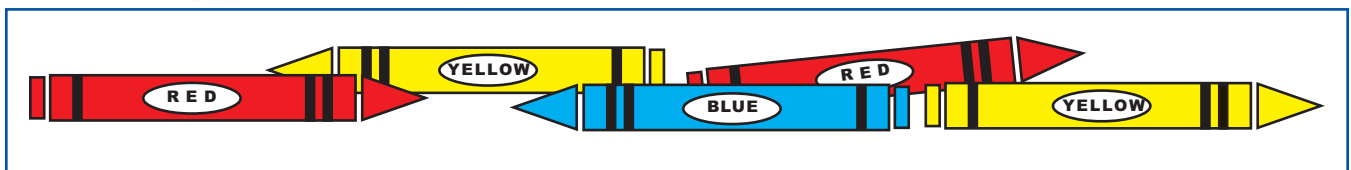
Let's Pretend!

Tell your child that you are going to play a pretend game. In this version, the focus is on feelings. To start, you might say, "Close your eyes and pretend you are a big balloon floating through the air." Then ask, "How do you think it would feel to be a balloon?" Here are some others to try:

- Be a very tall tree.
- Be a lion in a cage.
- Be a refrigerator.
- Be a red crayon.
- Be a frog on your way to a pond.



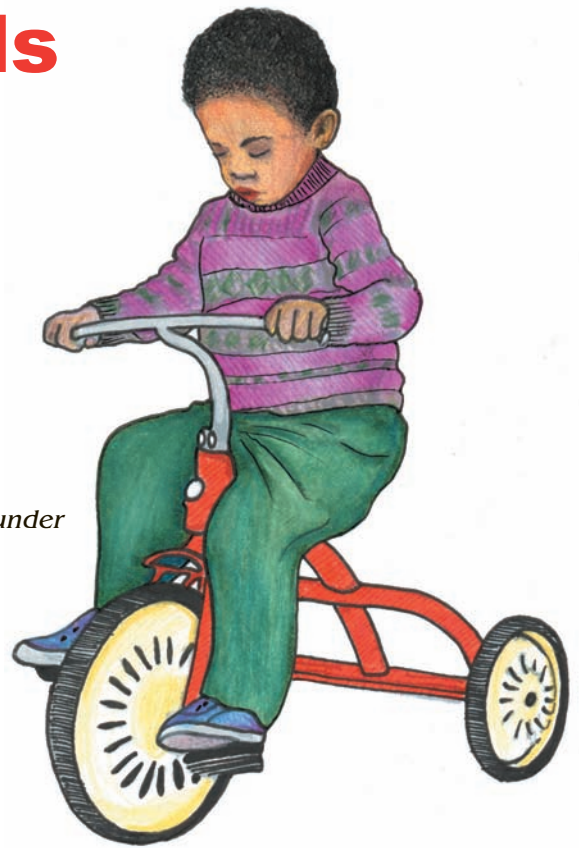
Talking with children about their answers encourages them to use their imagination. It also lets them learn to use words to describe feelings.



Say, "How many crayons are red? How many are yellow? Point to the blue one."

Most **Four-Year-Olds** Can Do These Things

- Wash and dry own hands
- Dress (with supervision)
- Button and unbutton large buttons
- Pedal a tricycle
- Say own first and last name
- Correctly use pronouns such as *I*, *you*, and *me*
- Use plurals like *cars* and *books*
- Understand meanings of such words as *on*, *behind*, and *under*
- Speak in short sentences
- Put simple puzzles together
- Hop and skip
- Walk up and down stairs
- Tell the names of several colors
- Say a short poem from memory



Remember, children develop at different rates. Some will be able to do some of these things when they are three; others will not do some of them until they are five. That's fine. If you are worried because your child is not doing most of the things on this list, talk to your child's teacher or doctor.



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

Move Like the Animals

**Can you hop like a rabbit?
Can you jump like a frog?
Can you walk like a duck?
Can you run like a dog?
Fly your hands like a bird?
Swim your fingers like a fish?
And then be very still . . .
Like ice cream in a dish?**

Patricia Penn



Move This Way

As you read this poem aloud to your child, make movements that match the words. Then have your child do the movements with you.

Things People Do

In real life, have you ever seen a dog drive a car? Ask your child this question and talk together about other things people do that animals do not (for example, wear clothes, bake cookies, use a toothbrush, and draw pic-

tures). You might need to explain that sometimes cartoons or movies show animals doing things that they do not really do in real life.

Explain that reading and writing are two things animals do not do. People can't do these things either—unless they learn how. During the next few days, whenever you write a grocery list, look up a phone number, follow a recipe, come to a stop sign, and so forth, remind your child: "It's a good thing I learned to read (or write), or I couldn't do this!"

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

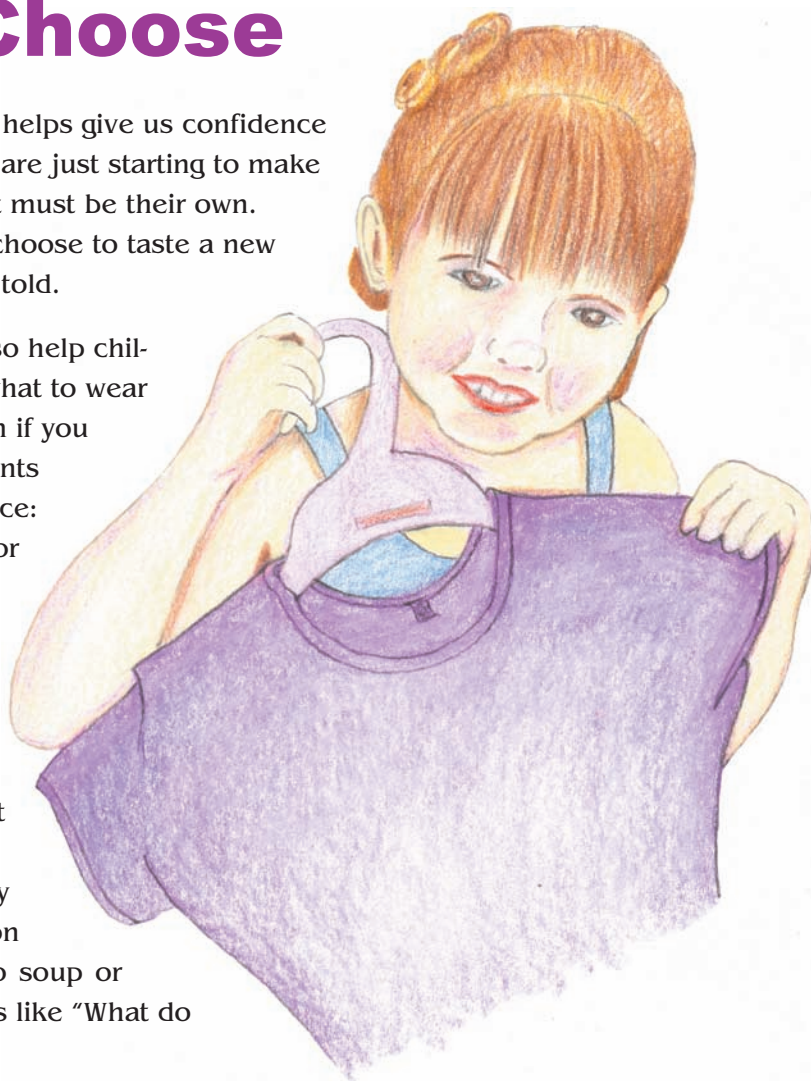
Chances to Choose

Making choices is important. Choosing helps give us confidence that we can do something. Young children are just starting to make choices. They need to have success, and it must be their own. You can help by praising them when they choose to taste a new food or to pick up their toys without being told.

Let your child decide. Choosing can also help children feel powerful. Let your child decide what to wear today. Let him wear what he chooses, even if you think a green striped shirt and red plaid pants look awful together. Or offer a limited choice: "Do you want to wear the blue shirt today or the green one?"

Keep it simple. Do not give your young child choices that are too hard. Choosing between going out for ice cream or having pizza delivered may take so long you will wish you hadn't asked! But it is important to offer children chances to consider their likes and dislikes. When they are first learning to choose, a good question would be, "Would you rather have tomato soup or chicken noodle soup for lunch?" Questions like "What do you want for lunch?" can come later.

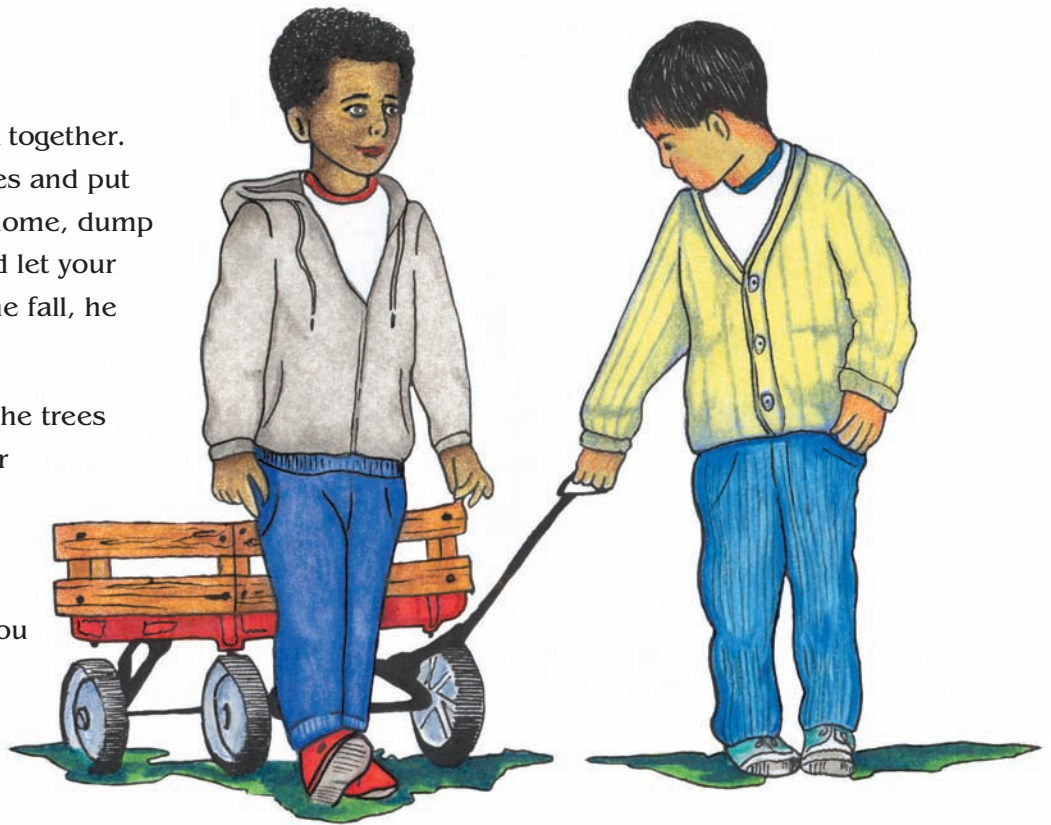
Keep your word. Choosing how to spend money can cause real grief. If you tell your child he can spend his birthday money from Aunt Janet any way he likes, be ready to accept his choice. Do not change your mind after he chooses something you think is not a good idea. Better for him to learn for himself that a toy won't hold up than to lose his trust in your word.



Leaf Walk

Go for a leaf-collecting walk together. Pick up different kinds of leaves and put them in a bag. When you get home, dump the leaves on a newspaper and let your child sort them by shape. In the fall, he could sort them by color.

If you know the names of the trees the leaves came from, tell your child. You could also get a child's book on trees from the library. Let your child look for pictures to match the leaves you found together. If there are no leaves where you live, try collecting rocks instead.

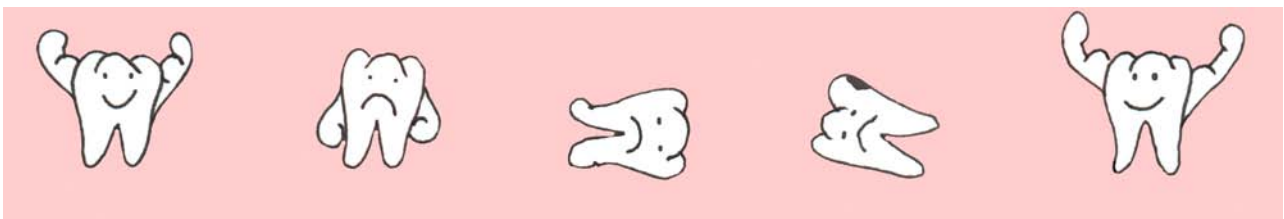


Toothy Toothbrush

One of the things children should *not* be allowed to choose is whether to brush their teeth. To have healthy, strong teeth and gums, children should brush at least twice a day. After breakfast and just before going to bed are good times.

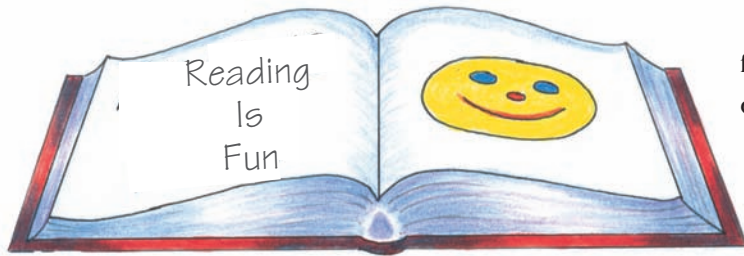
It is important to take care of the baby teeth, even if children don't keep them long. A visit to the dentist during early childhood is a good way for your child to learn how to brush correctly.

Make tooth brushing a game: "Let's go visit Toothy Toothbrush. He can tickle your mouth and make you smile." Let your child choose what color toothbrush to get. Brush your teeth together. Give hugs for a good job of brushing.



Say, "Can you show me which teeth are strong from brushing? Which are weak?"

Good Choices from the Library



These are books that children’s librarians suggest for reading aloud to preschool children. Some are classics, which means they have been around for a while—but there are many other excellent choices. Ask your local librarian for recommendations. If your child really likes a book, look for other books by the same author.

Good Choices for Parents

Parents and other family members can find read-aloud tips and book lists in the following books on reading with children:

Building Bridges with Multicultural Picture Books: For Children 3-5 by Janice J. Beaty

Babies Need Books: Sharing the Joy of Books with Children from Birth to Six by Dorothy Butler

Straight Talk about Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference During the Early Years by Susan L. Hall and Louisa C. Moats

The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers, Daphne Muse, editor

The Read-Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Voirst

Are You My Mother? by P. D. Eastman

Bread and Jam for Frances by Russell Hoban

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr.

Curious George by H. A. Rey

Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss

Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson

Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion

Is Your Mama a Llama? by Deborah Guarino

Jamberry by Bruce Degen

John Henry by Julius Lester

Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans

No, David! by David Shannon

Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy Shaw

Stephanie’s Ponytail by Robert Munsch

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak



Say, “These horses are galloping fast! Where do you think they are going?”

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

Wildflower **Naptime**

**The flowers nod
like sleepy grandmas
dozing in the grass.**

**In wind, they bend
on long **green** stems,
and brush me as I pass.**

**I like to pick them
and pretend
I'm tickling grandma's chin.**

Carla Thomas McClure



Hearts and Flowers

Get a piece of paper and crayons, and let your child create a flower picture to send to someone special. Or, you could help your child cut flower pictures from magazines and paste them to the paper. Let your child dictate a message to the special person. Write the words while your child watches. Mail or deliver the flower message together.

Get the **Picture?**

Have you ever seen a field of flowers and tall grasses swaying in the wind? If so, maybe you saw this picture in your mind as you read "Wildflower Naptime." Being able to make pictures in our heads can help us make sense of what we read or hear. You can help your child "get the picture," too.

As you read the poem, half-close your eyes and sway from side to side, pretending that you are almost falling asleep. If your child is sitting next to you, you will gently brush against him or her each time you sway in that direction. When you get to the last verse, pretend to tickle your own chin.

Say, "Let's do it together this time!" Read the poem again, this time with both of you "swaying in the wind."

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Children Do as You Do

Children are natural copycats. They try to do what adults do, and they most want to be like their parents or other family members who care for them.

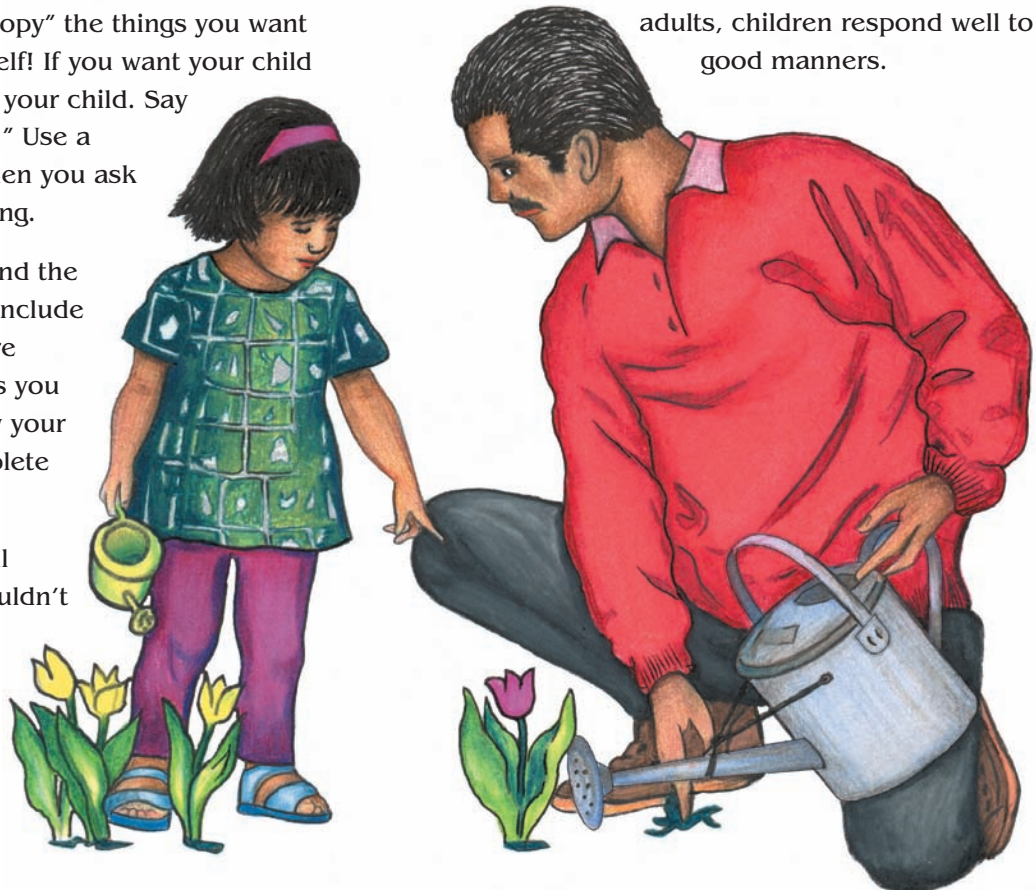
Be a good example. What is the best way to encourage children to “copy” the things you want them to? Do them yourself! If you want your child to be polite, be polite to your child. Say “please” and “thank you.” Use a friendly tone of voice when you ask your child to do something.

When you work around the house or in the garden, include your child in what you are doing. Explain what tools you are using and why. Show your child good ways to complete tasks.

Nobody is perfect. All parents do things we wouldn’t really want our children to copy. Being a model is not easy. Everyone has a bad day now and then. None of us can be perfect role models.

Luckily, children do not expect us to be perfect.

Adults can say “I’m sorry.” It is important to apologize to our children when we treat them unfairly or rudely. The best way for children to learn to say “I’m sorry” is by having it said to them. Like adults, children respond well to good manners.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Blowing Bubbles



Blowing bubbles is so much fun you should be prepared to spend a lot of time with your child at this activity. Neither of you will want to stop.

You can make your own bubble mix with this easy recipe:

1 cup water
1/3 cup dishwashing liquid
2 tablespoons light corn syrup

If you do not have a wand from a commercial kit, use a slotted spoon or make a wand by bending a piece of wire. Be sure not to leave sharp edges.

Mix the ingredients and allow the solution to sit for one hour. Store whatever you do not use in the refrigerator. Use a covered container and LABEL IT. It would be an unpleasant surprise for anyone who tasted it.

Simon Says

Remember this game? If you are "it," you give a direction for the other person to follow. (For example, Simon says, "Close your eyes.") If you do not say "Simon says," the other person should *not* follow the direction.

Playing this game with your child is a good way to teach about listening and following directions. It is also a way to practice taking turns.

Here are some examples:

Simon says,
"Take one giant step."

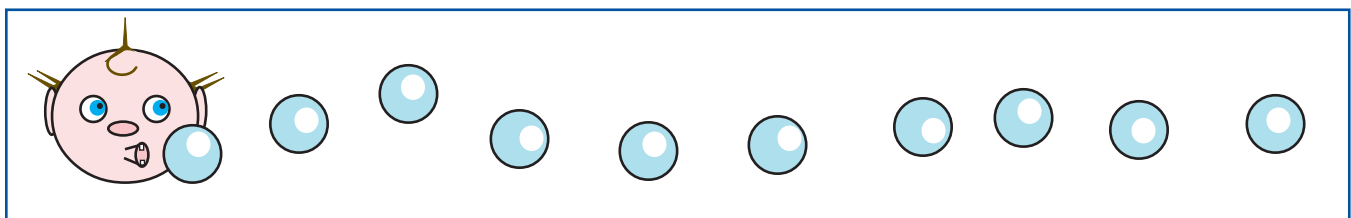
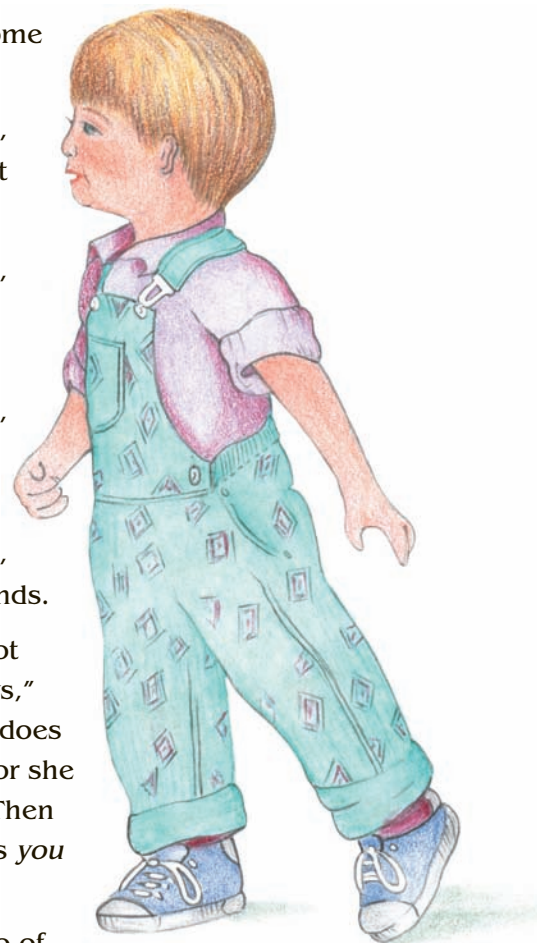
Simon says,
"Hop on one foot."

Simon says,
"Raise one hand."

Simon says,
"Raise both hands."

If you do not say "Simon says," and your child does the action, he or she becomes "it." Then your child gives *you* directions!

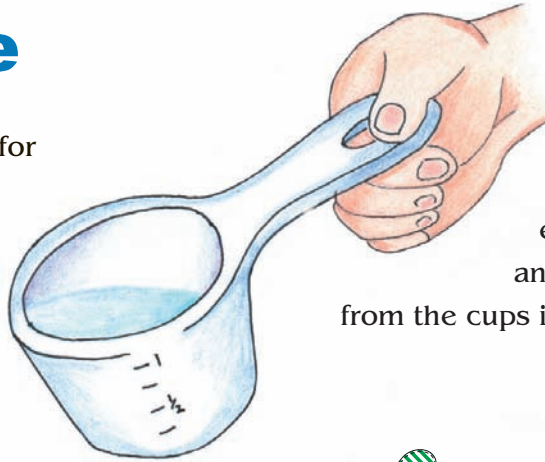
Just the two of you can play, or several people can play together.



Say, "Baby Ben is blowing bubbles. Ten of them, I see." Count together.

Kitchen Time

Kitchen time is a happy time for kids. They like to help. Let them do simple measuring for you. Use plastic cups and spoons in half, quarter, and third sizes. Children can



quickly see the difference in sizes. Let them experiment with “more” and “less” by pouring water from the cups into a clear container.

Bake Your Own Alphabet

Mix together:

1 cup plain flour
1/3 cup salt
6 to 8 tablespoons water

Mix flour and salt together in a bowl. Add water a tablespoonful at a time, using only enough to mix the flour and salt into a ball you can work with. Roll or pat it out 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick. A child can cut the dough with cookie cutters or make objects with his

or her hands. You can cut shapes with a sharp-pointed knife. Put them on a cookie sheet and bake at 300 degrees until hard.

Young children like to make ABCs with this dough. They will need help in shaping the letters. Be careful to have enough space in letters like “o” that they won’t close up during baking and look like cookies.

You can enjoy this home-baked alphabet for a long time.



Say, “Baby Ben’s brother baked four cookies. Point to the whole cookies. Point to the halves. How many halves make one whole cookie?”

Read-Aloud

RHYMES

Reading a Rebus

A rebus is a story or rhyme that uses pictures in place of some of the words. As you read this one aloud, sit side-by-side so that your child can see the pictures. Run your finger along each line as you read. When you come to a picture, tap your finger on it and say the word that goes with it. The next time you read it, when you come to a picture, stop and let your child “read the picture.”

Rhyme Chain

Tell your child you are going to make a rhyme chain together. Start with a pair of rhyming words (**shoe** and **do**). Say, “Now it’s your turn to keep the chain going. Say **do** and then say another word that ends with the **oo**h sound.” Keep going back and forth until you run out of rhymes.

Then pick a different pair of words (for example, **bread** and **bed**) and start again. If your child likes this game, it’s a good one to play in the car. No hands needed!

There Was an Old Woman

There was an old



Who lived in a



She had so many



She didn’t know what **2** do.

She gave them some broth

Without any



Then kissed them good night

And sent them

2



FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Discipline Leads to Self-Control

Many people think discipline is the same as punishment. It isn't. Discipline is the way children learn self-control. You can help your child learn self-control by being clear about what you expect.

Be in charge. Parents who let a child be the center of attention without regard for others make it hard for that child to learn self-control. Think of it this way: You are the adult and you are in control. Children will take over if you let them, but they do not want to be in charge. It scares them.

Set limits. Your child wants you to set limits. Expand the limits as the child gets older. Limits you set for your two-year-old will not be appropriate for your four-year-old.

Children can learn at this age not to interrupt when others are talking. You can say, "I'm talking to someone else now. Wait a minute, please. Then I will listen to you."

Be reasonable. Staying in the yard is a reasonable rule. So is having a set bedtime.

Be sure the child knows what the rules are—and what will happen if they are broken. For example: "If you leave the yard, you will have to come in the house. You won't get to play outside for an hour."

Keep it simple. Do not have too many rules for young children. Rules can cause conflict between you and your child. Do say what you mean and mean what you say. You don't have to be harsh. You don't want to threaten. Be gentle but firm. Your child will learn self-control—and still feel secure and loved.



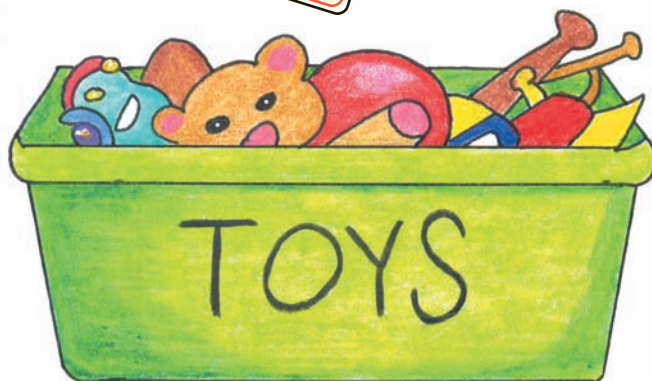
Tip: Inside you will find activities you and your child can do together. Not every child will enjoy every activity. That is all right. Do the ones your child likes and skip the others or try them later.

Taking Care of **Belonging**^S

In school, children learn to take care of their own things. Each child usually has a place to put outdoor wear and other personal belongings.

Now is a good time for your child to learn that taking care of his or her own things at home is a grown-up thing to do. You can help by putting up hooks that children can reach to hang up their jackets.

Find a box or basket where your child can keep small toys. It is a good idea to have something children can carry from one place to an-



other. Praise your child for doing as you ask: "You did a good job of putting your things away."

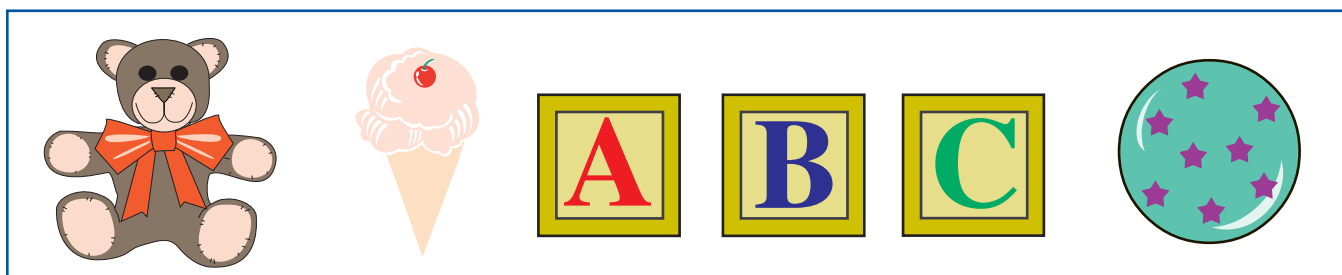


A Special **Rock**

Most children like to collect rocks. Take a walk together and find a smooth rock that has a fairly flat surface. Decorate it together. You can show how to paint a happy face on it with magic markers or finger paint. Or find a picture to cut

from an old magazine. Let your child paste the picture on the rock to decorate it.

Your child might like to give a special rock to someone as a present. If you collect several rocks, the two of you could make a family of happy faces!



Say, "Which of these things does not belong in your toy box? Why not? Let's count the toys."

Thumb Pies

Use this simple recipe with your child to make thumb pies.

1 cup plain flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon shortening
2 tablespoons water

Help your child measure and mix the ingredients. Roll the dough into small balls. Then let your child press a thumbprint into each ball.

Bake the thumb pies at 350 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes. Fill the thumbprints with jelly or peanut butter.

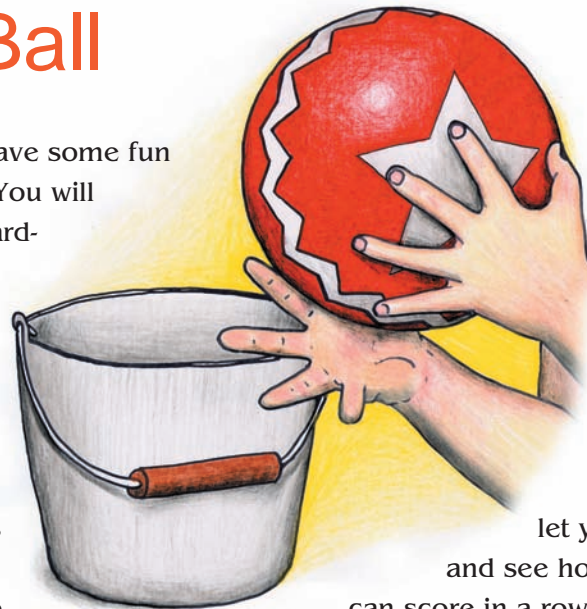


Explain that each person's thumbprint is different from everyone else's. Children like knowing that no one else in the world can bake a thumb pie that is exactly the same as theirs.

Bucket Ball

Here is a simple way to have some fun and improve coordination. You will need a large bucket (or a cardboard box) and a soft foam ball, a beanbag, or a stuffed toy.

Place the bucket in the middle of the floor. Have your child stand directly in front of the bucket and toss the ball into it. For most children, this will be easy to do. Let your child get the ball out of the bucket



and try again, but this time say, "First, take *one* step back before you toss the ball." Continue by having your child add another step each time before tossing the ball. Missing the bucket means starting over.

Another way to play is to let your child stand in one place and see how many "buckets" he or she can score in a row. Two or three children can take turns playing this game.



Say, "Put your thumb on each thumbprint. Which are bigger than yours? smaller?"

Read-Aloud RHYMES

Little Jack Horner

Little Jack Horner

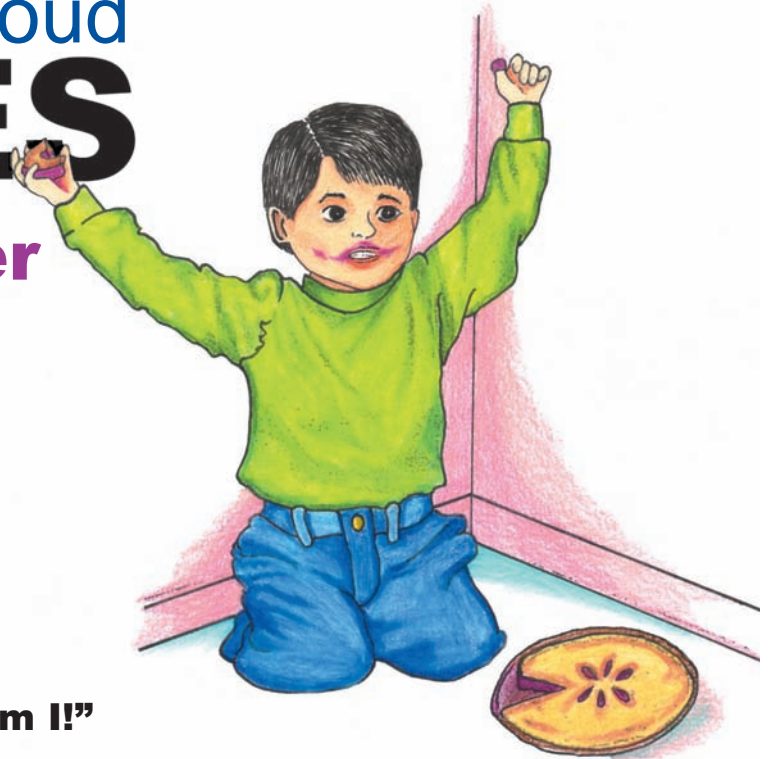
Sat in a corner

Eating his Christmas pie.

He stuck in his thumb,

And pulled out a plum,

And said, “What a good boy am I!”



Let's Talk about You

Read or recite this nursery rhyme to your child. Ask, “What did Jack say about himself?” Talk with your children about some of the things they might want to tell people about themselves. Ask, “What are some of

the things you like? What are some things you can do all by yourself?” Let your children know you are proud of them. Children need encouragement as they become more independent.

A Funny Thing about Plums

Read this little rhyme to your child:

Plums are delicious,
very nutritious.
I love to eat them for snack.

When they are dried,
they're still plums inside
But outside they're prunes—that's a fact!



If you have a plum or a prune (or both), have one for a snack. Say, “A lot of people don't know that prunes are really plums with most of the water taken out. And raisins are really dried grapes. I'm proud of all the new things you are learning.” Talk about some of the things your child has learned.

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Build Your Child's Self-Esteem

The word *self-esteem* means how people think and feel about themselves. It does not mean seeing yourself as better than others. It means feeling lovable and thinking you can learn and succeed. Parents and other family members can have a big effect on children's self-esteem.

Why is self-esteem important? Children with healthy self-esteem are more willing to try new things. If at first they don't succeed, they do not give up. Like "the little engine that could," they have an attitude that says *I think I can*. Did you know that low self-esteem can lead to all sorts of problems, including doing poorly in school?

Children develop good self-esteem when they are made to feel secure and loved. Their self-esteem grows when they succeed at things they try. Here are some ways to help your child build self-esteem:

Look for the positive. If you pay attention only to what children do wrong, "acting up" becomes a way to get attention. Give more attention to behaviors you want to encourage.

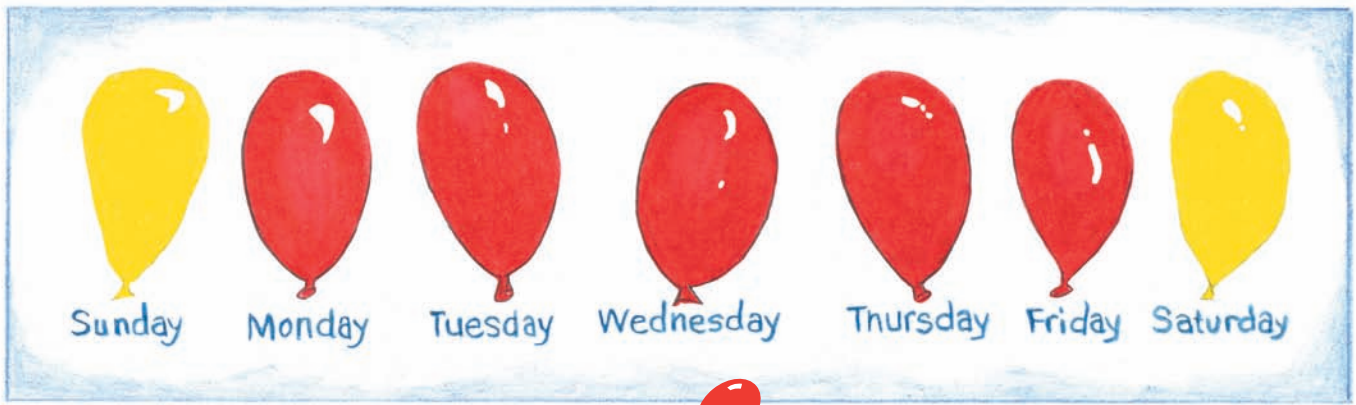
Praise your child. When your child completes a task or does something positive, offer specific praise: "You did a good job picking up your blocks. Thank you." Saying "please" and "thank you" shows respect for the child—and sets a good example.

Be realistic. Be realistic about what you expect. Four-year-olds are not short adults. Give children tasks they can finish successfully. Be patient. Offer help if you think it's needed, but do not take over.

Say "I love you." Your child needs to hear these words from you often.

About shyness. People used to think poor self-esteem caused shyness. We now know that some children simply feel more anxious when they are around other people. These children need to practice social skills in safe settings. If you have a naturally shy child, be sensitive. Do not push too much—or too little. Let your child know you understand nervous feelings. But never say "She's shy" or "He's a shy boy." This will only make it harder for your child to feel comfortable around others.





Pop! Goes the Week

How long is a week? Here is a fun way to help your child get a better sense of time.

1. Blow up seven balloons—two of one color, and five of another color.
2. Make a big chart showing the seven days of the week.
3. Tape the balloons to the chart, one balloon for each day. Use one color of balloon for the weekdays and another color for the weekends.
4. Remind your child that a week has seven days. Count the seven balloons together. Point to the names of the days as you say them together.
5. Every evening at the same time, let your child pop the balloon for that day. Talk about what happened during the day. Talk about what will happen tomorrow. On Saturday and Sunday, discuss the different things people do on weekends.

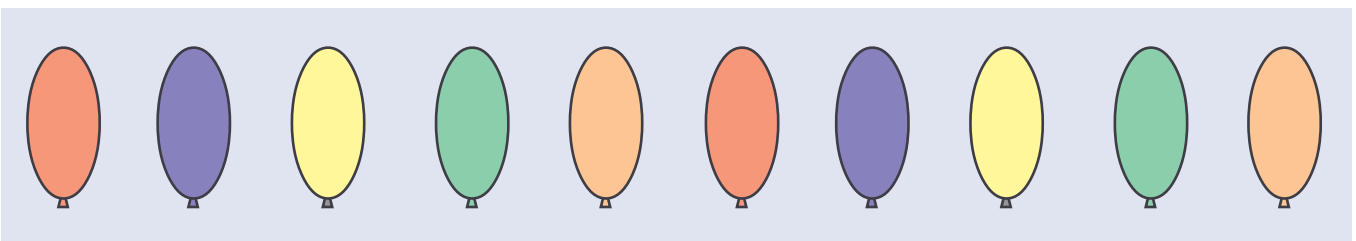
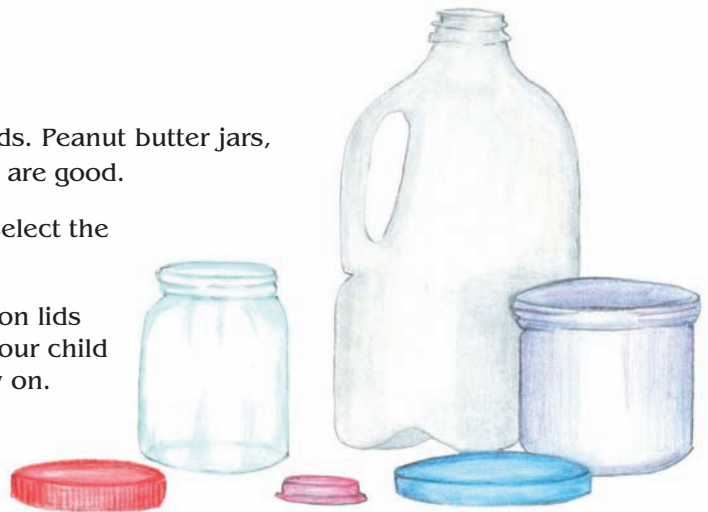
Tops and Lids

Collect different kinds of empty containers with lids. Peanut butter jars, juice bottles, soft drink bottles, and plastic milk jugs are good.

Put all the tops and lids in a box. Let your child select the right top for each container.

You can also use the small containers with snap-on lids that film comes in. You will probably need to show your child how these lids are different from the ones that screw on.

This activity helps your child develop small muscles. It helps build sorting skills, too.



**Write your child's name, putting one letter in each balloon.
Say each letter as you point to it, then say the name.**

Learning to Concentrate

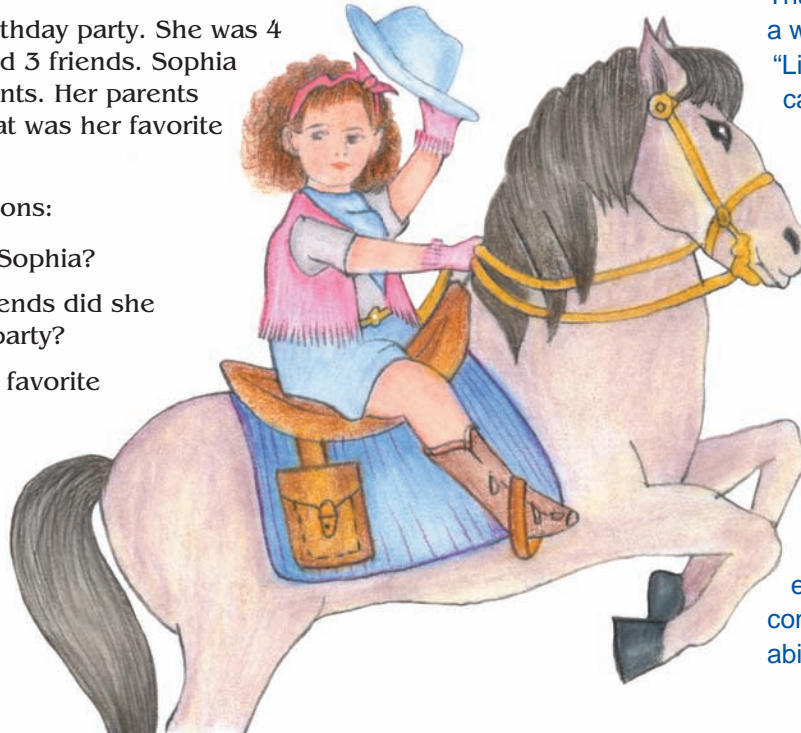
Here is an activity you can do anytime, anywhere. Tell your child, "I am going to tell you a story. You must listen very carefully because at the end, I am going to ask 3 questions about the story." Make up a simple story, like this one:

Sophia had a birthday party. She was 4 years old. She invited 3 friends. Sophia got some nice presents. Her parents gave her a pony. That was her favorite present.

Ask these questions:

1. How old was Sophia?
2. How many friends did she invite to her party?
3. What was her favorite present?

Make up other short stories. Do the activity as often as your child shows interest. If 3 questions are too difficult, use only 1 or 2 at first.



Stories like this will help children learn to listen. The first time you try it, your child may not be able to answer any of the questions correctly. That's OK. When you get a wrong answer, just say, "Listen again. See if you can hear the right answer this time."

Repeat the story. This time, your child will know to listen more carefully—and what to listen for.

Be patient. This is not a test. Do everything you can to help your child succeed. Success builds children's self-esteem. It gives them confidence in their own abilities.



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Read-Aloud RHYMES

Look What I Can Do!

**When I was just a baby,
I couldn't count to three
or make up funny stories
or say my ABCs.**

**When I was really little,
I needed lots of help
learning how to use a spoon
and how to dress myself.**

**But now that I am older,
just look what I can do—
I can dance and talk and sing
and whisper *I love you*.**

Carla Thomas McClure



Baby Talk

Children love hearing about their baby days. Tell stories about things that happened when your child was a baby. Tell how you felt when your child said that first word or took that first step. Talk about ways your child has stayed the same (“You still love to hear music”) and ways your child has changed (“Now you don’t eat baby food”).

Soft as a Whisper

As you read this poem, when you come to the end, lean over and whisper the words *I love you* into your child’s ear. Then, in a normal voice, say, “Now, you whisper something to me.” Continue the game if your child shows interest.

Explain that there are times when it is best to whisper or use a soft voice (so you will not wake a sleeping baby, for example). Talk about when to use soft and loud voices.

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

The Sense of Touch

Young children learn through their five senses: taste, smell, hearing, sight, and touch.

Children learn through touch. The sense of touch lets us feel different temperatures and textures. If you pick up a hot potato, the skin on your fingers lets you know if the potato is too hot to handle safely. If someone gives you a rose, you can enjoy the velvety feel of its petals—just watch out for those prickly thorns! Children, too, can learn about their world and enjoy it through touch.

You can help. In your home, there are many different textures to touch. Help your child notice these textures. The next time the two of you make a bed, talk about how the sheets feel different from the blanket.

In the kitchen, let your child feel the difference between an ice cube and warm mashed potatoes.

Talk about touch. Encourage your child to describe different feels: soft, hard, fuzzy, smooth, tickly, sticky, squishy, and so on. If the child cannot find a word to use for how something feels, you can suggest one.

Brave the elements. Take a walk outdoors. Stop and feel different objects. Touch a tree trunk, its branches, its leaves, a brick wall, a car bumper. Talk about how each feels different.

Give your child the freedom to touch as many things as possible. Your little scientist will have fun experimenting with touch. With your help, your child will learn some new words, too.

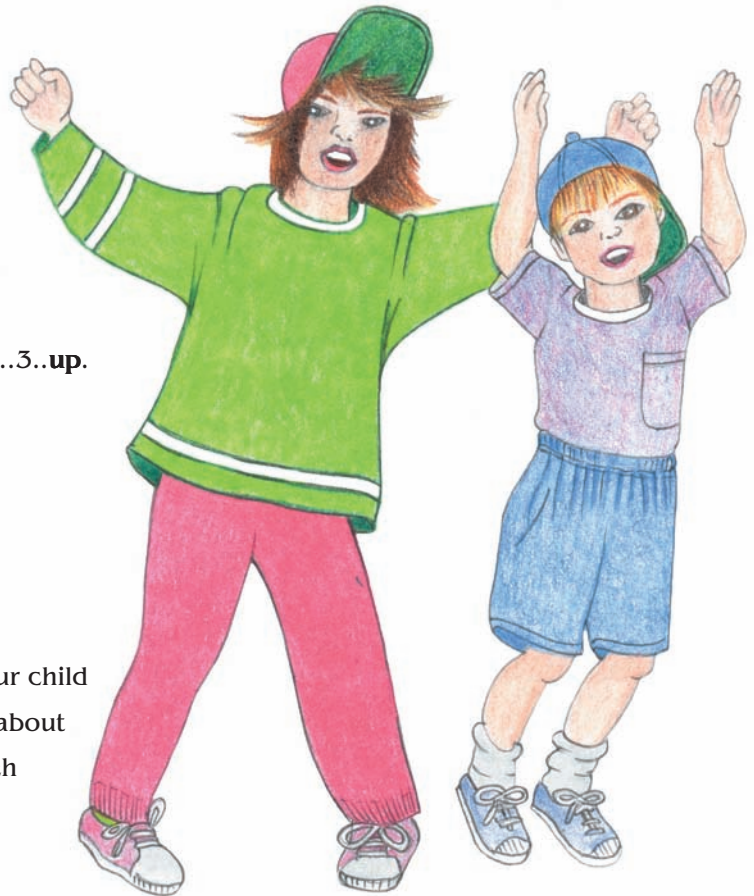


Exercise Time

Your child will like to do exercises, especially if you do them together. Being active will help your child build strong muscles and bones. Exercise also helps children maintain a healthy weight. Try some of these moves:

- Bend **down** and touch your toes. Count 1..2..3..**up**.
- Stretch your arms high over your head.
- Hold on to a chair and kick one leg high in the air.
- Change and kick with the other leg.
- Slowly, turn your head to one side, then to the other.

Repeat the movements as many times as your child enjoys them. If you wish, you can begin to teach about **right** and **left** as you exercise. You might also teach about **up** and **down**, **fast** and **slow**.



A Different Touch

Hands are not the only body parts that touch and feel. Here are some other ways to feel:

- Walk with your child in the rain or snow, and feel the raindrops or snowflakes on your faces. Brush different objects against your child's cheeks and ask, "How does this feel against your skin?" You could try cotton balls, feathers, ice, a spoon, and different fabrics.
- Walk barefoot on different surfaces: grass, sand, mud, cement, carpet, and wood. Talk about how different it feels when you are not wearing shoes.



Point to each item and say, "If you were outside looking for this, would you look up or down?"

Following Directions

Here is a way to have a lot of fun while teaching your child something very useful: following directions. Give each of the following directions slowly and clearly while doing the action yourself:

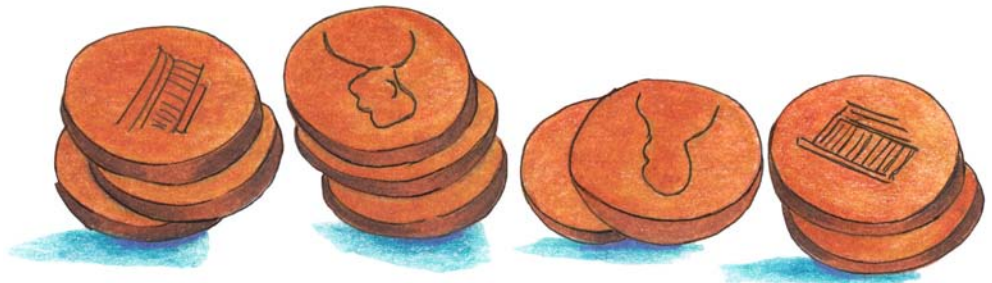
1. Touch your nose.
2. Touch your ears.
3. Show me your teeth.
4. Stick out your tongue.
5. Touch your elbows.
6. Clap your hands.
7. Wiggle your fingers.
8. Touch your knees.
9. Sit down.
10. Stand up.



Now, let your child tell you some things to do.

It's your turn to follow directions!

Play with Pennies



You don't find many uses for pennies these days, but if you collect a few, you can do this activity with your child. It will help with learning how numbers work.

Ask your child to stack 3 pennies. Then offer one more penny to add to the stack. Say, "Now, count all the pennies to see how many pennies you have in your stack."

Next, have your child make two stacks of 2 pennies each. Say, "First you had 3 pennies, and when you added one more, you had 4 pennies. You took 2 away from the stack. Now you have 2 left in one stack. You have 2 in another stack."

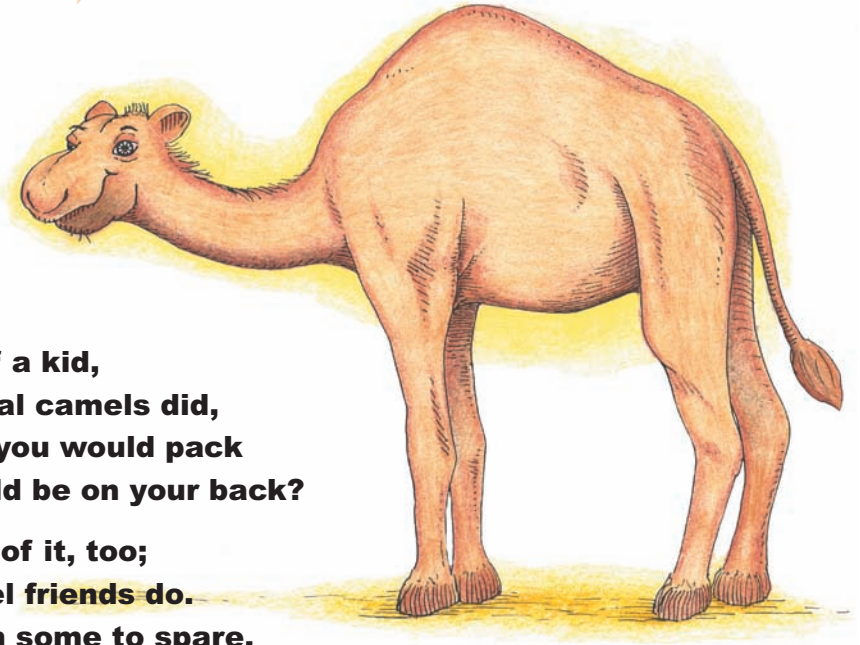
Keep it light and fun as you play with pennies. When your child is very sure of the numbers, you can increase the pennies.



Say, "How many pennies long is this pencil? Guess." Use pennies to find out.

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

Those Amazing Camels



**If you were a camel instead of a kid,
And lived in the desert, like real camels did,
I wonder, I wonder, now what you would pack
Inside that big hump that would be on your back?**

**I think I'd pack food, and a lot of it, too;
Exactly the way that our camel friends do.
They put lots of food, and then some to spare,
Up there in those humps on their backs.**

**So if they get thirsty or hungry or tired
while out in the desert all day,
They can stay where they are,
There's no need to go far—
They can stay in the desert and play.**

Ron Diss

Wishing for **Water**

Explain that in the desert, there is lots of sand but not much water. Say to your child, "Let's see if we can think of at least five things we need water for." Make a list together. Number the list. Let your child watch as you write the words. Your list might include drinking, bathing, cooking, swimming, and making plants grow. Your child might enjoy "acting out" the actions you list, or drawing pictures to go with the words.

The Long, Long Poem

You probably read many short nursery rhymes to your child. But does your child lose interest when you read something longer? You might try pausing now and then to ask a question or to talk about the pictures. Try this as you read "Those Amazing Camels."

After the first verse, stop reading. Point to the picture and ask, "What would you put in your hump?" After your child answers, read the second verse. Say, "If you could take just three foods into the desert with you, what would you take?" After your child talks about this, say, "In real life, camels eat hay and grass." Then finish reading the poem.

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FAMILY

Connect ions Pre-K

For the family of _____

How Children Learn Language

Children learn an amazing number of words before they go to school. They learn words from family members, friends, television, and books. They learn from having all kinds of experiences.

Give your child a variety of experiences. Take your child to stores with you. Go to the library together. Visit the local fire department or police station. Talk about what you are seeing. Encourage questions.

Talk about everyday activities. One of the simplest ways to help your child learn new words is to talk about everyday activities and items: "Your banana slices are thicker than mine." "Let's use a measuring cup for the flour." "Look—the tulips are in bloom!"

Have fun with language. Tell stories. Read or recite

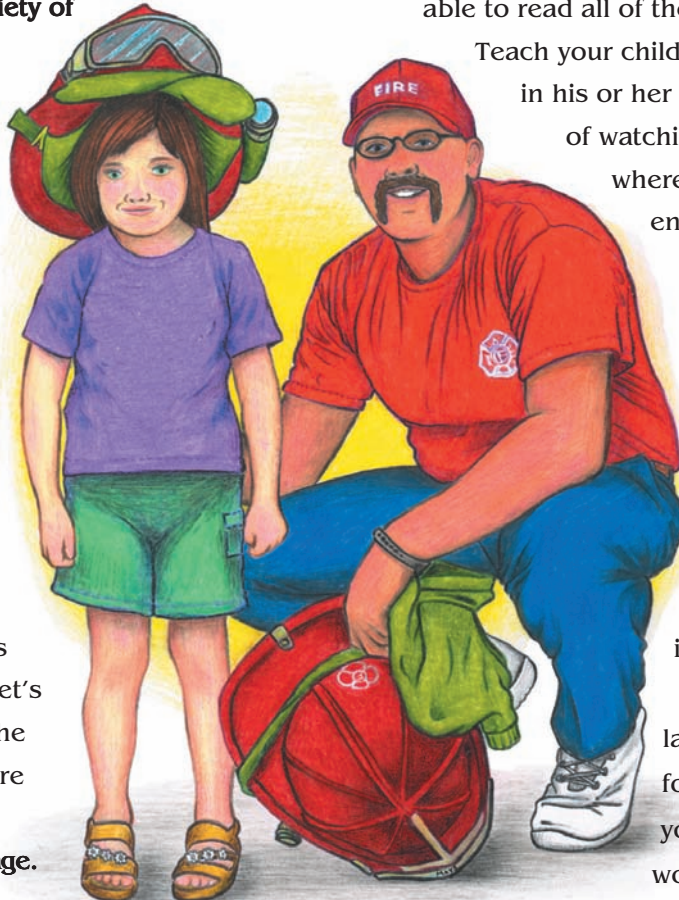
poems and rhymes. Encourage children to make up their own stories and rhymes. Write them down.

Show and tell. When you are in the car, point out signs and read them. Say, "Someday you will be able to read all of these signs by yourself!"

Teach your child to recognize the first letter in his or her name. Then make a game of watching for that letter everywhere you go. Later, try a different letter.

Listen to your child's words. If you watch adults with young children, you may be surprised at how little adults listen. Check yourself. Be sure you really hear what your child is saying. Let her know that her words are important to you.

You can enjoy building language skills. Look inside for activities that let you and your child have fun with words.



★ Practice Rhyming

Ask your child to listen while you say two lines from a nursery rhyme. Explain which words rhyme. Say them and let your child hear how they sound alike. For example:

Jack and **Jill**
Went up the **hill**
Little Bo **Peep**
Has lost her **sheep**

Now, read these short rhymes and ask which words rhyme:

Let's have some **fun**.
We'll play in the **sun**.

The traffic **cop**
Made the traffic **stop**.

The little red **hen**
Got out of her **pen**.

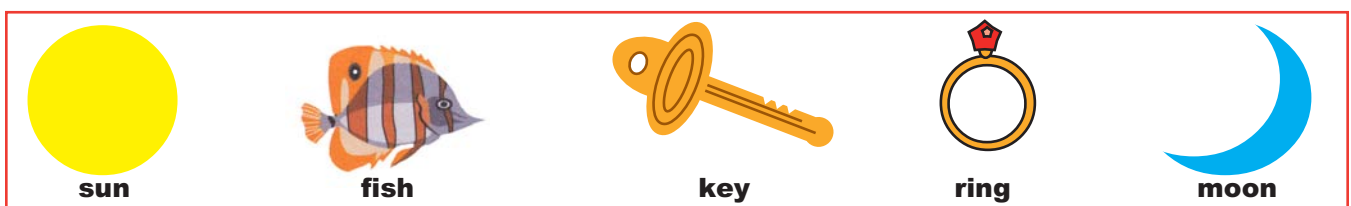
I saw a **toad**
Hop onto the **road**.



Encourage your child to make up rhymes. It doesn't matter if the words are "real" or not. The rhyming sound is the important thing.

What's That?

You probably have some old catalogs or magazines. Find one that has lots of pictures, and invite your child to play a game called What's That? Open the magazine and say, "Close your eyes and put your finger anywhere on the page. When you hear me say *What's that?*, open your eyes and tell me the name of whatever your finger is on." If your child does not know what the object is, give the word for it. Let your child talk about the picture or ask questions. Then move on to another page. Take turns, if you wish.



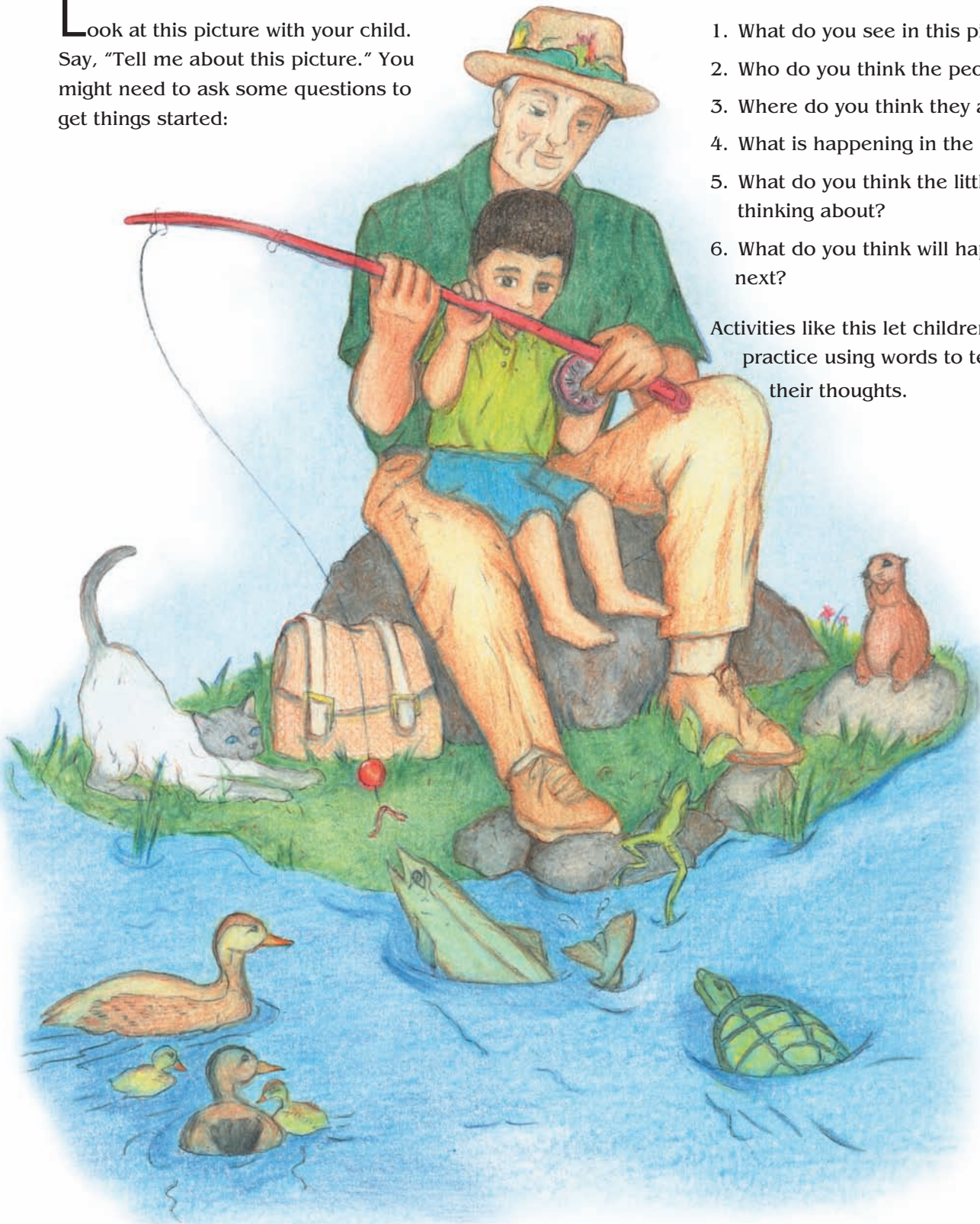
As you point to each picture, say the word and ask your child to give you words that rhyme.

Tell Me a Story

Look at this picture with your child. Say, "Tell me about this picture." You might need to ask some questions to get things started:

1. What do you see in this picture?
2. Who do you think the people are?
3. Where do you think they are?
4. What is happening in the picture?
5. What do you think the little boy is thinking about?
6. What do you think will happen next?

Activities like this let children practice using words to tell about their thoughts.



Ask your child to point to the animals in this picture as you say their names: fish, squirrel, turtle, cat, duck, and frog.

Read-Aloud RHYMES

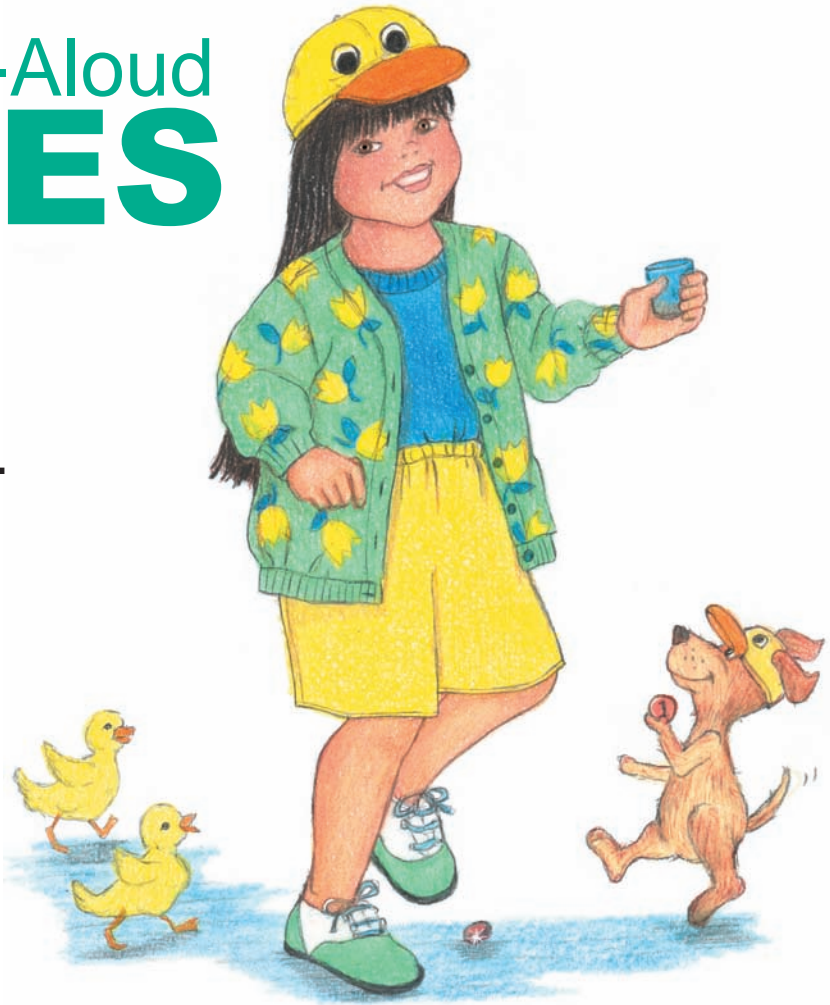
Happy Trails

**Run across the floor and back.
Flap your arms,
And then say “quack.”**

**Up and down the hall we go.
You go fast,
And I go slow.**

**See a penny, pick it up.
Put it in
A plastic cup.**

**In a circle, walk around.
Take three steps,
And then sit down!**



Carla Thomas McClure

Walk the Talk

“Happy Trails” is a poem that gives directions. Your child will enjoy following the directions and doing the actions. Do them together, and you will both get some exercise. Doing the actions that go with the words will help your child understand what the words mean. The only thing you will need to do ahead of time is put some pennies and a plastic cup on the floor.

Let's Play Store

What can be bought with a few pennies? Let your child find out. Set up a “snack store” in your kitchen. Your store might offer apple slices and peanut butter on celery sticks. “Welcome to Aunt Maria’s Snack Stand,” you might say. “May I help you?” Tell your child how many pennies each item will cost. Then let your child choose and pay for a snack. Be sure to say “thank you,” and remind your young customer to wash those hands before eating!

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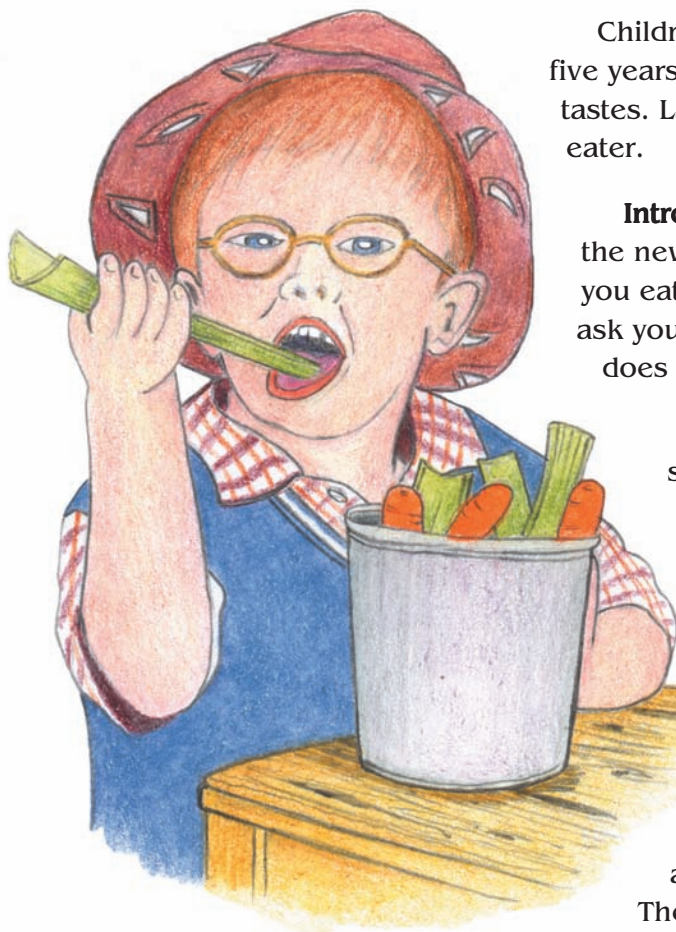
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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Peanut Butter and Jelly Again?



Children learn to like foods more easily during their first five years. Now is a good time to introduce some new tastes. Later on, you will not be as likely to have a picky eater.

Introduce new foods slowly. Offer a small portion of the new food along with a favorite food. Let your child see you eat and enjoy the new food. Do not make a fuss, but ask your child to take one or two bites. If your child still does not want it, take it away. Try again at another time.

Let the child decide. The next time you go to the store together, let your child choose a new food. At home, let your child help prepare it and decide when to serve it.

Encourage good choices. In the produce section, play *What color is this?* Brightly colored fruits and vegetables catch the eyes of young children. Yours may want to try one of these healthful choices.

Steer clear of aisles filled with sugary cereals and high-calorie products that offer little nutrition. The eating habits you help your child establish now will last a lifetime.

Tip: Inside you will find activities you and your child can do together. Not every child will enjoy every activity. That is all right. Do the ones your child likes and skip the others or try them later.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children.

Poor Humpty Dumpty

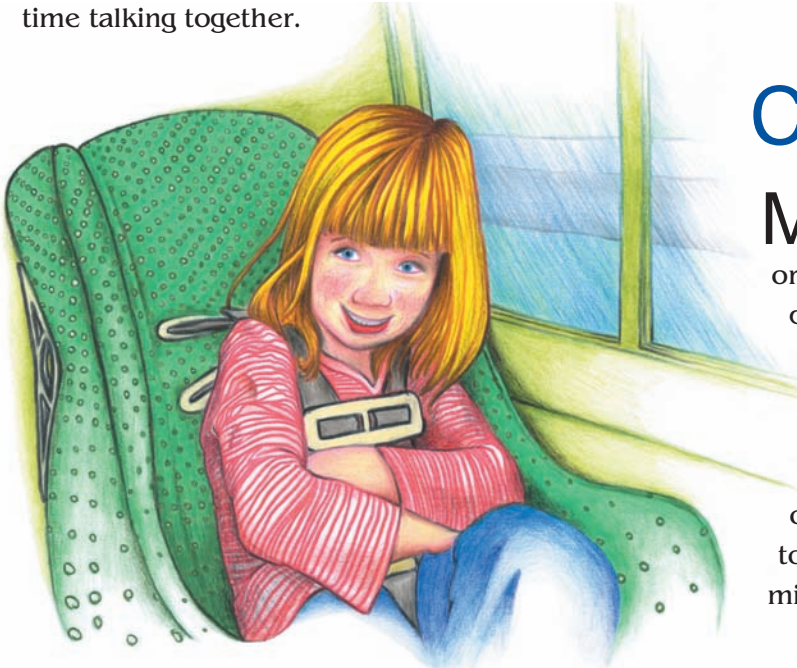
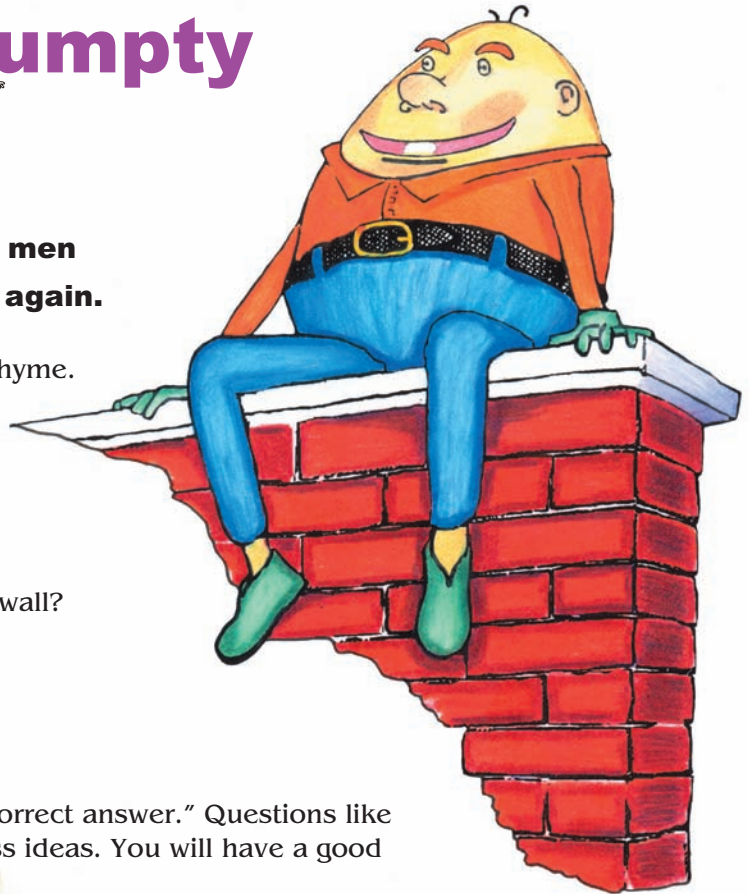


Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

Your child may already know this nursery rhyme. Read it or say it together. Then ask these questions:

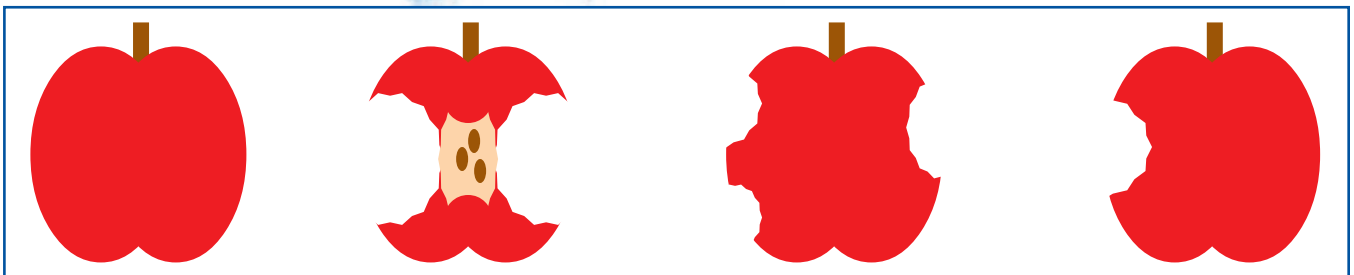
- Where was Humpty sitting?
- How do you think he got there?
- What do you think made him fall off the wall?
- Who tried to put him together again?
- Why couldn't they do it?
- Could you put Humpty together?

For most of these questions, there is no "correct answer." Questions like these help your child learn to think and express ideas. You will have a good time talking together.



Car Talk

Most people spend a lot of time in their car or riding the bus. The next time you and your child go somewhere together, use this time wisely. Take turns saying nursery rhymes. Count how many blue cars you see. Read traffic signs to your child. Name things you see on the way: "Look, there's a police officer in a blue uniform!" Sing a song together. It's good for your child, and it might make the trip go faster for you, too.



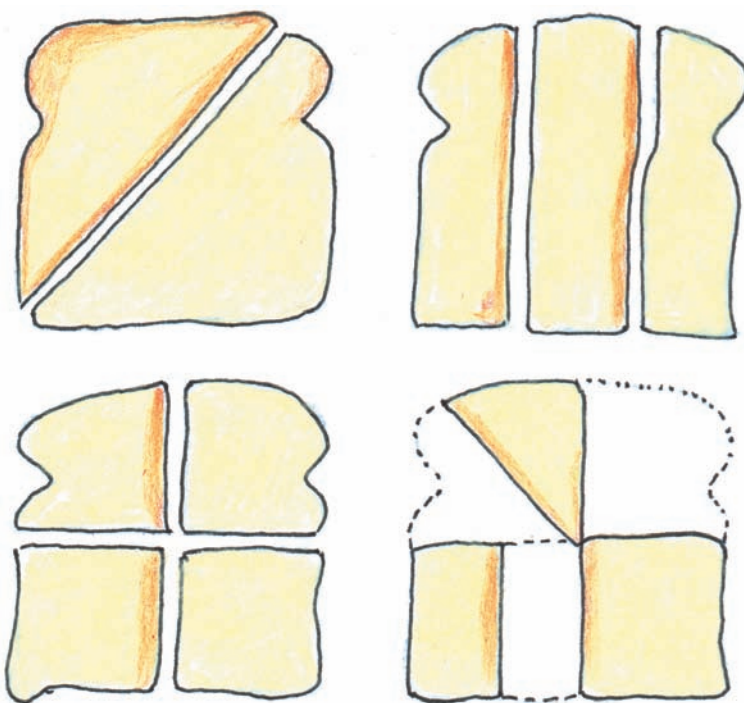
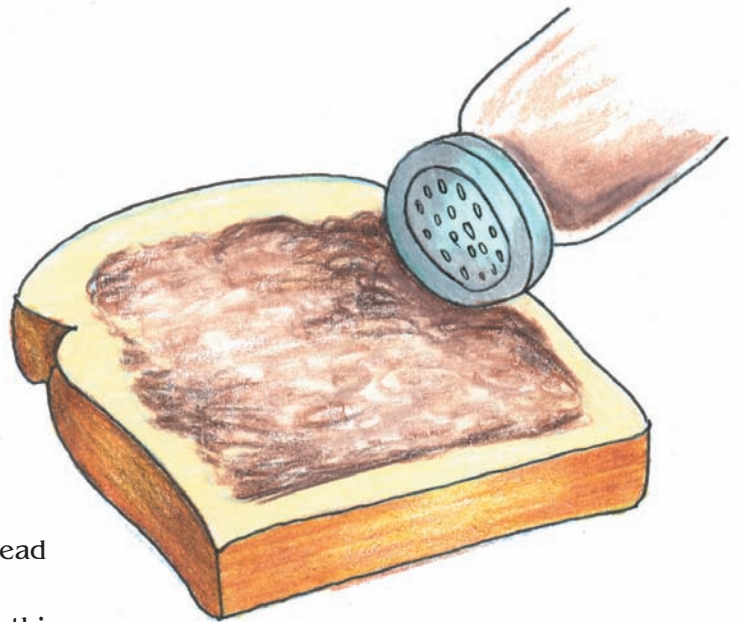
Say, "Let's put these pictures in order. The whole apple comes first. Which should come next? next? last?"

Cinnamon Toast

Children like being able to do things for themselves. You can show your child how to make cinnamon toast.

Put the toaster where your child can reach it. Help your child mix sugar and cinnamon together. If you have an extra salt shaker to put the mixture in, it will be easier to use. If not, just use a spoon.

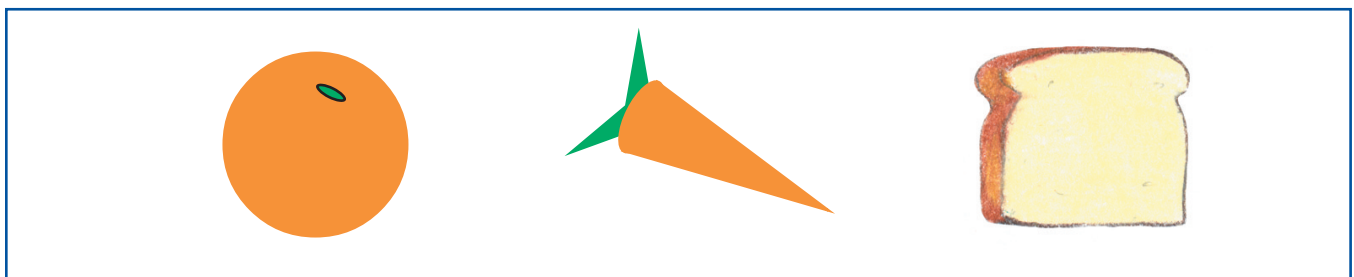
Let your child toast the bread. Show how to spread butter or margarine on the warm toast and how to sprinkle the cinnamon-sugar on top. Children enjoy this snack with a glass of milk.



Stay in Shape

While you are helping with the cinnamon toast, you can show your child some shapes. The toast is a square to begin with. Cut the toast from corner to corner to make two triangles. Cut it in thirds to make three rectangles. Cut it into four pieces to make small squares. Talk about the shapes as you cut the toast.

If you want to add interest, count out pieces as you cut them. Your child will get to know more about numbers, too. This does not need to be serious business. Remember, for your small child, learning is natural and fun.



Say, "Tell me which food is shaped like a triangle. A circle. A square."

Read-Aloud RHYMES

At Night When it's Quiet

**At night when it's quiet
is the best time of all.
I snuggle with my pillow
and my very favorite doll.**

**The story Momma
read to me
is rushing through my head.
I love how Momma reads to me
Before I go to bed.

I love it when she reads to me
Before I go to bed.**

Ginger Hamilton Caudill



Trading Places

Some evening, tell your child, "Why don't we do something just for fun? Let's pretend you are my mommy or daddy and I am your child. You tell me what I need to do to get ready for bed. What you say is what I will do. OK, what do I do first?" You might be surprised to hear how much your child sounds like you! Be sure to ask your child to tell you a bedtime story.

Night and Day

What are some things we do at night?" Use this question to start a conversation with your child about how night and day are different. You might talk about how the sky changes, what people do, and what animals do. Ask, "What is your favorite thing about nighttime?" and "What is your favorite thing about day-time?"

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FAMILY

Connect ions Pre-K

For the family of _____

Learning to Use Small Muscles

Children develop small-muscle control when they use their fingers and hands. You can help. Suggest activities that get children to work with their hands, then supply the materials they will need.

Keep it simple. You do not need to buy costly things. Give your child paper, crayons, and scissors. Let your child have old magazines and catalogs to cut up. These simple things can provide hours of fun and learning. Children also love modeling clay or play dough. You can make it yourself very cheaply.

Let them do it. Encourage children to dress and undress themselves. Be patient as they are learning. Putting arms in sleeves and buttoning clothes are real achievements for a

small child. Show your child how to thread large beads or buttons on long shoelaces. Your child will be proud to give someone a necklace made this way.



Right or left hand? At this age, children may use either hand to hold a spoon, crayon, or scissors. They may still be deciding whether they prefer right or left. Let the child decide.

We live in a world that makes it easier for right-handed people, but it is best not to make children use the right hand if they prefer the left.

About scissors. Be sure to provide scissors that are safe for children. Scissors that have rounded ends are best for small hands. If you have a child who is definitely left-handed, buy left-handed scissors.

Homemade Play Dough

This play dough will stay soft for a long time if you wrap it in plastic wrap and keep it in the refrigerator. It is also nontoxic, so you do not have to worry if children put it into their mouths.

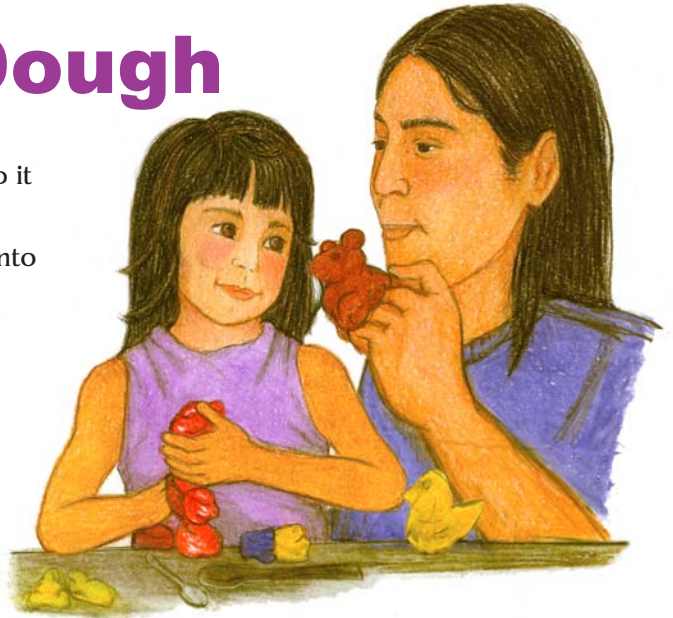
Mix together:

1 cup plain flour

1/2 cup salt

2 teaspoons cream of tartar

1 cup water



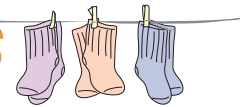
Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a saucepan. If you have a drop of peppermint to add to the oil, it will make the dough smell wonderful!

Add the other ingredients to the heated oil. Cook the mixture for 3 minutes, stirring constantly.

A ball of dough will form. Drop it onto waxed paper or foil and let it cool.

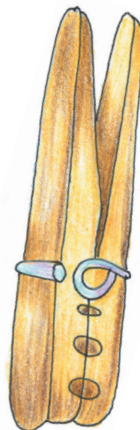
Knead the dough until it is soft and easy to work with. Separate it into two or more portions, depending on how many colors you want to make. Use food coloring to add color.

Clipping with Clothespins



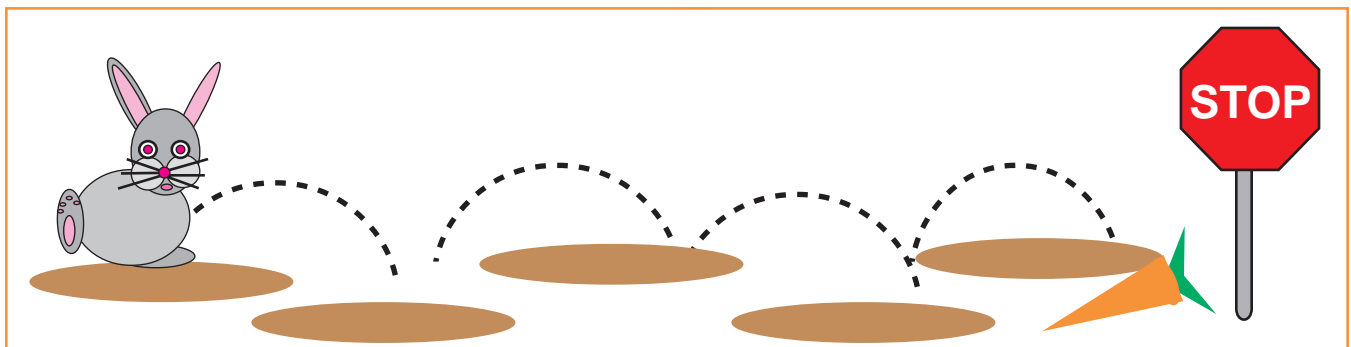
Spring-type clothespins can give your child practice in using the thumb and index finger together. Let your child try opening and closing the pins. Here are some things your child might like to try:

- Pick up small objects such as beads or dried beans and drop them into a basket or empty food can.



- Clip clothespins around the rim of a cardboard box.
- Clip doll clothes or child's socks on a clothes line. (You can make a temporary clothes line by tying a rope between two chairs.)

You and your child will think of other ways to use the clothespins.



Say, "Use your fingers to help the rabbit hop, hop, hop, hop, and STOP for a carrot." Count the number of hops.

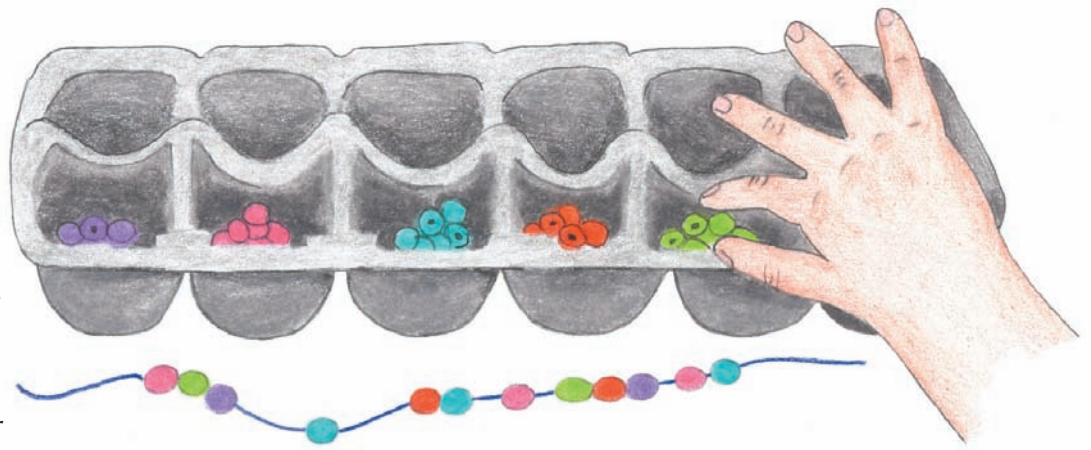
Sorting Things

Sorting beads, marbles, buttons, or other things into sections of an egg carton is good preparation for your child's later math skills. It also develops finger dexterity.

If you have some beads, put a few in a bowl and ask your child to sort them by color. Large beads work best for small children. Include just enough beads so your child can complete the task without getting bored or discouraged. Your child can sort the different colors into sections of an empty egg carton.

Another time, you might ask your child to sort buttons by size (big or little). If you have a bag of mixed nuts that are still in their shells, your child could sort the different kinds of nuts. Look around the house for other small objects your child might sort by color, size, or shape.

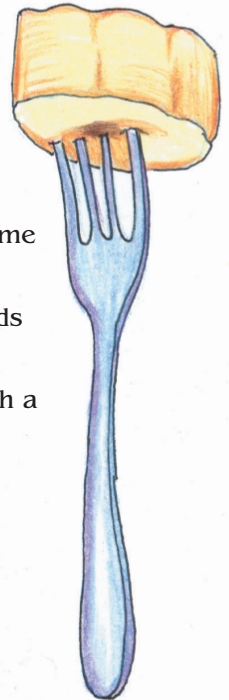
Safety note: Small children can choke on beads, marbles, and buttons. Be sure to put these items out of your child's reach when finished with this activity.



Fork Foods

Snack time can also be a time to develop hand-eye coordination—if you offer foods that can be eaten with a fork. Some good foods to spear with a fork are these:

- thick banana slices
- pineapple chunks
- cubes of cheese
- pickle chunks
- cubed apples or pears



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

A **Visit** from Grandma

**When Grandma comes to visit,
She takes me to the park.
She helps me bake some cookies,
And plays with all my cars.**

**She holds me on her lap,
And we do lots of talking.
She takes me to the mall,
Where we do lots of walking.**

**When Grandma comes to visit,
We always have such fun.
Next time, I hope she comes to stay
Two weeks instead of one!**

Patricia Penn



Welcome **Words**

Tell your child you are going to play a game called "Visitor." Let your child pretend to be a friend or relative coming to visit. Have the child go outside and knock on the door. When you answer the door, say the things people say when visitors come:

"_____(name), I am so glad you came for a visit."

"Please have a seat."

"Would you like a glass of water?"

Next, you be the visitor and let your child welcome you.

Your Grandma Is My **Mother!**

Does your child know that Grandma is your mother? Young children can be amazed to learn that Mom was once a little girl, or that Dad was once a little boy. Have you ever talked about things that happened when you were a child? Do you have pictures you could show? This might be a good time to talk about family relationships and to tell some family stories. You might also tell about when your own grandmother used to visit when you were a child. Don't be surprised if your child asks lots of questions.

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FAMILY

Connect ions Pre-K

For the family of _____

Hearing and Listening to Learn

Listening is a skill we must learn and practice. The first step in learning to listen is being able to hear differences among sounds.

Help your child notice sounds. For example, when you take a walk together, see how many sounds the two of you can identify. Talk about how some of the sounds are soft, some loud, some high, others low. Try to tell what direction a sound is coming from. This is not easy to do, but your child will benefit from trying.

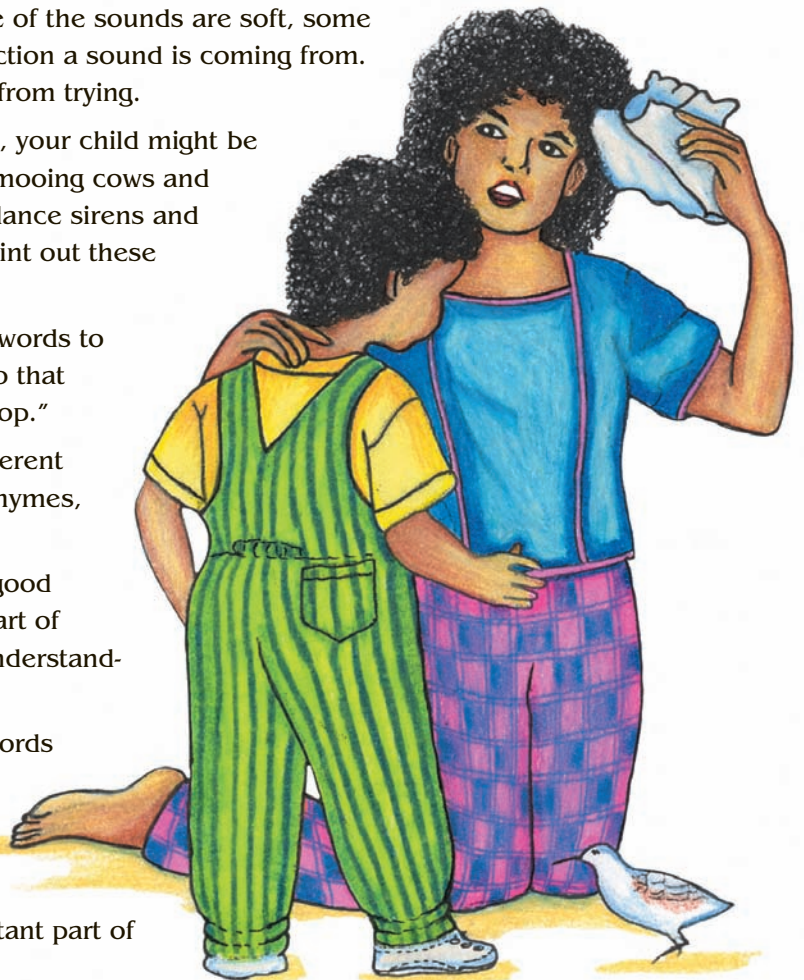
Talk about sounds. If you live in a rural place, your child might be used to the sounds of farm animals and nature: mooing cows and croaking frogs. A city child is likely to hear ambulance sirens and taxi horns. As you watch TV together, you can point out these differences.

When you hear a new sound, give your child words to help describe the sound. You might say “Listen to that bird chirp” or “The rain is going *ping* on the rooftop.”

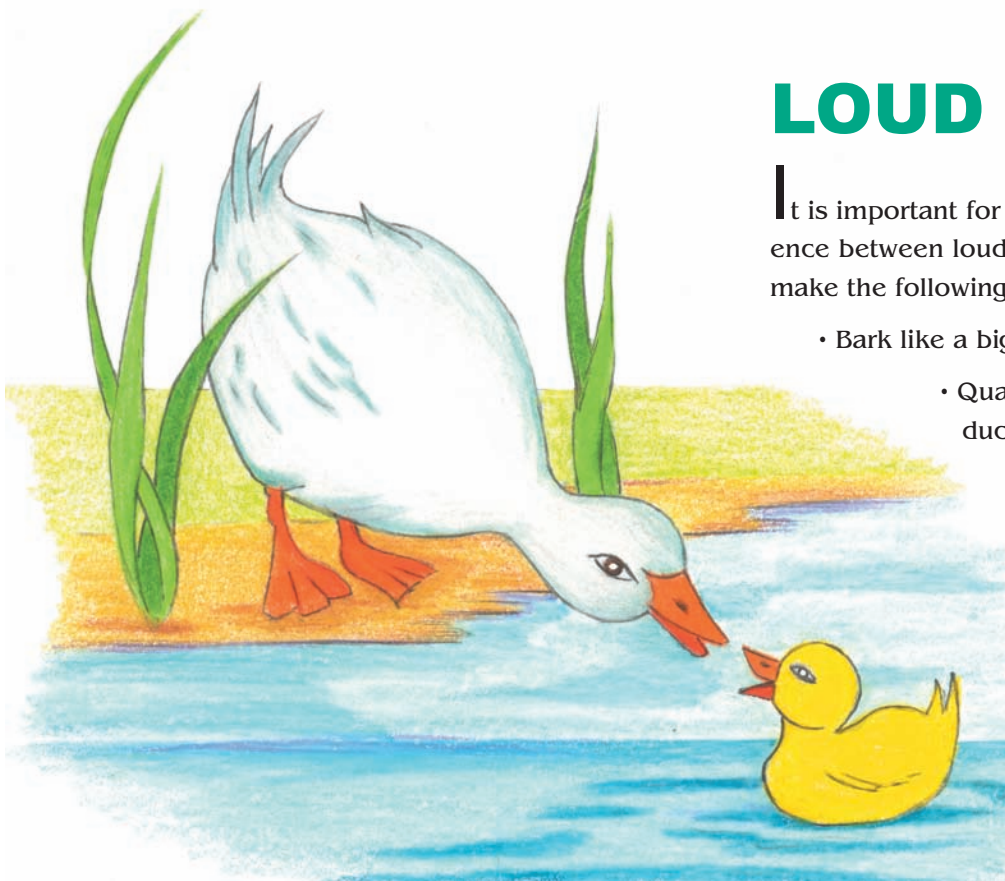
Play. As children learn to pay attention to different sounds, they might repeat songs, make up silly rhymes, and play with sound.

All of these activities prepare children to be good listeners. Being a good listener is an important part of following directions, answering questions, and understanding stories.

Being able to hear the individual sounds in words is also important. Playing with tongue twisters (“Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers”) can help children learn to recognize the sound that is repeated. This will help them as they begin matching sounds to letters—an important part of learning to read.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children



LOUD and Soft

It is important for children to understand the difference between loud and soft sounds. Ask your child to make the following sounds.

- Bark like a big dog, then like a small puppy.
- Quack like a big duck, then like a baby duck.
- Roar like a lion, then meow like a kitten.

You might think of other sounds to have your child make. Comment on the sounds. Say, "That was loud!" or "That was a soft sound." You can also point out loud and soft sounds on TV or on the radio.

Sing Your Telephone Number



Children love to sing, and they can't be unhappy and sing at the same time. Singing is a good way to brighten a child's mood.

It is also a great way to learn something by repetition—like your phone number. Try it with your child. Sing "Twinkle, Little Star."

Now, put the numbers of your telephone number to the tune.

Encourage your child to sing along, and soon he or she will know the number!

Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star

5 5 5 1 2 3 4

How I won-der what you are

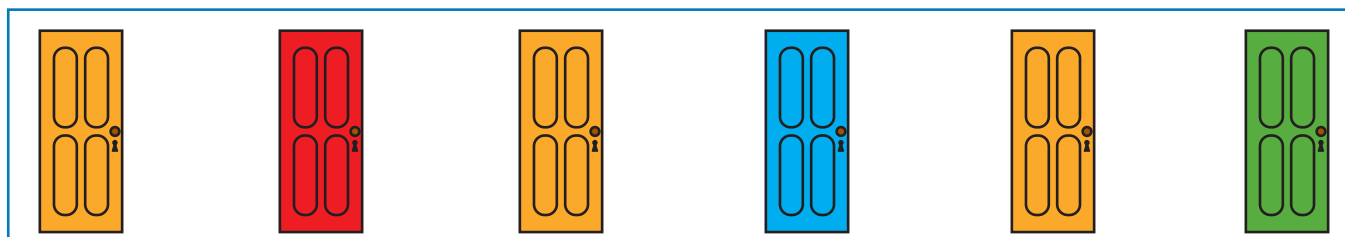
5 5 5 1 2 3 4

Up a-bove the world so high

5 5 5 1 2 3 4

Like a dia-mond in the sky

5 5 5 1 2 3 4

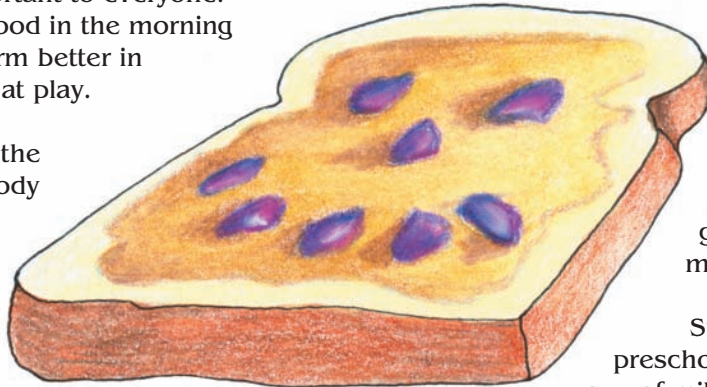


Say, "Let's count the doors on this page." Next, count the doors in your home.

Breakfast: The **Power** Meal

Breakfast is important to everyone. Eating nourishing food in the morning helps people perform better in school, at work, or at play.

Foods eaten in the morning give the body energy to start the day. Breakfast does not have to be cereal or bacon and eggs.



Your child might enjoy a glass of juice and a piece of toast spread with peanut butter. Let your child add raisins to make a smiling face. (For children who are allergic to peanut butter, try hummus or melted cheddar cheese.) A glass of milk rounds out the meal.

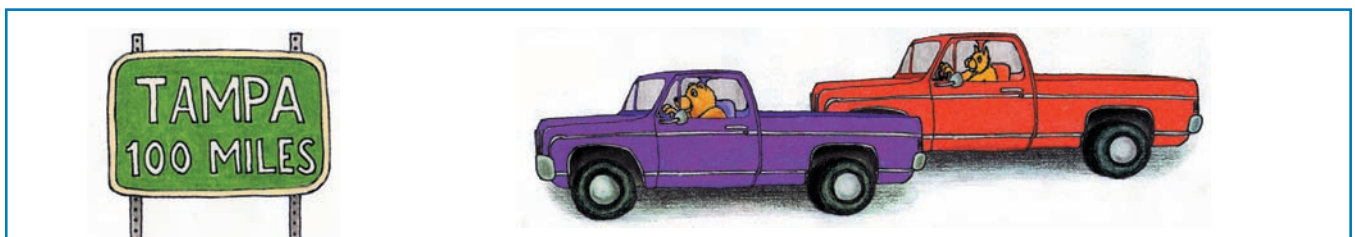
Suggested amounts for preschoolers are 1/2 cup of juice, 3/4 cup of milk. Small stomachs do not need large servings.



Tell Me What You Hear

Stand where your child cannot see you. Make these sounds. Ask your child to tell you what the sounds are.

- rattling keys
- clapping hands
- stamping feet
- tearing paper
- bouncing ball
- snapping fingers
- rattling silverware
- running water



**Ask your child to say this tongue twister with you:
"Trish and Troy traded trucks and took a trip to Tampa."**

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

Engleberry Wilson

Engleberry Wilson

**Had a clock for a nose.
He could breathe through his fingers
And talk with his toes.**

**His friends thought him funny,
For his favorite food was peas.
Every day he took a bath
In a bowl of melted cheese.**

Engleberry Wilson

**Never cared what people said—
He put bread on top of ice cream,
And ice cream on his bread.**

Carla Thomas McClure



What Would You Do If . . .



Say to your child, "Let's pretend we're in the land of make-believe. What would you do if you could jump higher than the trees?" Show how the game works by telling your answer: "If I could jump higher than the trees, I would jump on the roof and watch everyone in the neighborhood." Here are some questions you might try:

- What if your bath water turned into milk?
- What if your crayon could talk?
- What if your umbrella could fly all by itself?
- What could you grow if you had some magic seeds?

In the Real World

Ask your child to come back from the land of make-believe. Say, "Now I want you to tell me about things in the real world. Finish these sentences for me." Accept any reasonable answer.

You breathe through your _____.

You talk through your _____.

You take a bath in _____.

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FAMILY

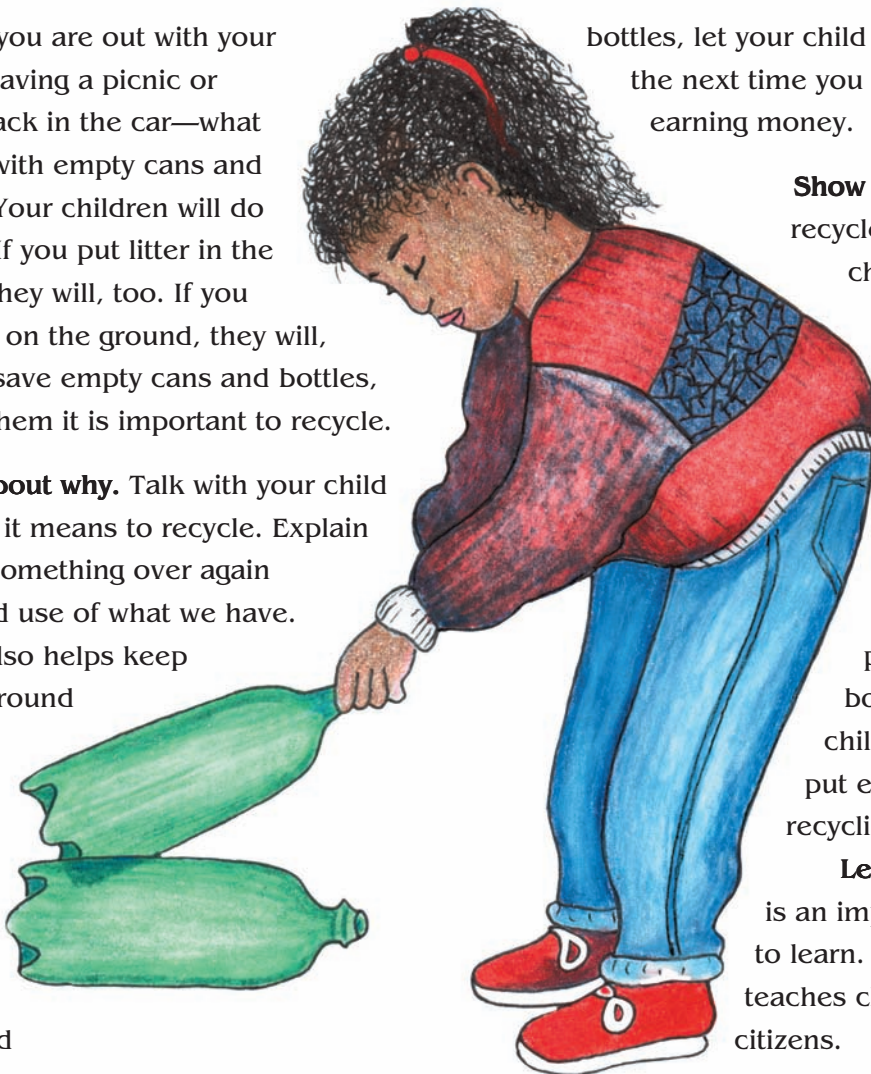
Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Don't Litter—Do Recycle

When you are out with your children—having a picnic or eating a snack in the car—what do you do with empty cans and wrappers? Your children will do as you do. If you put litter in the trash can, they will, too. If you throw trash on the ground, they will, too. If you save empty cans and bottles, you teach them it is important to recycle.

Talk about why. Talk with your child about what it means to recycle. Explain that using something over again makes good use of what we have. Recycling also helps keep the world around us clean and safe. If you live near a recycling center that pays for cans and



bottles, let your child take something, too, the next time you go. Your child will like earning money.

Show how. Saving items to recycle is a good way for children to practice sorting. Have boxes or garbage cans they can reach. Show what goes into each container. Have your child cut out pictures of a can and a bottle. You can help tape or paste a picture on each box or can. Then your child will know where to put each item to save it for recycling.

Let children sort. Sorting is an important skill for children to learn. Sorting to recycle also teaches children to be good citizens.

Helping Hands

Sit down with your child and talk about the ways we use our hands. Play a little game.

- See if you can pass a crayon to each other without using the hands. Try different ways. Can you use your feet? Your head?
- Move a sheet of paper from one hand to the other without using your thumbs.

Take turns naming some ways we use our hands—to eat, drink, cut, paste, write, and draw,



for example. You will think of many others. Offer your child some “raw materials” such as paper, scissors, paste, and crayons. Say, “Now, let’s see what you can make with your own two hands!”

The Food Guide Pyramid

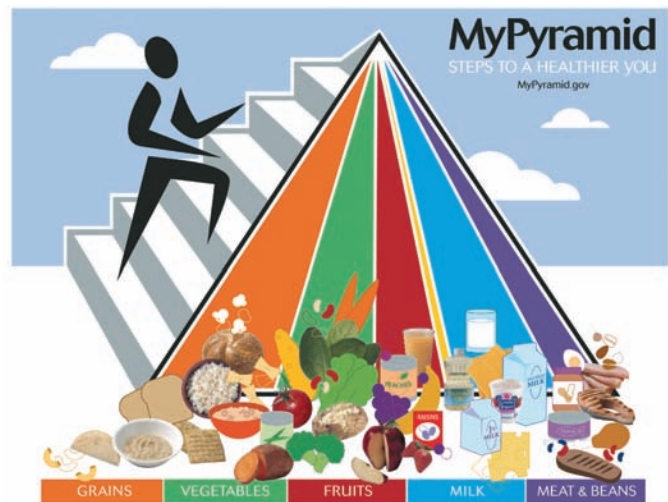
Good nutrition and exercise can help your child be healthy. Four- and five-year-olds who get 30 to 60 minutes of daily exercise need about 1,400 calories a day. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that children in this age group should eat the following amounts from various food groups daily:

Grains: 5 ounces (including at least 2^{1/2} ounces of whole grains)

Vegetables: 1^{1/2} cups (serve a variety of dark green veggies, orange veggies, beans and peas, starchy veggies, and others)

Fruits: 1^{1/2} cups (offer a variety; go easy on fruit juices)

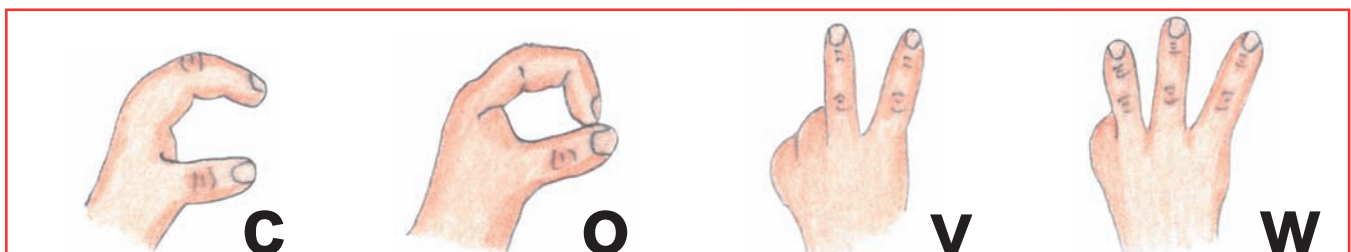
Milk: 2 cups (or substitute a cup of low-fat yogurt or 2 ounces of cheese for 1 cup of milk)



Meat & Beans: 4 ounces (offer a variety—lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, peas, nuts and seeds)

Fats and sweets: limit solid fats and sugars (for this age group, the daily allowance for oils is 4 teaspoons a day)

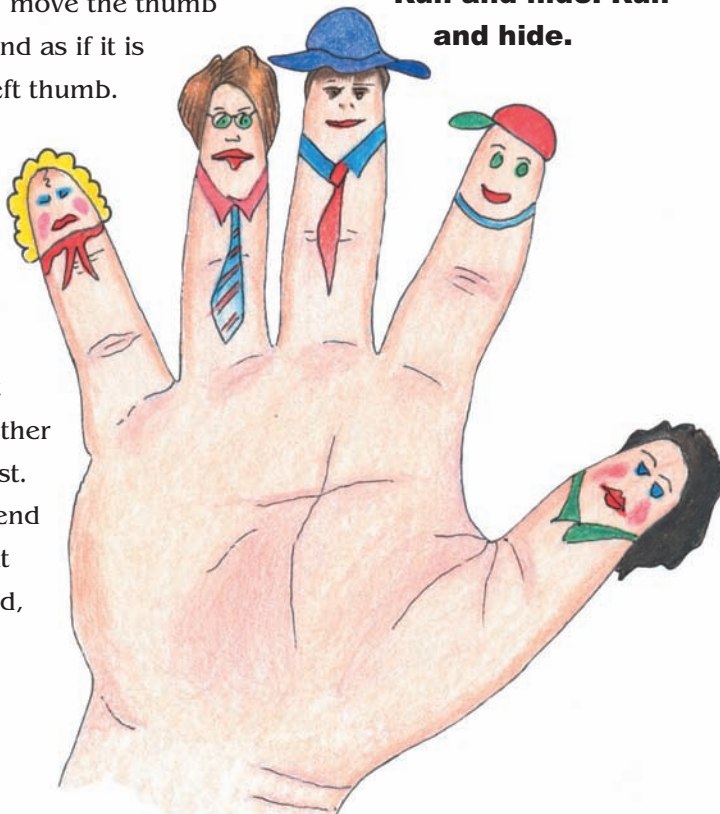
To learn about the nutritional needs of other family members (based on age, gender, and activity level), visit the USDA Web site at www.mypyramid.gov.



Say, “Let’s see if we can make these letters with our hands.”

Finger Play

This is a finger-play rhyme. You can read it, or you can sing it to the tune of "Frere Jacques" (Are you sleeping, are you sleeping, Brother John). Have your child copy your movements. Start with both hands made into fists, thumbs hidden. As you read, extend the thumbs and fingers as they are called for. When you read, "How are you today, sir?" move the thumb of your right hand as if it is talking to the left thumb. Then "Very well, I thank you" is the left thumb answering. When you say, "Run and hide," tuck first one, then the other back into the fist. For Family, extend all the fingers at once. At the end, both hands will once again be made into fists.



Where Is Thumbkin?

**Where is Thumbkin?
Where is Thumbkin?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.**

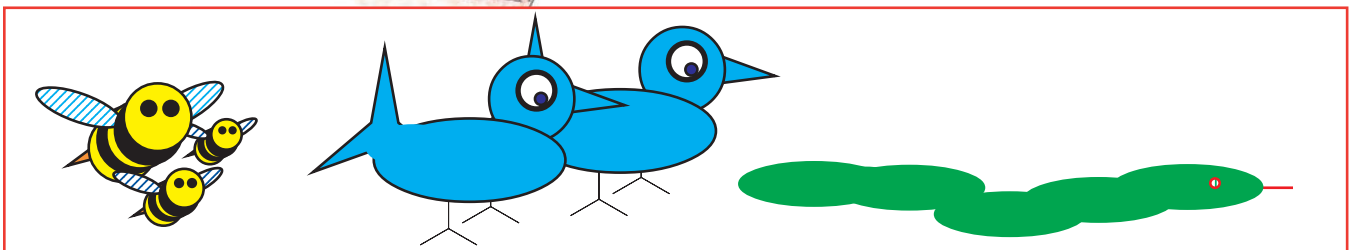
**Where is Pointer?
Where is Pointer?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.**

**Where is Tall Man?
Where is Tall Man?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.**

**Where is Ring Man?
Where is Ring Man?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.**

**Where is Baby?
Where is Baby?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.**

**Where is Family?
Where is Family?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.**

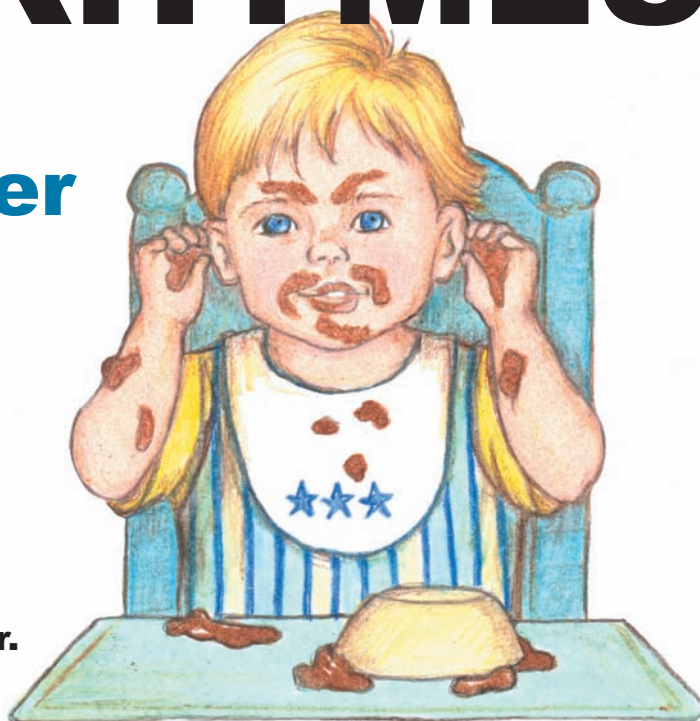


Say, "Let's count the bees. Can you buzz like a bee? Count the birds. Can you chirp like a bird? How many snakes do you see? Can you hiss like a snake?"

The Chocolate Pudding Monster

**Pudding on his hands,
Pudding in his hair—
When Baby Jim eats pudding,
He gets it everywhere!**

**Pudding on the table,
Pudding on his face—
He's a chocolate pudding monster.
He gets pudding everywhere!**



Carla Thomas McClure

Silly Names

Say, "The Chocolate Pudding Monster is a silly name. Help me think up some other silly names for messy eaters." Give an example: "What about a baby named Bessie who's very messy? A silly name for her might be Messy Bessie." Here are some ideas to get your child started. What would you call . . .

- a giant who gets ice cream all over him? (Sticky Ricky)
- a man named Freddie who has trouble with spaghetti? (Spaghetti Freddie)
- a bear who drips honey down his chin? (Sweet-Chin Charlie)

Where's the Pudding?

Say, "Baby Jim is a very messy eater.

He gets pudding on his hands and hair and face.

Where else do you think

Baby Jim might put his

pudding?" You might need to give a prompt: "What

about on his nose? On the floor?" See how many different places your child can think of. Then ask,

"Where is pudding supposed to go?" Answers might include "in your mouth" or "in your bowl."



FAMILY

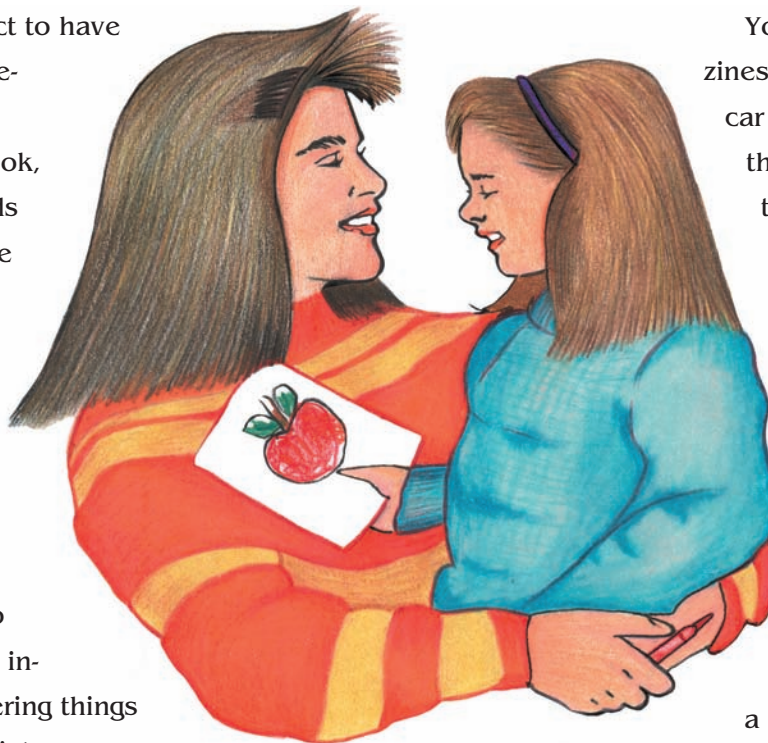
Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Waiting Can Be Useful Time

We all have to wait sometimes. Waiting can be a boring, miserable time for a small child. But if you plan ahead, you can make it a time for learning and fun.

If you expect to have to wait, come prepared. A simple game, a story book, or a deck of cards can help pass the time and be enjoyable, too. Paper and crayons will keep small hands busy. Children will be happier if you do things with them instead of just offering things to keep them quiet.



Take along something to nibble on. Pretzels and an apple are good snacks. A treat can boost energy and keep children from being fussy if the wait is getting into nap time.

You might keep old magazines, paper, and crayons in your car in case you have to wait there. Or you might have a toy that comes out of the glove compartment only during long waits. Don't forget games like What If? and I Spy.

Talk with your child about why you have to wait. You might feel like whining yourself, but try not to be cross with your child. Waiting time can be a chance to spend some valuable minutes together.

Tip: Inside you will find activities you and your child can do together. Not every child will enjoy every activity. That is all right. Do the ones your child likes and skip the others or try them later.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Act It Out

Tell your child that you are going to act out (pantomime) something that happens often in your house. Say, "Watch closely so you will be able to guess what I am doing. Then it will be your turn to act out for me."

Pantomime simple activities: brushing your teeth, combing someone's hair, washing dishes. At first, do one pantomime and ask your child to guess what you are doing. Then you can do two or



three in a row. Ask: "What did I do first?" "What did I do next?"

This activity helps children learn an important language skill—how to use words to describe what they see.

Doing Dishes

Ask your child to help you wash and dry the dishes. (If you have a dishwasher, you can do the same things as you unload the clean dishes to put them away.) Have your child sort things by type and size, like this:

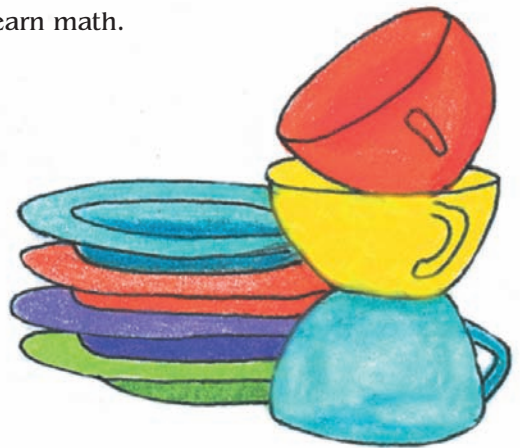
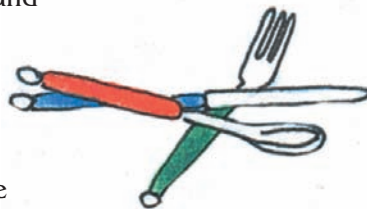
"Let's put all the plates together."

"Now put the cups together."

"Put all the spoons together, and put all the forks together." And so on.

If you have more than one size of any item, you can have the child put the same-sized pieces together.

Ask questions. "Which cup is the biggest?" "Which plate is the smallest?" With this activity, you can have a good time together while your child learns skills that help him or her get ready to learn math.



Have your child look for things that are round—first in this picture, then in your home or outside.

Three Nursery Rhymes

Read these nursery rhymes aloud. Your child might already know these rhymes by heart. If so, stop before a rhyming word and ask your child to give you the next word. Look at the pictures together. Ask, "What is happening in this picture?" Talk about the words in the nursery rhymes: "See this low seat where Miss Muffet is sitting? I would call it a bench, but it is also called a tuffet."



**Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells,
And cockle shells,
And pretty maids all
in a row.**



**Jack be nimble,
Jack be quick,
Jack jump over the candlestick.
Jump it lightly,
Jump it quick.
Jump right over the candlestick.**

**Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey.
Along came a spider,
Who sat down beside her,
And frightened
Miss Muffet away.**



Ask your child to find these things on the page: hat, candle, hands, flowers, spider.

Read-Aloud RHYMES

Spending Time

**My brother likes to watch TV
Before he goes to bed.
He sits and stares for hours,
And never moves his head.**

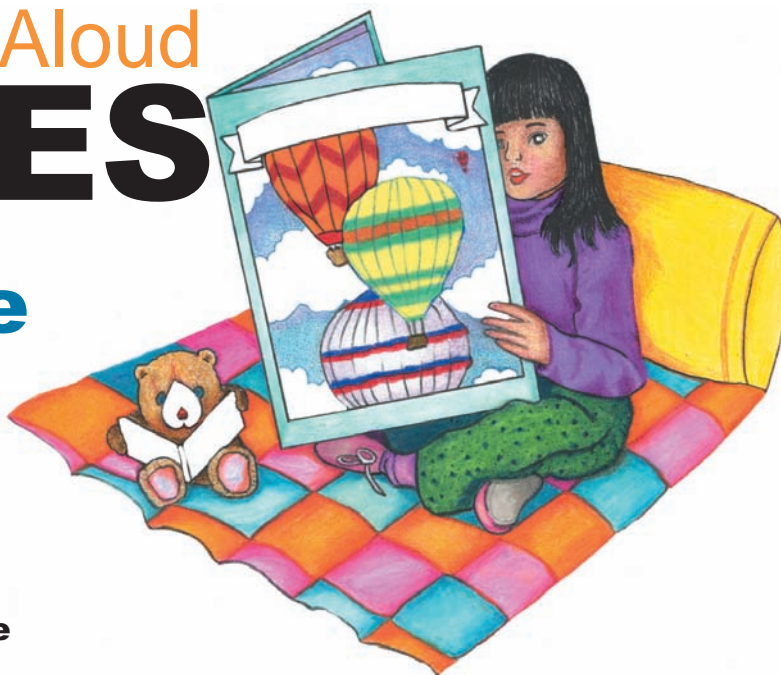
**My sister likes to use the phone
(it seems) all night and day.
She's always chatting with a friend.
She'd rather talk than play!**

**TV's okay for a little bit,
And calling friends is fine.
But looking at my books is how
I like to spend my time.**

Ginger Hamilton Caudill

Reading Picnic

Wait until the stars come out. Gather a blanket, popcorn or some other treat, a flashlight, and a favorite book. Say, "Let's go for a reading picnic." After you read the story, look for pictures and patterns that the stars make in the sky. If you can't go outdoors, turn out the lights and have an indoor reading picnic after dark. Activities like this create special memories for your child and help nurture a love of books.



Books of Their Own

Looking for a present for your child? How about one that is portable and unbreakable, requires no assembly, needs no batteries, takes little space, and does not cost a lot? Books are perfect gifts. Many different kinds are available:

- Alphabet books
- Counting books
- Concept books (for example: shapes, colors, opposites, zoo animals)
- Nursery rhymes (children like the rhyme and repetition)
- Predictable books (a word or phrase is repeated throughout to form a pattern)
- Traditional literature (fairy tales, folktales, fables, myths, and legends)
- Wordless picture books (children can tell the story themselves as they "read" the pictures)

Help your child create a special place for books. You might decorate a box together or put a sign ("Michael's Books") on a low shelf in the child's bedroom.

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Learning by Seeing

Words alone have no meaning for children. If you say “cow” to a child who has never seen, heard, or touched a cow, the child will not know what you mean. If you try to describe a rectangle to a child without showing one, the child will not know what you are talking about.

Learning at home. Children have to experience things to know about them. This does not mean you have to buy fancy toys or take children on long trips to help them learn. In fact, a great place to learn is your own kitchen!

Teach about sizes. Pots and pans, for example, can help children learn about sizes. A small pan will fit into a larger one. The larger one can fit into one that is even bigger. One might be the perfect size to fit a small head.

Teach about shapes. In the kitchen, children can also learn about shapes. “This lid is round. So is this pan. That pan is square.” Talk with your child about the shapes. “This pan that I use for lasagna is a rectangle. Can you find

another pan that is a rectangle?” You might ask, “What about the cookie sheet? Is it a rectangle, too?”

Look around your kitchen for other shapes you might talk about—square tiles, round canisters, rectangular cabinet doors.

Relax. You do not need to make a job out of teaching shapes or sizes or new words. Just let the child explore. Perhaps the most important thing about “kitchen play” is the time you spend with your child.

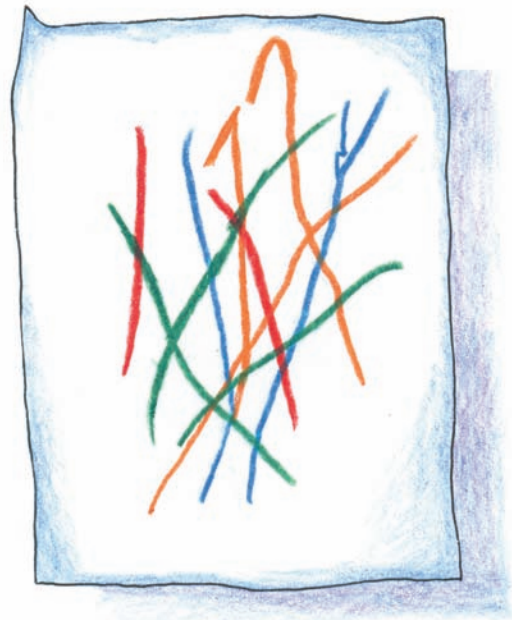


String Paintings

Most young artists like to do string paintings. You will need finger paints or poster paints, construction paper, and pieces of string about six inches long.

Show your child how to dip a piece of string into a color and pull it across a section of paper. Your child can make many patterns using a different piece of string for each color.

You may find that you want to make a string painting, too. Be sure to display your child's painting. This will give your child a sense of pride and self-confidence.



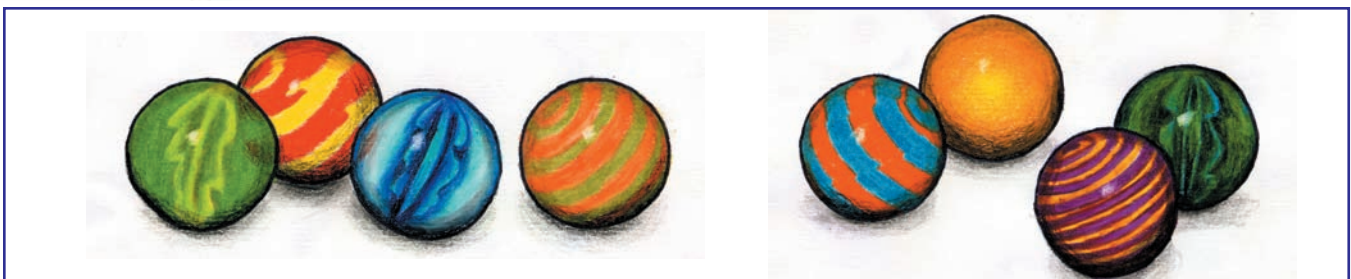
Home in a Bottle

Get some cotton balls and a clean, see-through plastic jar with a twist-on lid. Gather some extra copies of family photos. If you have pictures of your home and your family pet, gather those, too.

Look at the photos with your child and talk about them together. Let your child pick a few favorites. Help your child put the pictures in the bottle. Make sure each picture is facing out so that it can be seen. Stuff cotton balls in the bottle to hold the pictures in place. Have your child twist on the lid.

Say, "This is yours to keep. It's called home in a bottle. If you ever feel sad or afraid, you can look at the pictures and remember that you have family members who love you very much."

Some children feel less homesick and more secure when they take their "bottles" with them to a new preschool or kindergarten classroom.



Say, "Tanisha found 8 marbles that are not hers." (Point and count.) "What should she do?"

Time to Move!

Do you have a timer or a clock that counts seconds? If so, try one of these activities to give your child some exercise and a better sense of time. If indoors, move breakable items to another room first!

- **Bubble catch.** Blow bubbles for exactly one minute. Your child's job is to run and "catch" as many as possible.
- **Balloon up.** How long can your child keep a balloon from touching the ground, using only hands, head, and knees?
- **Crawl or skip?** Which is faster? Ask your child to crawl from one end of the room to another while you keep the time. Then ask your child to skip back across the room. Tell which was faster. You might also time running, hopping, rolling, and other ways of moving across the same distance.



Safety note: Do not allow children under six to play with balloons without adult supervision. Small children can choke on deflated balloons or balloon pieces.



Looking Forward



Talk together about a trip you would like to take, either real or imaginary. Think about the best way to travel. You might go on a plane, a train, a car—maybe even a dog sled.

Talk about what you will do. What will you need to take on this journey? Do some pretend packing. "What will you put in your suitcase if we go to the

North Pole?" Let your child dictate a list for you to write down. You could even let your child put things in a suitcase or a shopping bag.

If you have an old magazine or catalog, children can look for pictures of things they will need on the trip. They can cut out the pictures and pack them, too.

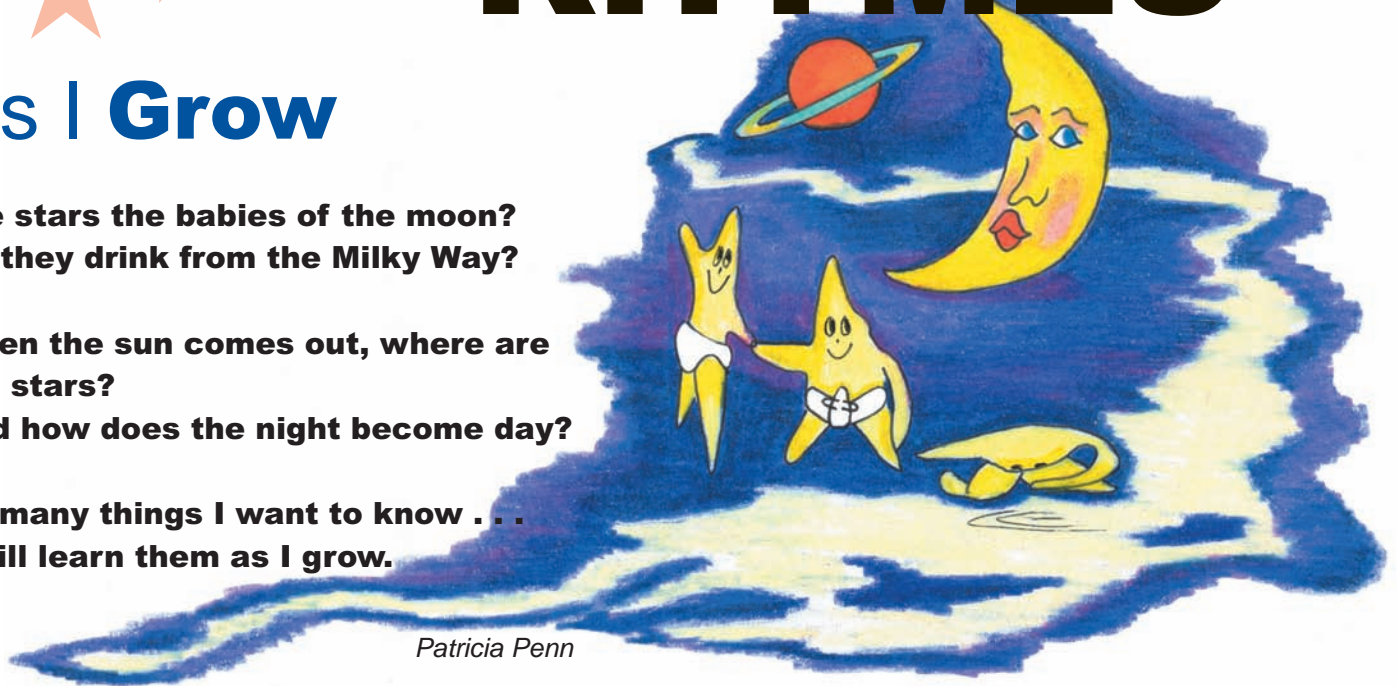
Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

As I Grow

**Are stars the babies of the moon?
Do they drink from the Milky Way?**

**When the sun comes out, where are
the stars?
And how does the night become day?**

**So many things I want to know . . .
I will learn them as I grow.**



Patricia Penn

Point and Click

When you point to words or pictures on a page, it helps focus your child's attention. Whatever you are reading or saying is more likely to "click" in the child's mind. Before you read "As I Grow," talk about the picture that goes with it. Point to the moon, the planet, and the stars as you talk about them. Point to the "star babies" in the picture. Say, "It looks like these stars are wearing diapers! What do you think is happening?"

You might also point to the stream of "milk" and say something like this: "Did you know that all the stars and planets near us are part of a big neighborhood in the sky? It's called the Milky Way." If your child asks why, you can say, "Because somebody thought all the stars together looked like milk somebody spilled in the sky."

Night Artist

Ask your child to name some things that happen at night. Some answers might be "We see the stars and the moon in the sky. The street lights come on. I put on my pajamas. You read me a bedtime story. We go to sleep." Give your child some crayons and construction paper or butcher paper the size of a placemat. Suggest making a placemat with a nighttime picture for a friend or family member. Ask your child to tell you about the picture when it is done. Don't forget to print your child's name on the placemat.

FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Quality Time

Surveys—and common sense—show that children have a greater sense of purpose and belonging when grown-ups spend quality time with them. They also have a more positive self-image.

What is quality time? It is not “hurry-up” time, but time spent with your child doing things both of you enjoy and find meaningful. To give quality time, focus attention on the child and what you are doing together.

Taking a walk, baking cookies, reading aloud, drawing pictures, and playing games are some things many parents and children enjoy.

How do I find the time? Look for ways to build “together time” into your daily routines. What if you woke your child by softly singing a song or saying a poem instead of yelling “Time to get up!” This would take only an extra minute or two, but it might make the day go better for both of you.

In the car, sing songs together or play games like What If? and I Spy. Eat meals together whenever you can. Plan for a few minutes of “down time” each evening so you can talk together and read a bedtime story. Children often become less “clingy” and more sure of themselves when they know they can count on having your full attention at certain times each day.



You will also want to do special things with your children. Visits to libraries, museums, parks, and zoos can create good memories. A walk around the block or visits with friends and relatives can also be a treat.

The choice is yours. Only you can decide how to spend your time. Choosing to spend quality time with your child is one of the best decisions you can make. You might have to give up a 30-minute TV show or change some habits. But as a result, your child will gain new skills and confidence, be happier and healthier, and feel more secure. The time you spend with your child can help create a unique bond that will last you and your child a lifetime.

Wordless Books

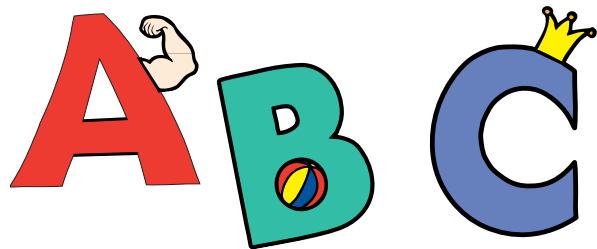
All children can enjoy wordless books. They are books that tell stories in pictures. You can “read” them to your child. Your child can “read” them to you. Wordless books are fun. Here are some you and your child might enjoy.



- 1, 2, 3 to the Zoo* by Eric Carle
- A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog* by Mercer Mayer
- Ah-Choo!* by Mercer Mayer
- Anno's Counting House* by Anno Mitsumasa
- Ben's Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg
- Changes, Changes* by Pat Hutchins
- Deep in the Forest* by Brinton Turkle
- I Can't Sleep* by Philippe Dupasquier
- Looking Down* by Steve Jenkins
- Pancakes for Breakfast* by Tomie dePaula
- Peter Pier's Rain* by Peter Spier
- School* by Emily McCully
- Time Flies* by Eric Rohmann
- Tuba Lessons* by T. C. Barlett
- Tuesday* by David Weisner
- Window* by Jeannie Baker
- Yikes!* by Robert Florczyk
- You Can't Take a Balloon into the Metropolitan Museum* by Jacqueline Preiss Weitzman

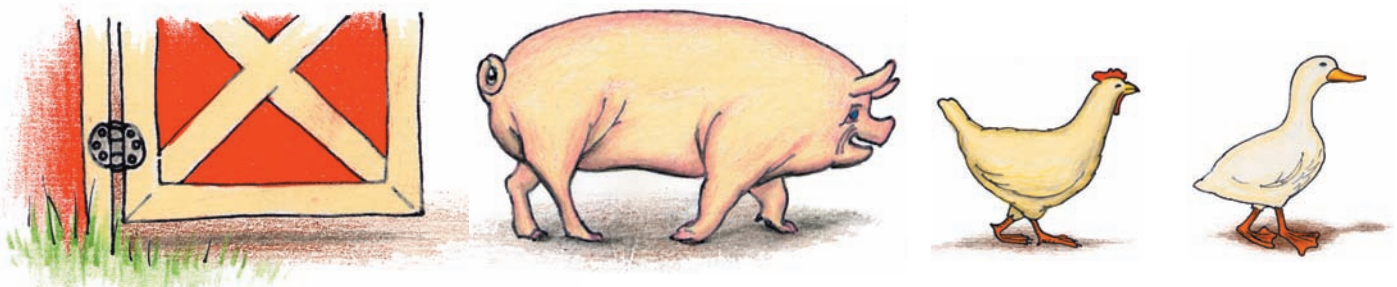
Alphabet books can spark your child's interest in letters. You might find several in your local library. Here are two you might want to try.

- Alphabet City* by Stephen T. Johnson
- The Graphic Alphabet* by David Pelletier

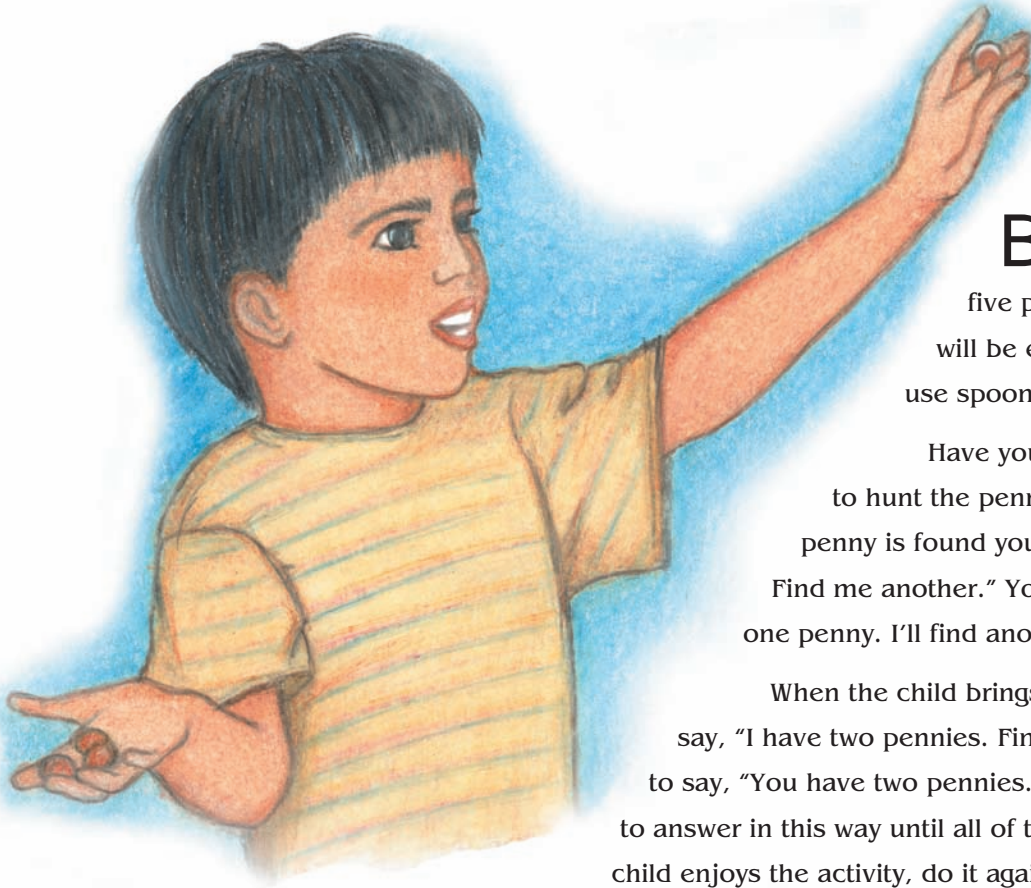


In the long run, the only thing of lasting value you can give a child is your time and the memories of the time you shared together.

Jim Tralease



Say, “Look! The animals got out of the barn! Where do you think they are going?”



Find Me a Penny

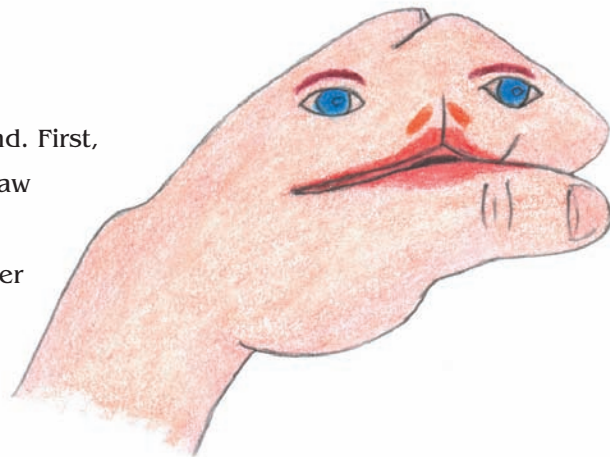
Begin this game by hiding five pennies in places where they will be easy to find. (You could also use spoons or bottle caps.)

Have your child come into the room to hunt the pennies. Explain that as each penny is found you will say, "I have one penny. Find me another." Your child is to say, "You have one penny. I'll find another."

When the child brings you the second penny, you say, "I have two pennies. Find me another." The child is to say, "You have two pennies. I'll find another." Continue to answer in this way until all of the pennies are found. If your child enjoys the activity, do it again. This time, let your child hide the pennies!

Talking Puppet

Show your child how to make a little puppet friend. First, have your child make a fist. Then use crayons to draw eyes and a nose on the side knuckle of the index finger. Paint a lipstick mouth on the thumb and lower palm. Show how to make the puppet "talk" by moving the thumb up and down. Encourage your child to talk to the puppet or have the puppet talk to you.



Turn on the radio. You and your child can make up a dance together.

This Little Froggie

**This little froggie hurt his toe.
(Hold up thumb.)**

**This little froggie cried, "Oh, oh!"
(Hold up first finger.)**

**This little froggie said, "That's bad."
(Hold up middle finger.)**

**This little froggie said, "How sad."
(Hold up ring finger.)**

**This little froggie, helpful and good,
(Hold up little finger.)**

Ran for the nurse as fast as he could.

Patricia Penn



Doctor and Nurse

You can use this poem to introduce a matching game. Start by saying, "Usually when you go to see a doctor, you also see a nurse. Doctors and nurses work together. Let's see if you can think of some other things that go together. I'll start, and you fill in the blank." Accept any reasonable answer. For starters, try these:

A sock goes with a _____.

A cap goes with a _____.

A glove goes with a _____.

A fork goes with a _____.

A table goes with a _____.

Show Me

Read this finger play with your child and show your child how to do the motions. Then read the poem aloud again. This time, ask your child to make a face at each line to show the frog's feelings. (You might need to ask a question like "What do you think your face might look like if you fell and got hurt?")

FAMILY

Connect Icons Pre-K

For the family of _____

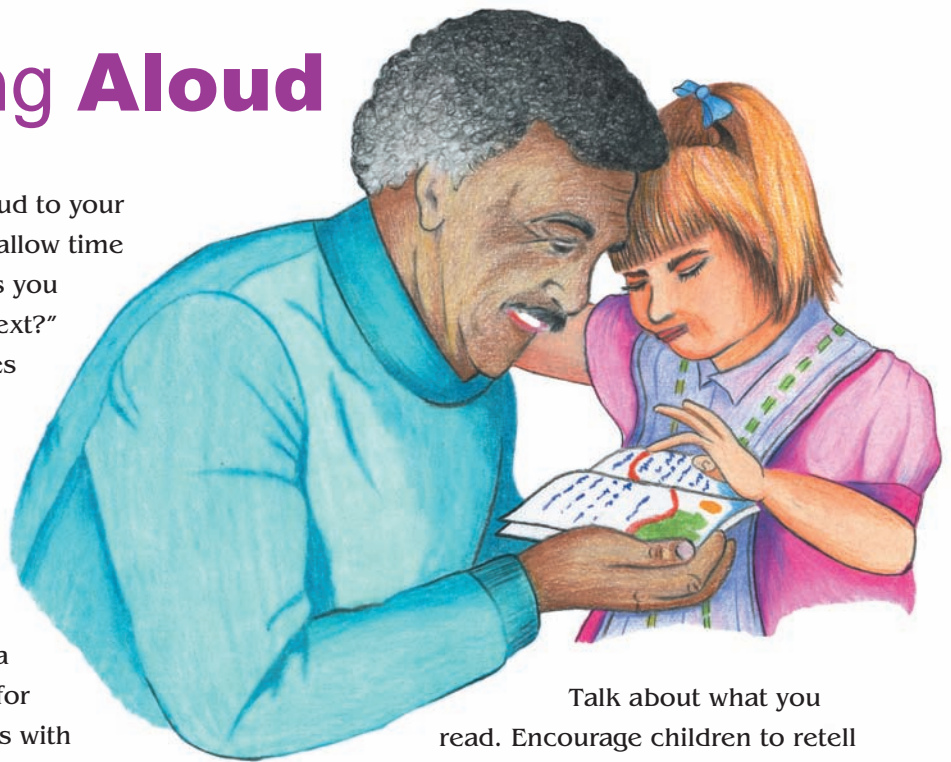
About Reading Aloud

The more you practice reading aloud to your child, the better you get. You learn to allow time for questions and answers. Sometimes you ask, "What do you think will happen next?" Like an actor, you learn different voices for different characters—a big, deep voice for the wolf and a high, squeaky voice for the little pig. You and your child talk about the pictures.

You read many different kinds of books. You choose some, and your child chooses some. If your child has a special interest in airplanes, you look for books about airplanes. You read books with interesting sounds and rhymes. You know a book is a "keeper" when you hear "Read it again!"

What else should I know? As you read, you can show your child that a book has a front cover. It has pages. Each page has a top and a bottom. You turn the pages one at a time to find out what happens next. You read a story from left to right. Words are made of letters. There are spaces between words.

While reading aloud, turn off the TV or radio so you have your child's full attention. Sit close to your child or let your child sit on your lap. This lets children know they have your full attention, too.



Talk about what you read. Encourage children to retell a story in their own words. This shows how well they understand it.

Read aloud without books. In the car, read road signs and billboards. In stores, read signs and labels. At home, read comic strips and recipes. In restaurants, read the menu.

When will my child start to read? Most children are reading by age 7. Some learn earlier, and some take longer. This is normal. All children do not develop and learn at the same rate. Parents who read aloud to their children are giving them a big head start.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Which Is Heavier?

Let your child hold a favorite book. Say, "Your book is not hard to pick up because it is not very heavy. Let's try something." Take the book away and hand your child a much heavier object—maybe a phone book. Say, "This phone book is much heavier than your book. Can you tell the difference? Is it harder to pick up?" Talk about it.



Next, give your child something to hold that is very light—maybe a crayon. Ask, "Which is heavier—the crayon or the phone book? The crayon or your favorite book?"

Point to other things in the room. Ask your child to guess: "Do you think the CD is lighter or heavier than your favorite book?" Let your child lift the object to see if the guess was right. Your young scientist will find that some objects seem to weigh about the same. And sometimes, a smaller object is heavier than a larger one. These are important discoveries for your child.

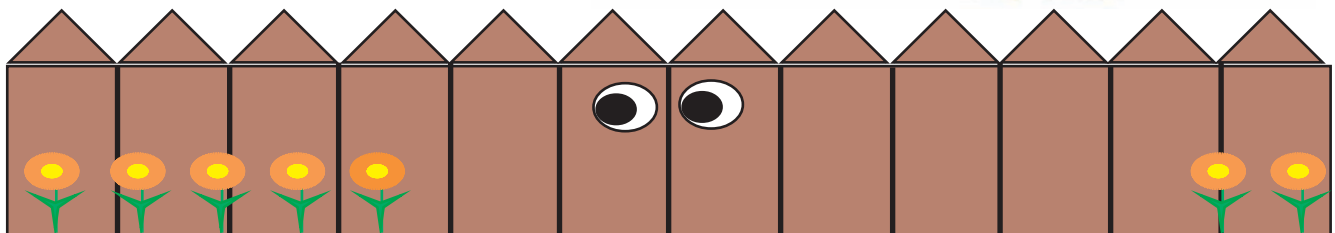
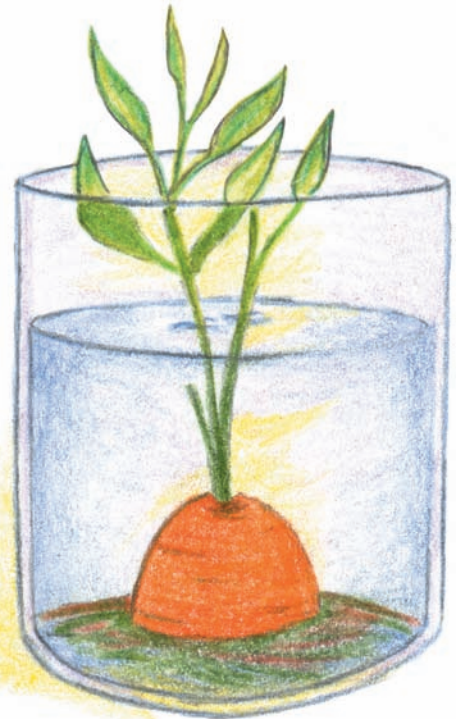
Watch It Grow

Watching a plant take root and grow is interesting to a young child. Cut an inch-long piece off the top of a carrot. Let your child put the carrot piece in a clear container, cut side down. Add water to cover the carrot piece by an inch or so.

Set the glass in a windowsill where the carrot will get plenty of light and sun. Within a few days it should sprout, then leaf.

To add interest, put a second carrot piece in a dish of water and set it in an unlighted place. Let your child discover that the carrot will not grow without sunshine.

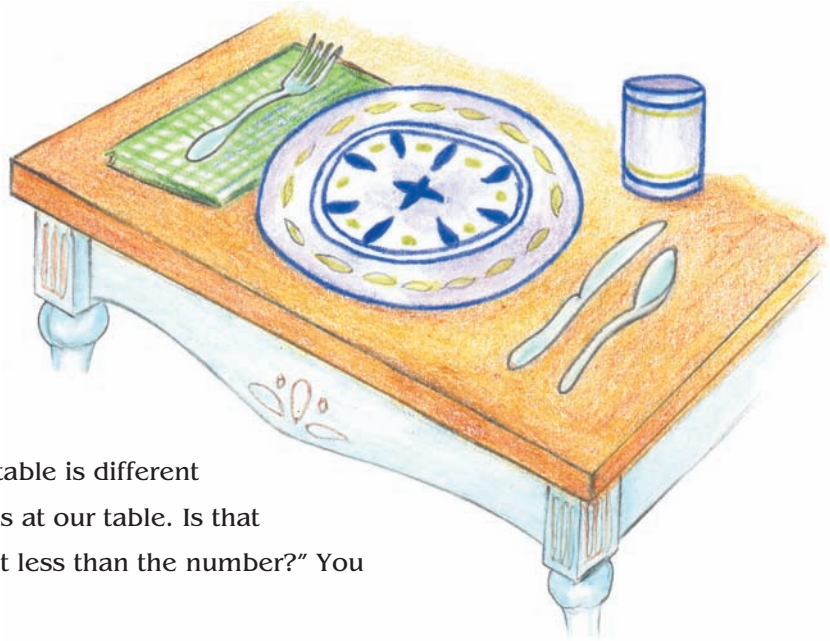
Growing things with your child gives you lots of opportunities for talking together.



**Say, "Who is peeking through the fence at us?
What do you think is on the other side of the fence?"**

Set Our Table

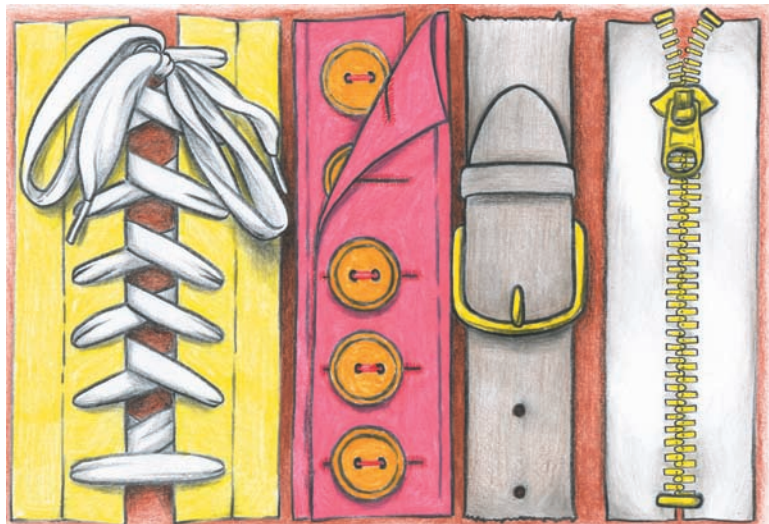
After you read "The Dinner Party" (see Rhymes to Read Aloud on the back page), try some number play. Let your child set the table for dinner. Ask: "How many will be at dinner? Can you name them? Mommy, Daddy, Sister, Brother . . . get one fork for each person." Your child can also get spoons and napkins.



Talk about how the number of places at your table is different from "The Dinner Party." Say, "We have four places at our table. Is that more than the number of places in our poem? Is it less than the number?" You can use forks to help show the difference.

Be sure to tell the family that your child helped by setting the table for dinner.

Tie, Button, Buckle, Zip



Does your child know how to work buttons, buckles, and zippers? What about tying shoes? Do you think some extra practice might help? If so, here is an idea.

Instead of throwing away those old shoes, shirts, and pants, use them to make a learning toy. Start with a board or some very heavy cardboard. Use extra-strong glue to attach a shoe with shoelaces, a zipper cut from an old pair of jeans, and a row of buttons and buttonholes from a shirt. You might also attach a belt with a buckle.

Playing with this simple toy can help your child develop small-muscle skills.



Say, "Can you tell me what each object is? Which one is a different shape?"



RHYMES

The Dinner Party



**I'd like to set the table,
If I just had seven spoons
And seven yellow napkins,
And plates as round as moons.**

**I'd like to have a party.
I'll invite a purple cat,
My Uncle Don, a teddy bear,
And you—in a bright blue hat.**

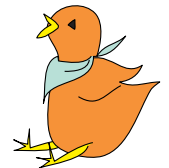
**Let's see . . . that's just five places,
So in the other two,
I'd like to have an orange bird
And a big green kangaroo!**

Patricia Penn

Table Manners

Does your child have a favorite doll or stuffed animal? Ask your child to bring it to the table at meal time. Have your child put the doll or animal in its own seat. Say, "I think it is time for you to teach your doll about table manners." During the meal, make two or three suggestions. "Tell your doll to chew with her mouth closed," you might say. "Let her know it is not polite to make loud slurping sounds." "Remind your doll that she's too old to eat with her fingers. Please ask her to use a spoon." Let your child do the teaching. Children learn when they teach—even if the student is a doll!

Make a Little Book



Wouldn't it be fun to make a picture book for this poem? After you have read "The Dinner Party" to your child a few times, say, "I would love to see what pictures you would draw to go with the words."

All you need is paper and crayons. Cut a sheet of plain white paper in half, then fold the two halves together. Staple or paste the folded edge, and you have an 8-page "little book." Be sure to print your child's name on the book: "Drawings by (your child's name)."

Your idea of what a purple cat looks like might not match your child's drawing. Just remember, it's your child's purple cat—not yours!

FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Children and Television

Many children spend more time with television than with their parents or teachers. From the time they are born until they turn 17, children (on average) watch at least 15,000 hours of television. That is five years' worth of 8-hour days!

Experts warn that watching this much television leaves children with little time for reading, creative play, family, friends, and exercise. Violence and adult content can also be a problem. Commercials can make children want costly toys and foods that are not good for them.

Of course, TV can be a great source of learning and healthy entertainment, too. Here are some things you can do to use TV wisely.

Set limits. Limit the amount of time your child spends watching TV in your house.

Be picky. Think about your child's age and personality. What things do you want your child to see, learn, and imitate? Children need your help in picking TV shows to watch. Be reasonable, but do not be afraid to say "no."

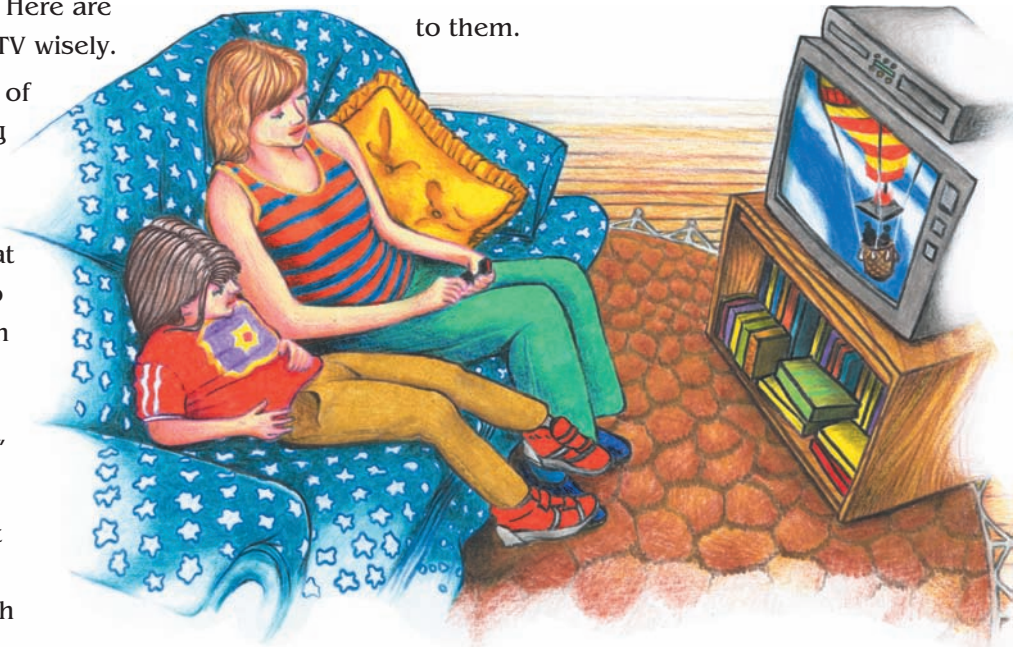
Watch together. Watch TV with your child. Talk about what you see. Answer your child's questions. When you can't watch

together, keep tabs on what your child is watching.

Be creative. After a show is over, ask a question like "What might have happened if he had opened the blue door instead of the red one?" or "Can you show me the dance they were doing?"

Set an example. If you are watching more TV than you would like, consider cutting back.

Be careful. Do not watch news or adult shows on TV—or on the computer—when a young child is in the room. Even if children do not fully understand what they see and hear, they can pick up on information that can be disturbing to them.



Finish the Face

Together with your child, look at the faces pictured here. Ask: "What is missing? Can you finish this picture?"

Let the child draw in the missing feature with a crayon or marking pen. Some children might add ears or hair. That is fine.



The Lid Game

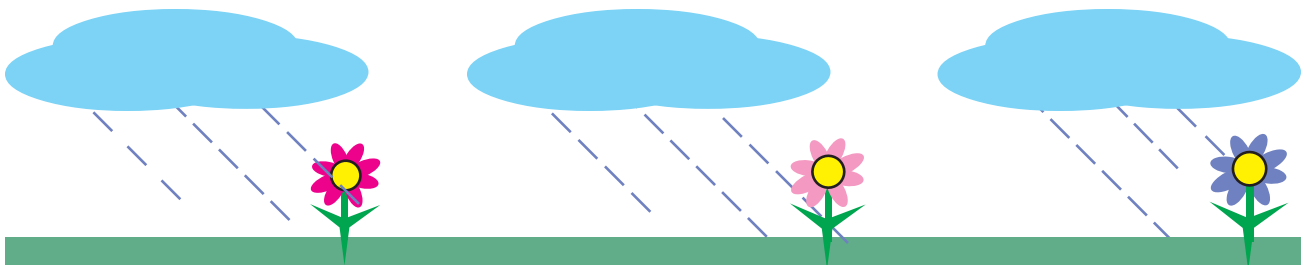


With three jar lids, three pictures cut from an old magazine, and some paste, you can make a simple game. Let your child paste a picture on each lid. Have something you can hide under one of the lids. A coin or a button will work fine.

Tell your child how the game is played. "I am going to hide this button under one of the lids while you are not looking. Close your eyes so you can't see where I put the button."

Then have the child guess which lid the button is under. But first, explain the rule: The person doing the guessing is not allowed to point or touch. The guesser must answer with a sentence: "It's under the lid with the flower." Or, "It's under the one with the kitty's picture."

Take turns hiding the button. Help your child learn to answer in complete sentences.



Say, "What's your favorite thing about rain?" Talk about how it sounds, how it feels on the skin, and how it looks different outside after it rains.

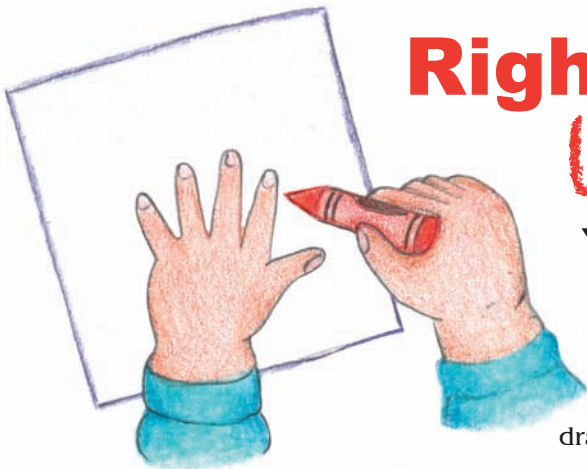
Remembering Directions

This activity will help your child learn to follow more complicated directions. It will help develop memory, too.

Tell your child, "I am going to give directions that you should follow in order." Start with something simple like: "Stand up. Jump two times." After your child has followed the directions, do some others.

1. Run to the door. Run back to me. Sit down.
2. Stand up. Find a book. Put it on the table.
3. Crawl to the window. Run back to me. Touch my arm.
4. Hop on one foot. Hop on the other foot. Raise your hand.

You can think of many others. Let your child have a turn at giving you directions, too.



Right Hand, Left Hand

You will need two pieces of heavy paper or cardboard, about 6 inches by 9 inches. Have your child put his or her right hand on the paper, with fingers spread. Draw an outline of your child's hand with a crayon or marking pen. (If your child wants to draw the outline, that is OK, too.) Print the word "right" under the outline of the hand. Read the word aloud. Say, "That is your right hand."

Do the same thing with your child's left hand. Then ask, "Which picture is of your right hand?" "Which picture is of your left hand?" Your child can put a hand on the drawings to get the answer.

Tip: The pointer finger and thumb on the back of the left hand form the letter "L."



Say, "Let's name these parts of a sandwich. If we put all the parts together, what food would we have?" (A cheeseburger!)

Read-Aloud RHYMES

Make a Rainbow

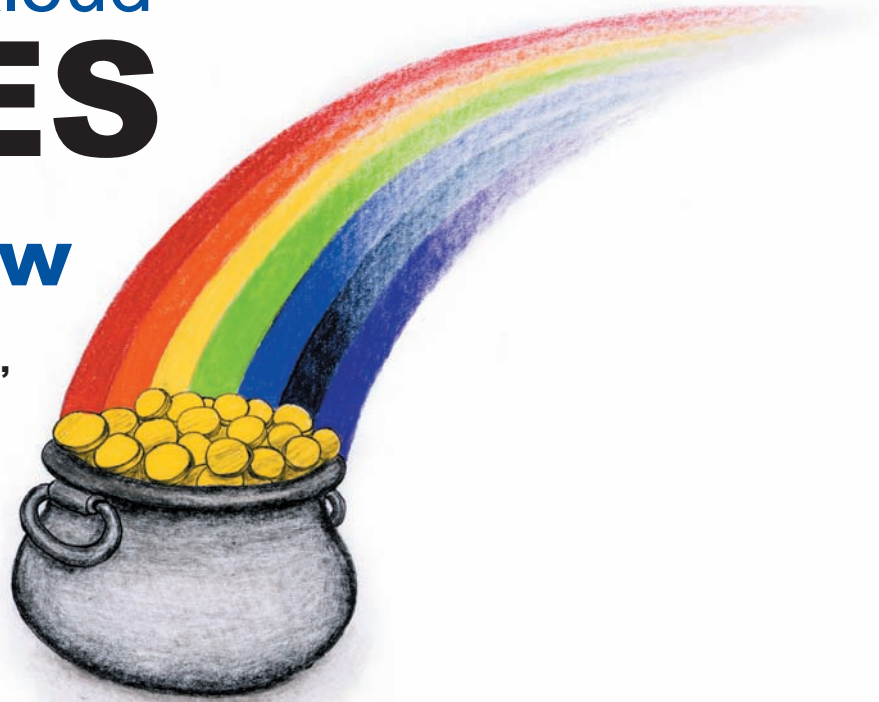
**After the rain, when the world is wet,
If things work out just right,
Sometimes you can see a rainbow
Shimmering in the light.**

**They say at the end of the rainbow
There is a pot of gold.
No one has ever found it,
Or so I have been told.**

**You too can make a rainbow
Just picture it in your head—
There's purple, blue, and green,
And yellow and orange and red.**

**So gather up your crayons,
And color all the bands.
You too can make a rainbow.
Just use your own two hands!**

Patricia Penn



What Would You Say?

Ask your child, "If you could talk with a rainbow, what would you say? What questions would you ask?" See what your child says. Then say, "I'm going to read you a little rhyme. I want you to jump up and down whenever I say something that you might say to a rainbow."

Over here!

Spread your cheer!

It's ever so lovely,
Your colors above me.

Could you give me a ride
On your big rainbow slide?

Is it true—what is told?
Of a big pot of gold?

My Own Rainbow

Gather crayons and a sheet of plain white paper. Let your child make a rainbow. Do not expect the bands of color to be even or perfect. When the drawing is done, write your child's name on it, like this: *Alicia's Rainbow*. Put it on the refrigerator or somewhere else where others can see it.

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FAMILY

Connect ions Pre-K

For the family of _____

Dealing with Feelings

Young children need help learning to use words to get their needs met. They will keep crying, hitting, and stomping until they find better ways to express frustrations. Here are some things you can do to help your child learn to use words.

1. **Listen patiently.** Do not hurry your child. Children need time to say what they want to say without pressure.

2. **Respond sensitively.** When your child tells you about a feeling or a need, try to make sure you understand what is being said: "You're upset because your toy cars are not in the box?" Reassure the child: "We can look for the cars together."

3. **Speak clearly.** Saying words clearly will help your child learn how to pronounce words the right way.

4. **Use kind words.** If you use kind words and a gentle tone, you might be surprised at the positive

effects on your child. Practice using kind words with your child. Be positive. Say "I'd love to help you" instead of "I guess I'll have to help you."

5. **Have two-way talks.** Talk *with* children—not *at* them—and they will start to see that using words is a good way to get your attention.

6. **Teach "feeling" words.** Children need words for different kinds of feelings—angry, happy, sad, bored, and so forth. The best time to teach these words is *not* when your child is very upset.

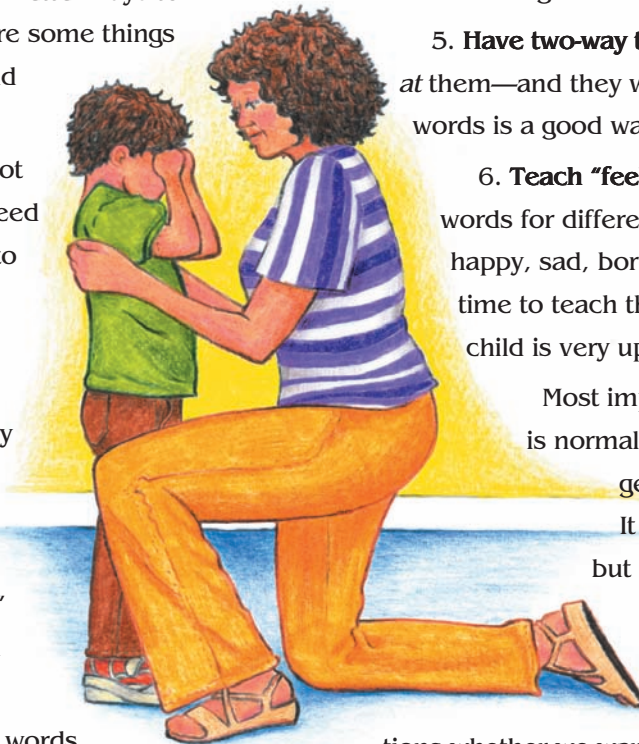
Most important, let your child know it is normal to have feelings: "Everyone gets angry or upset sometimes.

It is OK to say you are angry, but it is not OK to hit."

Do not tell your child, "You shouldn't feel that way."

Remember, we feel emotions whether we want to or not. But we can learn to express the feeling in an appropriate way.

Use words to express your feelings as well. Your child will follow your example.



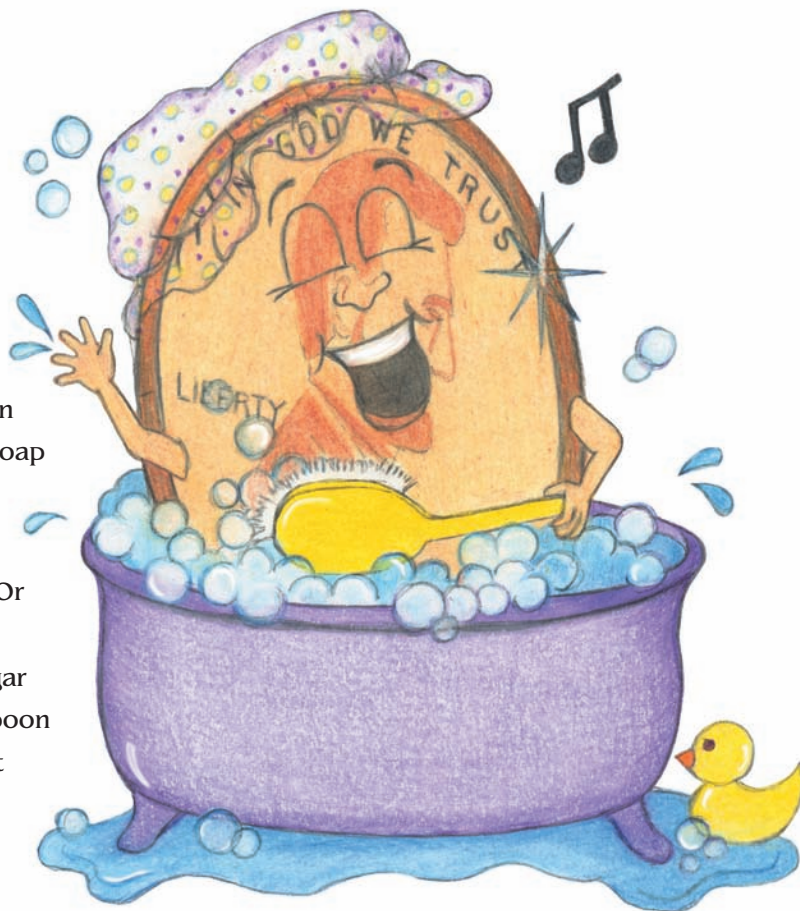
Tip: Inside you will find activities you and your child can do together. Not every child will enjoy every activity. That is all right. Do the ones your child likes and skip the others or try them later.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

How Pennies Take a Bath

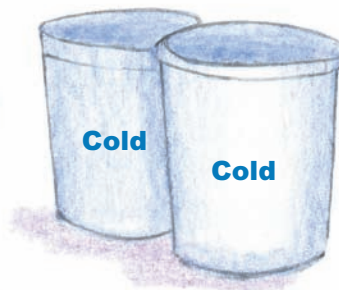
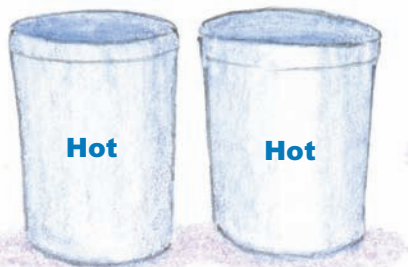
Gather a few pennies that look dull. Tell your child that when pennies are new, they are bright and shiny. Say, “Let’s see if giving these pennies a bath will make them like new.” Explain that people get clean when they take a bath in soap and water, but pennies need a special kind of bath.

Put a few tablespoons of vinegar in a glass. Or you can use lemon juice. Let your child drop a penny into the glass. Leave the coin in the vinegar for about 5 minutes, then let your child use a spoon (or fingers) to get it out. The penny will be bright and shiny. Explain that vinegar cleans copper, and pennies are made of copper.



Hot or Cold?

To do this activity you will need cups, ice, cold water, and hot tap water. (Do not use boiling water. Remember, water does not have to be very hot to feel hot to a child.) Put ice water in two cups and hot water in two cups.

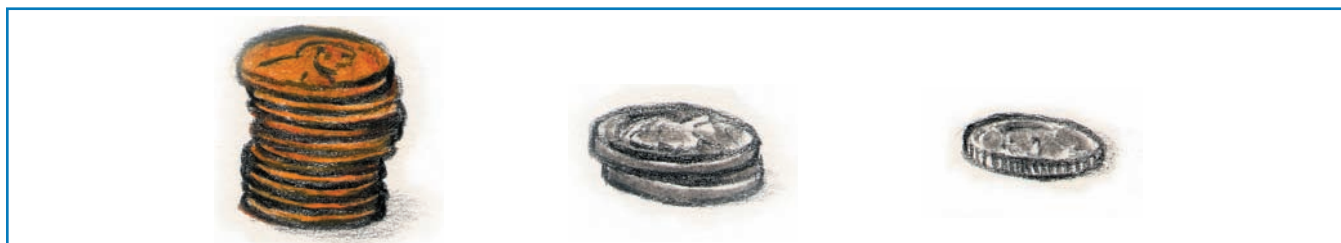


Then ask: “Can you set the two that are hot together? Can you find the two that are cold and put those together?” Ask, “How

many cups are there, altogether?” Point out that two sets of two add up to four.

Ask your child to touch the cups and tell you which are cold and which are hot.

Doing these things helps your child develop the sense of touch—and important math skills.



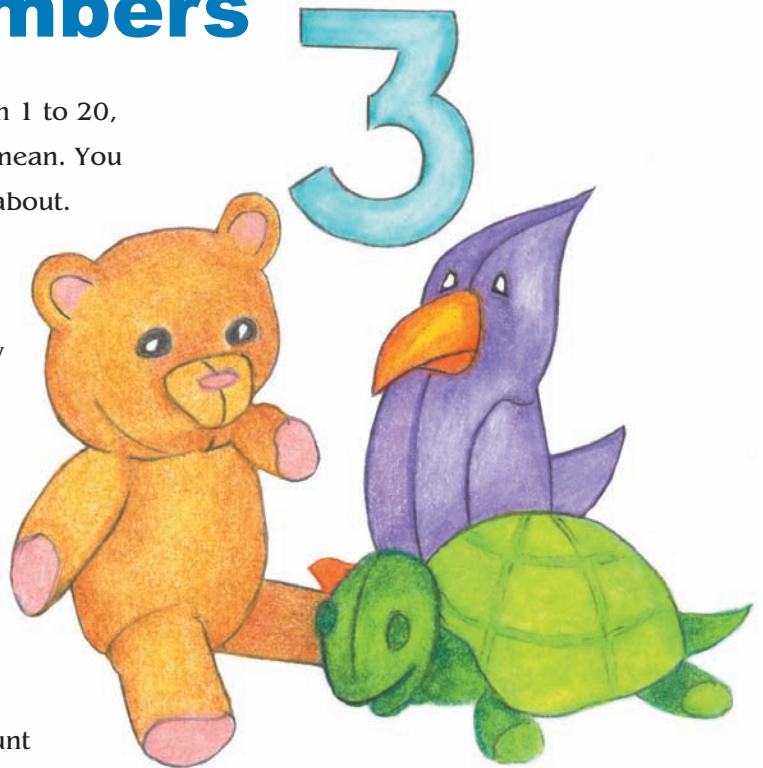
Explain to your child that it takes 5 pennies to make a nickel and 10 pennies to make a dime. Let your child count and stack some real coins.

At Home with Numbers

Some four-year-olds can “say their numbers” from 1 to 20, or higher. But they might not know what numbers mean. You can help your child discover what numbers are all about.

Here’s how!

- Count toys as you are putting them away together. When you are done, say “We put away ____ toys.” You can say something else about the number if you want: “That’s four more than we put away yesterday.”
- Together, sort toys into groups: blocks, dolls, cars. Talk about what you are doing: “Now you can put all the toys with wheels here.”
- Touch items or point to them as you count out loud. Encourage your child to do the same. Count stairs as you go up or down them.



Newspaper Fun

Before you read this comic strip aloud, ask your child to guess what is happening by looking at the pictures. Then read the words to your child. As you read each frame, point to the picture that goes with the words. Talk about the foods your child would like to put in the picnic basket. If your child enjoys this guessing-and-reading activity, try doing it with comic strips you find in the newspaper.



**Ask your child to find the following items on this page:
yellow hats, bears, a turtle, and something that flies.**

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

The **Silly** Song

**Hocus pocus,
Out of focus!
Silly little slime.**

**When I am mad
Or get upset,
I sing this little rhyme.**

**Hocus pocus,
Froggy croakus!
Dizzy Doozy Day.**

**This is what
I laugh about
To chase my cares away.**



P. Richardson Caudill

Chase Your **Cares** Away

Sometime when your child seems sad or bored, try playing this game. Say, "I am going to tell you some things to do. Let's find out which things make you feel happier." Here are some things to try:

- Do 10 jumping jacks.
- Sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."
- Make a sad face.
- Make a happy face.
- Curl yourself up into a ball.
- Call a friend or family member.
- Give someone a hug.
- Draw pictures of three things you like.
- Look at a favorite book.

Talk about which activities made your child feel happy. Did any activity make your child feel sad? Talk about that, too.

Run and Say

It is important for children to play with words. Here is a word game you can play with your child.

Make up a silly sentence. For example: "Red mice eat green cheese." Say the sentence and ask your child to repeat it. Then have your child run out of the room, then come back and say the sentence to you again.

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Robert Childers, Senior Editor • Patricia Penn and Carla McClure, Editors • J. C. Mays, Royce Dunn, and Dawn Pauley, Illustrators
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FAMILY

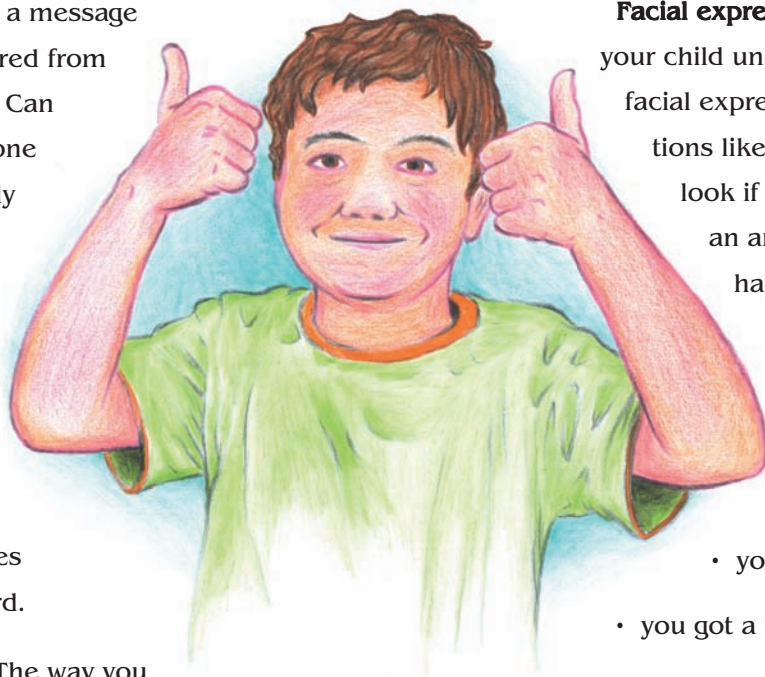
Connect ions Pre-K

For the family of _____

Wordless Messages

Did you ever get a message that someone was tired from the way she sighed? Can you tell when someone is angry by how stiffly he is standing? Can you tell by a facial expression when someone does not understand what you are saying? We all send messages, sometimes without saying a word.

Body language. The way you move can send a message to others. Try some different "body language" and ask your child to guess what message you are sending. You might jump up and down to show you are happy. Sit with your head down to show you are tired or sad. Clench your fists and stomp your feet to show anger.

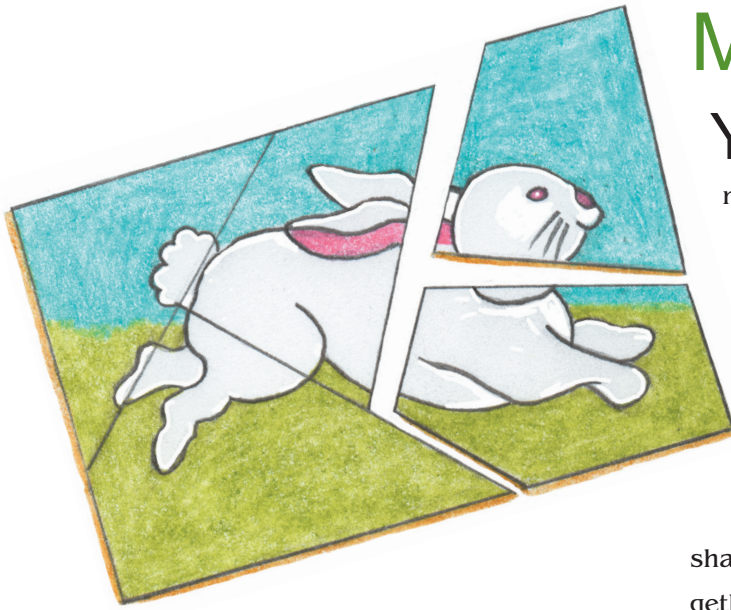


Facial expressions. You can also help your child understand what different facial expressions mean. Ask questions like these: How would you look if you were sad? Show me an angry face. What does your happy face look like?

Stand in front of a mirror with your child. Say, "Show how your face would look if . . .

- you just ate a slice of lemon
- you got a puppy for your birthday
- you fell off your bike and scraped your knee
- your favorite friend came to visit

Using wordless messages gives children another way of expression. Also, they start to understand that people can show feelings in more than one way.



Make a Puzzle

You can make a jigsaw puzzle with your child. You need a simple picture that is very colorful. You might use a page from a child's coloring book, a photo from a magazine, a picture postcard, or a picture on a cereal box.

You also need scissors, paste or glue, and a piece of cardboard the size of the picture.

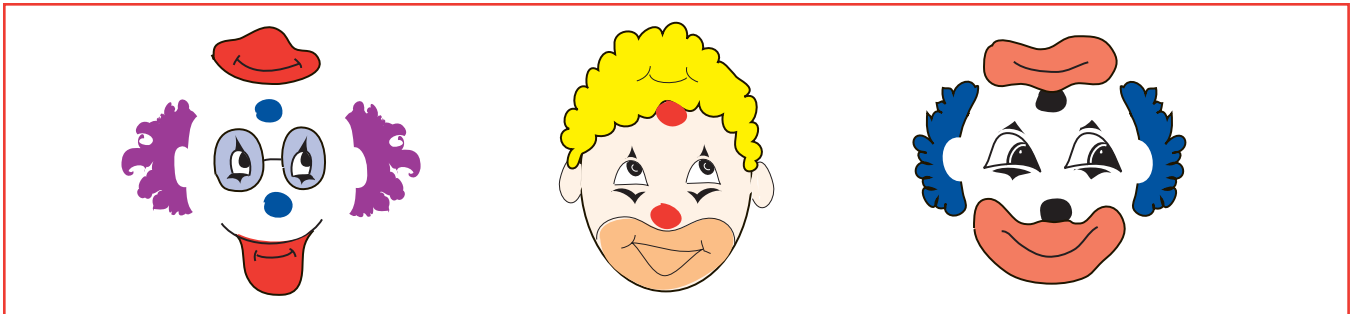
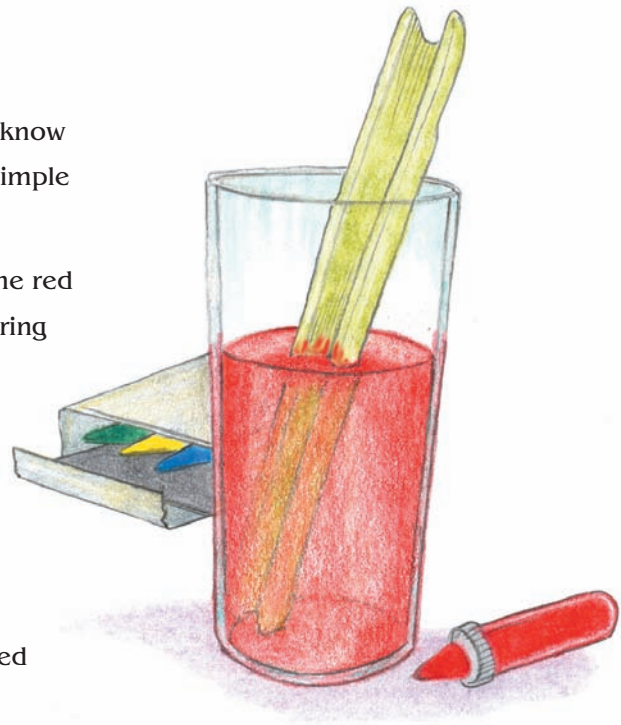
Paste the picture on the cardboard. After the paste dries, cut the picture into 4 or 5 different-shaped pieces. Your child can put the puzzle together, and then show someone else how to do it.

Red Celery

Children are interested in science even before they know what science is. You can encourage the interest with simple experiments. Here is one.

You need a piece of celery, a jar of water, and some red food coloring. Let the child mix some of the food coloring in the water. Cut the bottom off of a stalk of celery. Then ask: "What do you think will happen if you put the celery in the red water?"

Any answer is a good one. Encourage your child to complete the experiment. Talk together about what happens. Your child might want to find out what will happen to other objects when they are placed in the red water. You can have fun with this, too!

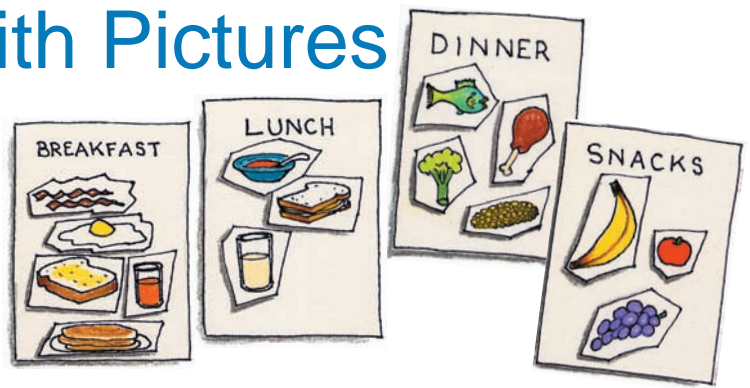


Say, "Let's see what happens to these clown faces when we turn the page upside down."

Menu Planning with Pictures

If you have some old magazines or advertisements with lots of food pictures in them, your child might enjoy making a meal-planning book. You will also need scissors, paste, and several sheets of notebook paper. (Or you can use colored construction paper.)

Have your child cut out pictures of all kinds of food. Together, sort the food pictures into categories of "breakfast," "lunch," "dinner," and "snack."



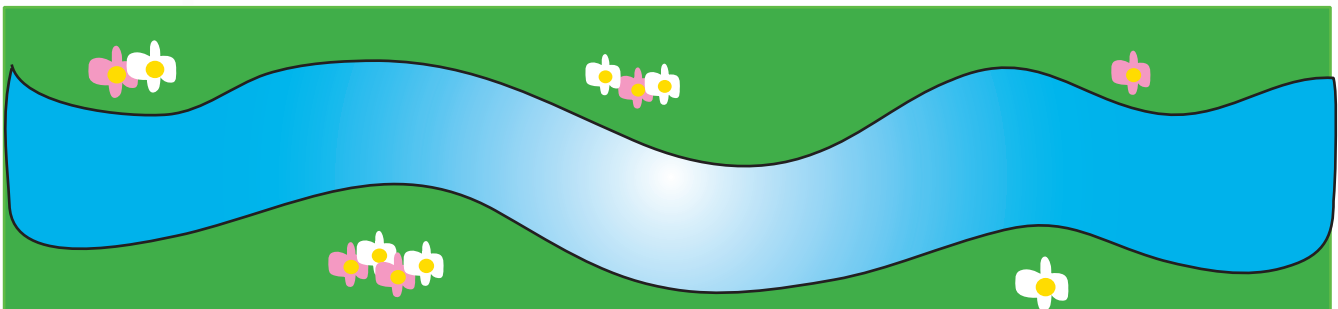
Put those words on separate sheets of paper and let your child paste the pictures on the appropriate page. Clip or tie the pages together to make a book.



Walk the Line

Use masking tape to make a straight line across the floor, about six feet long. Invite your child to try "walking the line." Explain that "walking the line" means moving straight ahead without making any turns. Once this skill is mastered, add other challenges to help your child develop balance and coordination. Here are some things to try:

- Walk the line with both hands up in the air.
- Hop instead of walk.
- Balance a book on your head as you walk.
- Take giant steps and go slow.
- Take baby steps and go fast.
- Hold a stick or broom in one hand as you walk.
- Try walking the line backwards!



This river is not straight. It has lots of curves. Let's count the curves as you "swim" the river with your fingers.



An Upside-Down World

The last line of this poem asks a question. Ask your child this question. There are no right or wrong answers. Some children will say you can make the clown happy by telling a joke. Some will say, "Give him a flower." Others will turn the page upside down to make the clown smile. (If your child doesn't guess this answer, show how it's done.)

Try looking at the world upside-down. Lie in bed on your backs, with your heads tipped back over the edge. Or simply bend over, with your head between your knees. Let your child use a spoon as a mirror. Your child's reflection will be upside down. (The inside of the spoon is curved in a way that bends the light.) Talk about how an upside-down world would be different.

The Upside-Down Clown

**I knew a clown
Who didn't frown
unless you turned him
upside-down.**

**His name was Fred,
his smile was red—
unless you stood him
on his head.**

**Then . . .
His lips turned blue,
his smile did, too—
his eyes looked sad and
went "boo hoo."**

**What can you do to make Fred grin
and be a happy clown again?**

Carla Thomas McClure

Repeat after Me

After you have read the poem once, tell your child you are going to play a game called Repeat After Me. Say, "I will read only one line at a time. As soon as I finish I'll point to you, and you repeat what I read." The next time, read two lines at a time before asking your child to repeat them.

FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Resolving Conflicts

Most children can begin to learn about sharing when they are about four years old. Children need help learning to play together. They need adults to show them how to share and take turns. They need chances to practice sharing.

Stay nearby. Watch and listen when your child plays with other children. Sometimes, when children disagree, the best thing to do is to let them work it out. Children learn important lessons when they settle matters on their own.

But sometimes, you should get involved right away:

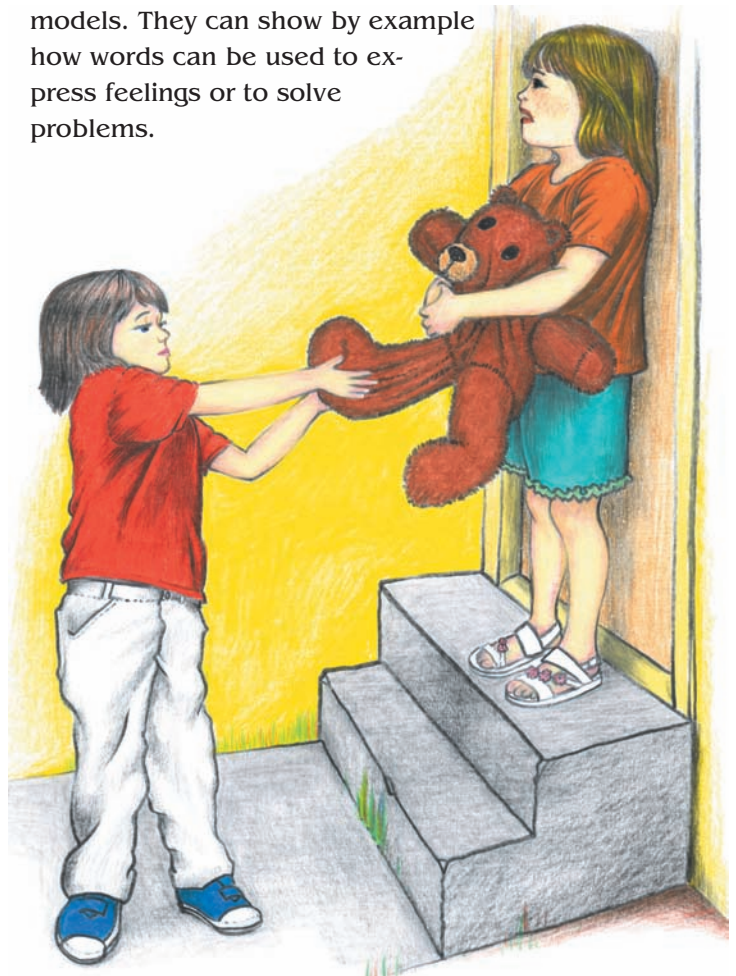
- When there is danger of injury. If children are arguing over something that could hurt them, step in.
- When a larger child is picking on a smaller one.
- When children are doing something that could cause damage to property. For example, they might throw rocks at parked cars and not realize how much damage they could do.

Teach problem-solving skills. Adults can help children figure out how to solve problems for themselves. You might say something like this: "I know you both want to play with the teddy bear. What might be a good way to let you both enjoy the teddy bear?"

It is normal for children to be angry sometimes. Do not expect them to be perfect. And never make fun of a child's feelings. Let your

child know that such feelings are OK: "I know you are mad because Andrew knocked down your block tower. It is OK to dislike what Andrew did, but it is not OK to hit Andrew."

Be a good example. Adults can also be good role models. They can show by example how words can be used to express feelings or to solve problems.



Oil and Water



Find a small jar with a lid. (A baby food jar will work.) Put about two tablespoons of water inside. Add a couple drops of food coloring, if you have any. Add two tablespoons of cooking oil. Put the lid on the jar. Make sure it is on tight. Ask your child to shake the jar to mix everything together.

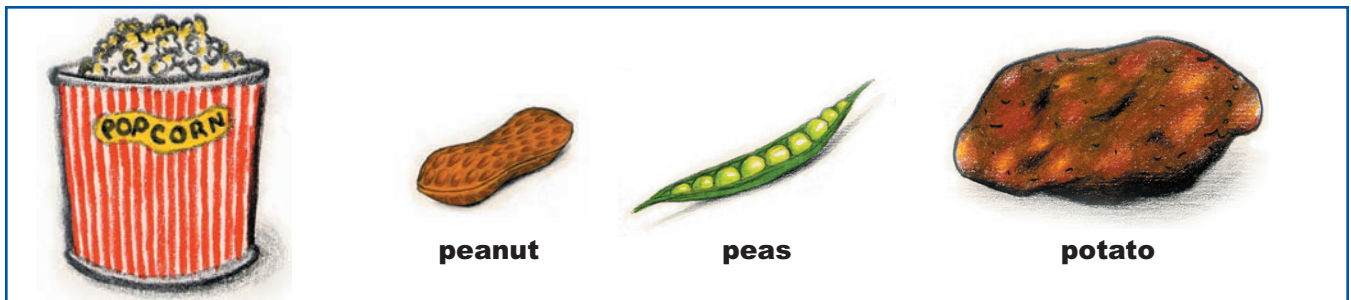
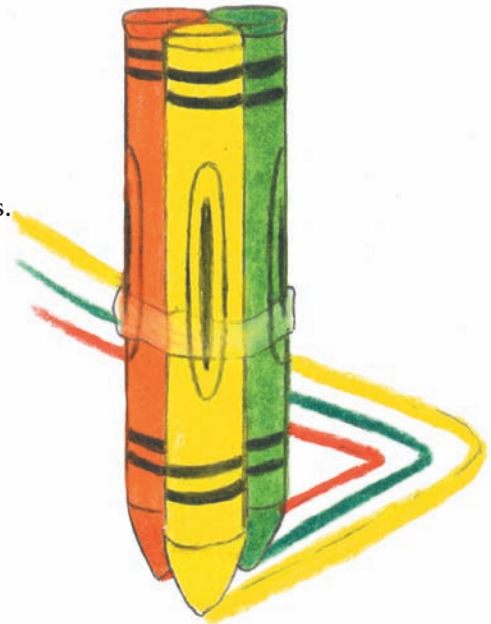
When your child puts the jar down, watch together to see what happens. At first, it will look like everything is mixed. But then, the oil will float to the top.

Explain, "We have just done a science experiment. We found out that oil and water do not mix."

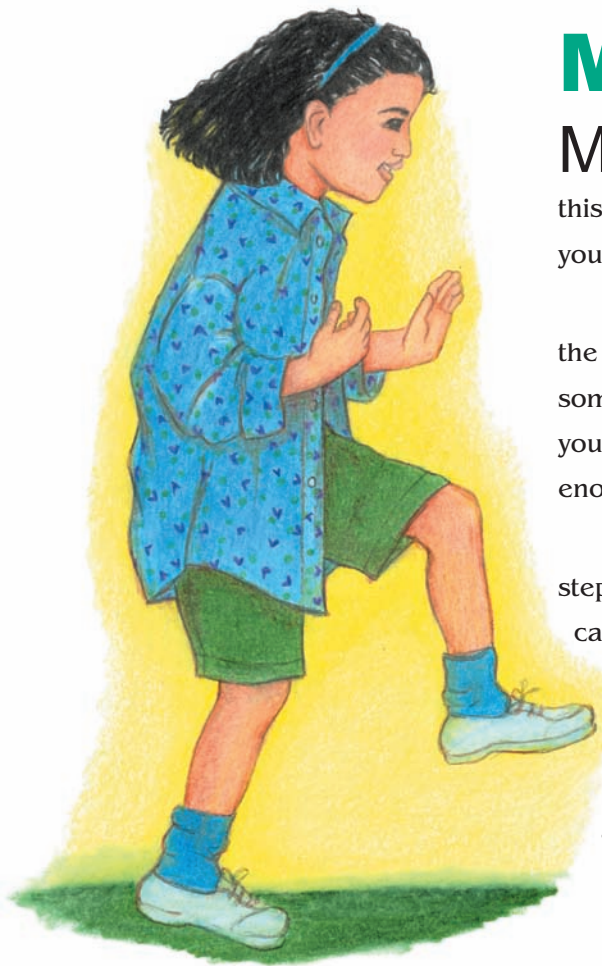
Crayon Machine

Have your child choose three crayons of different colors. Tell your child to hold the crayons together so the tips touch the table. Tape the crayons together around the middle. Say, "We have just made a crayon machine! Try it out!"

As the child moves the machine around on a sheet of paper, interesting pictures appear. Once children get the hang of this, they may want to make a machine of four crayons—or more!



Say, "Point to the food picture when I say its name." (Say the "p" sound very plainly.) Then ask, "What sound does each word start with?"



Mother, May I?

Mother, May I? is a lot like Simon Says. You might have played this game when you were little. Here is a fun way to play it with a young child.

Have your child go to the “starting line” a few feet away or at the other end of the room. Explain the game: When I tell you to do something, before you do it, you have to ask, “Mother, may I?” If you forget, you have to start over. You win when you get close enough for me to hug you.

Here are some directions you might give: Take two giant steps. Take four baby steps. Both feet together, jump as far as you can. Spin around one time. Take three frog leaps.

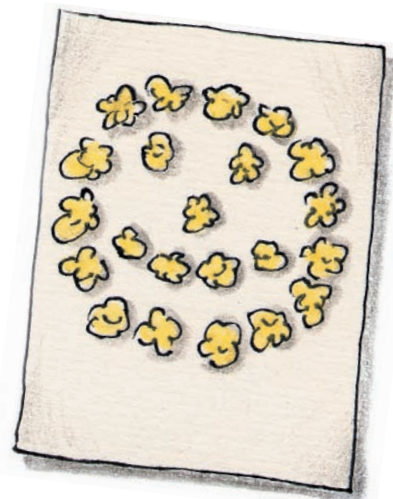
If your child forgets to ask “Mother, may I?,” it’s back to the starting line!

Here is another way to play: Let your child be the mother, and you can be the one who must ask, “Mother, may I?”

Popcorn Pictures

Stop! Do not throw out that stale popcorn! You can have a good time with your child making pictures with popcorn. Any kind will do.

Draw an outline of a simple picture. Outlines of lambs, bunnies, ducks, and snowmen are easy to do. Let your child put paste around the outline. (Children are proud to do this themselves.) Then have your child put pieces of popcorn on the paste. If you do not want to use popcorn, use something else. Cotton balls, pieces of Styrofoam, or flower petals will work.



Say, “Which gifts are wrapped in paper with stripes? Point to the one with polka dots. If you unwrap them, what do you think is inside each gift?”

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

Hey, Diddle, Diddle

Hey, diddle, diddle

The  **and the** 

The  **jumped over the** 

The little  **laughed**

To see such sport

And the  **ran away with the** 

Hey, a **Rebus!**

A rebus shows pictures in place of some words. A good way to read a rebus is to move your finger along each line under the words. Pause at each picture to give your child a chance to “read” it. Rebus books are a good way to introduce the alphabet and reading.

Maybe your child would like to make a rebus. Here is a simple one. On a sheet of notebook paper, write in large letters:

The _____ melted in the _____.

Ask your child to fill in the blanks with pictures to say:
“The snowman melted in the sun.”

Story Jar

Get a see-through jar with a lid. An empty peanut butter jar or a baby food jar will work. Collect three or four small objects, put them in the jar, and close the lid. You might include a plastic toy pig, a quarter, a crayon, and a feather. Ask your child to make up a story about the things in the jar. (The first time, you might need to say a starter sentence: “One day a pig was walking down the street.”)

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Helping Your Child Pay Attention

Many parents worry that their child does not pay attention long enough to finish anything. The first thing to ask is this: Am I expecting too much?

What to expect. You can expect most four-year-olds to look through a child's book from beginning to end. You would not expect a child that age to pay attention to a book that has no pictures.

Your four-year-old might work an easy wooden puzzle. But do not expect the child to watch a whole TV show intended for adults.

Your child might put away some toys, but do not expect a four-year-old to clean up a whole room.

How to help. To help your child spend more time on an activity, show your interest. Offer encouragement. Sometimes you just need to stay nearby.

If your child seems easily distracted, offer activities that do not take long to do. Little by little, offer activities that take longer. For example, if your child can't sit still to listen to a story, try reading a nursery rhyme. Later, try reading short books that have a lot of pictures.

When children have trouble listening, it might be because too much is going on in the room. Move to a different room to have time together. Get away from the TV or stereo, away from other people's activities.

As you try to increase your child's attention span, help your child have success. Do things you know your child can finish. Congratulate your child for finishing. Your efforts can make a difference.



Tip: Inside you will find activities you and your child can do together. Not every child will enjoy every activity. That is all right. Do the ones your child likes and skip the others or try them later.

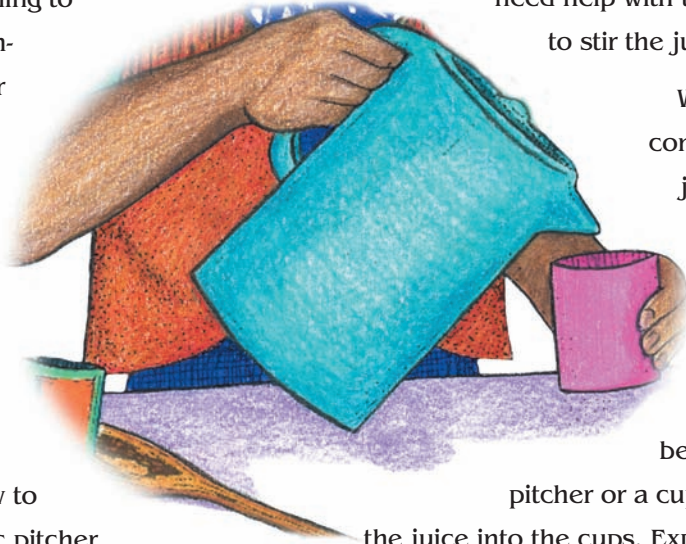
Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Mixing Juice

Many people buy ready-to-drink fruit juice, which comes in cartons, bottles, or cans. But your child might also enjoy learning to make juice from frozen concentrate. It is often cheaper than ready-made juice, and you can find it in the freezer section at the store.

The next time you buy juice, you might want to buy a can of frozen concentrate. When you get home, show your child how to open the can. Find a plastic pitcher to put the frozen concentrate in. Say, "You

will need to fill the can with water three times and pour the water into the pitcher." (Your child may need help with the counting.) Show how to stir the juice with a long spoon.

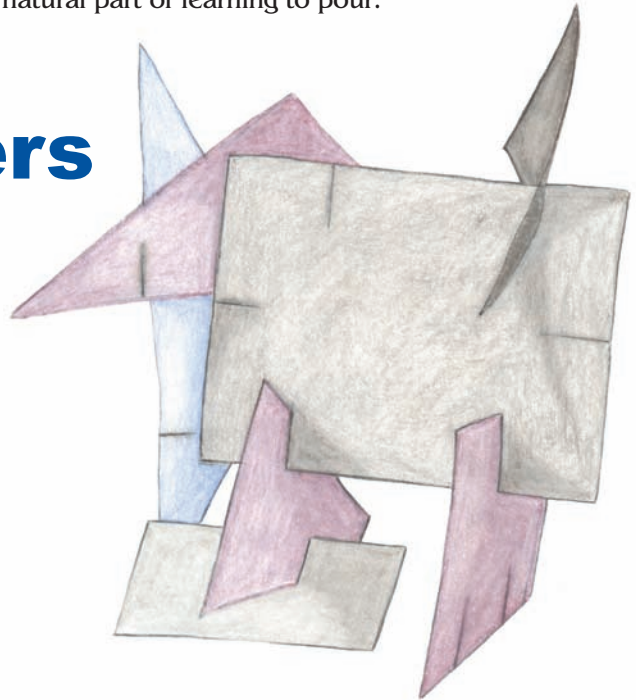


Whether you use frozen concentrate or ready-made juice, you can give your child practice in counting and pouring. Let your child get the right number of cups for you and other family members. Let your child use a pitcher or a cup with a handle to pour the juice into the cups. Expect spills. They are a natural part of learning to pour.

Cardboard Climbers

Cardboard climbers are pieces of cardboard with slits cut in them. Save cereal boxes of different sizes. Cut the backs and fronts of the boxes into different shapes and sizes. Then cut two slits about 1-1/2 inches long on each side of each piece.

Your child can then fit the pieces together in many different ways to make such things as houses. Why not join in? You will be surprised at how many things you can make together.



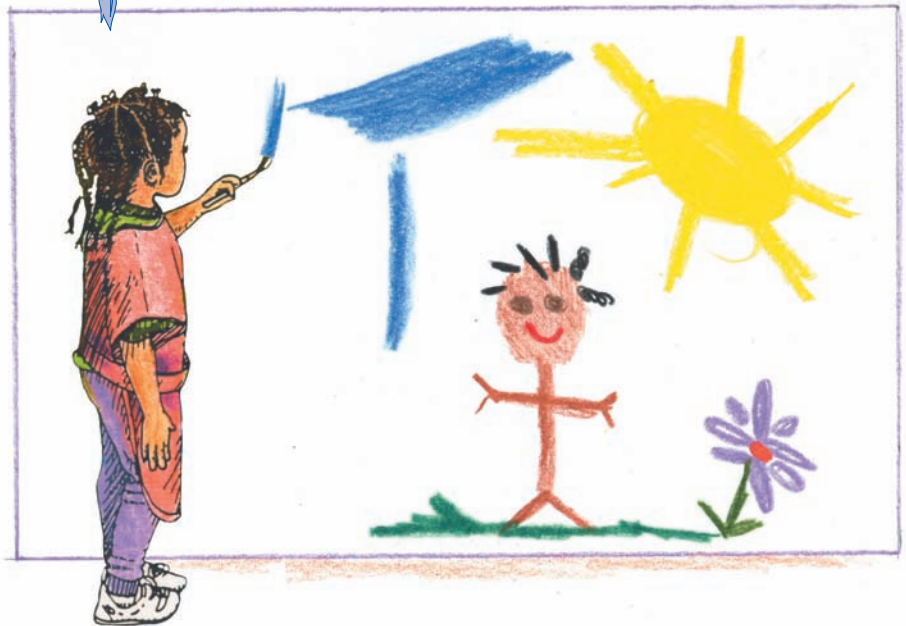
Ask, "Which glass is full of orange juice? Full of milk? Half full of juice? Empty?"

Making a Mural

To do this activity with your child, you will need 8 to 10 feet of heavy butcher paper. You can get it at the grocery store in rolls of brown or white. Tape the paper to a wall with the bottom edge about 12 inches off the floor. (If you do not have butcher paper, you can use paper bags or the white side of used wrapping paper.)

Talk about what to do with this space. Your child might decide to draw a big picture of the family. Some children might want to use part of the space for drawing with crayons and part for writing in pencil.

If your child wants to use finger paints or magic markers, be sure the paper is heavy enough that

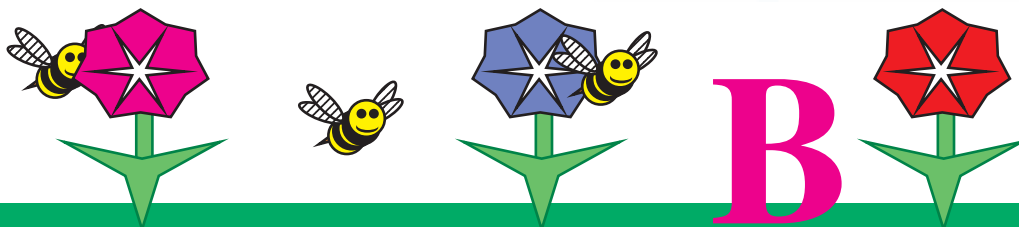
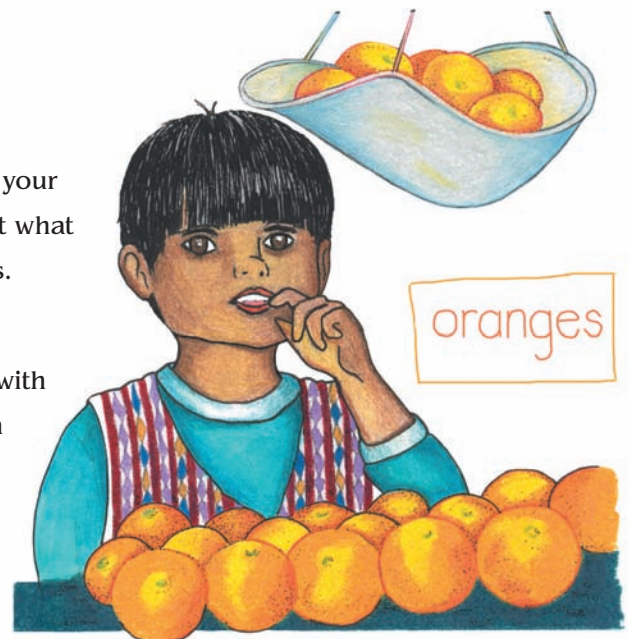


the color will not go through on the wall. Remind your child to draw only on the paper—not on the walls. Your child can work on this big project for several days.

Grocery Shopping

Sometime when you need to go to the grocery store, let your child plan with you. Sit at the table together and talk about what you need. Make a list. Write the things your child mentions. Show the list as you make it.

Let your child carry the list to the store. Take a pencil with you. Let your child mark things off the list as you put them in the shopping cart. Children also enjoy finding items on the shelves and putting them into the cart themselves. When you get home, your child can help you put the groceries away. Be sure to say thank you!



Say, "Help me find three bees that buzz and fly. Now, can you find the letter B?"

Read-Aloud RHYMES

Sing a **Song** of Sixpence

**Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye,
Four and twenty blackbirds,
Baked in a pie.
When the pie was opened,
The birds began to sing.
Now wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before a king?**



Write Your Own

Tell your child, "I am going to help you make up your own poem. As I read, you fill in the blanks." Write down whatever words your child says. Then read the whole poem aloud. It might not make sense, but it might make both of you laugh!

I knew a king who climbed a tree
And once on top, the king did see
A _____ flying through the air,
A _____ sitting in a chair,
A _____ swimming in a pool,
And all the land the king did rule.

What Does It Mean?

"Sing a Song of Sixpence" is a very old nursery rhyme. It was first printed in England in 1744. Did someone really make a pie with 24 blackbirds in it? No one knows for sure! When you read this rhyme aloud, your child probably will not ask this question. But the rhyme is fun to say. And it is short enough to memorize, once your child has heard it a few times.

You might want to explain that "four and twenty" is just a fancy way to say 24. To help your child understand the number 24, count 24 objects such as crayons, coins, or cars.

FAMILY Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

The Wonder of It All

Children are eager to explore the mysteries of the world. You can be your child's guide. Watch the sunset together. Roll in the autumn leaves. Make angels in the snow. You remember how—just fall into a snowdrift and flap your arms and legs. Like magic, an angel appears.

Take walks together. If you look carefully, you may find a feather from a bird. You might see a butterfly on a flower. For your child, everything in sight is interesting. Look down—mud puddles, ant hills, four-leaf clovers! Look around—grasshoppers, ladybugs, a praying mantis. Look up—airplanes, birds, and clouds of all shapes and sizes.

Spending time outdoors is important to your child for many reasons: fresh air and sunshine, open spaces to run and play, and new experiences

that engage the senses. Also, you and your child get to spend relaxed time together, away from work and school and TV.

Every experience is a discovery for your child.



Questions come, fast and furious. Encourage them. You do not have to give an answer every time. It is all right to say, "I don't know" or

"That's a good question!" If your child is really curious about something, the two of you can look for answers together.

When you notice the wonders of the earth, so will your child. Curiosity will follow, along with a desire to learn more and more.

Something else happens when you and your child explore nature together. You get to see the world through the eyes of a child. Enjoy.

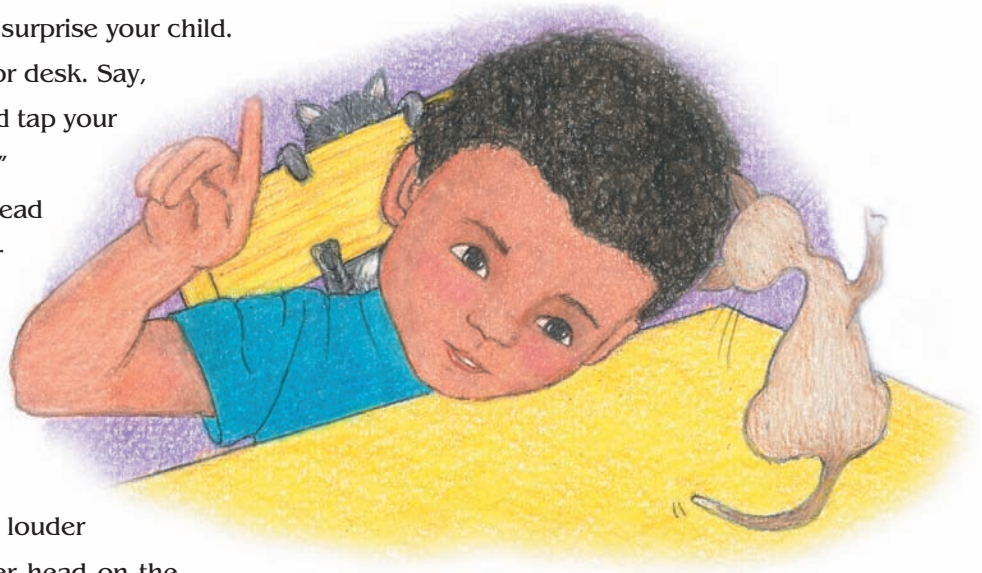
How Loud Is Your Finger?

Here is an activity that might surprise your child.

Ask your child to sit at a table or desk. Say, "Put your hand on the table and tap your finger. Listen to how it sounds."

Then say, "Now, put your head on the table and press your ear against it. Stretch out your arm and tap on the table again. Listen. Does it sound different this time? Louder or softer?"

The taps will sound much louder when your child puts his or her head on the table. Explain that sounds are louder when they travel through solid objects (like tables) than when they travel through the air.



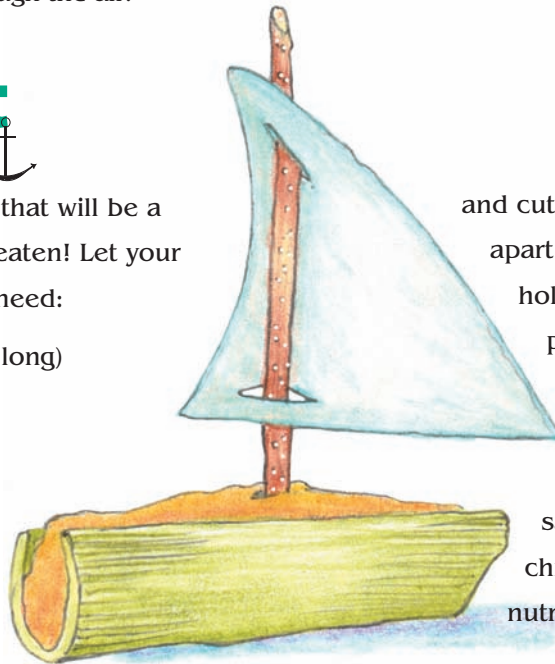
Eat-a-Boat



You can make a healthy snack that will be a special treat—boats that can be eaten! Let your child help. Here is what you will need:

- celery sticks (about 4 inches long)
- peanut butter
- small pretzel sticks
- paper triangles

First, fill celery sections with peanut butter. Cut paper or cheese triangles for the sails



and cut slits in them about an inch apart. Slip a pretzel through the holes. Stick the sail in the peanut butter boat.

You can use other stuffings: cream cheese mixed with raisins, egg salad, or something else your child likes to eat. This snack is nutritious and fun to make.



clown



crown



tie



pie

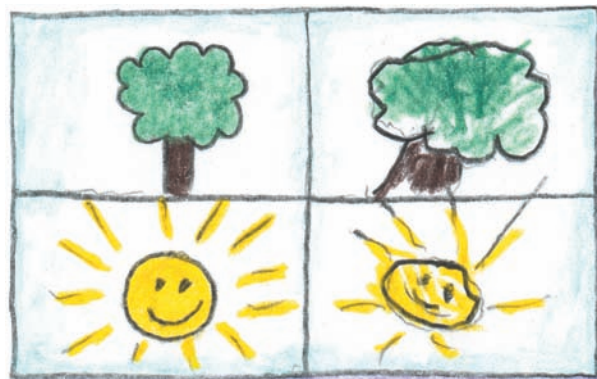
Ask your child to point to the picture as you say the word.

The Copy Game

This easy activity is a fun way for your child to practice following the lead of another person. The only materials you need are plain paper and crayons.

Divide a sheet of paper into four squares. In the first square, make a simple drawing—a tree or the sun. Ask your child to copy the drawing in the square beside your drawing. (Do not expect your child's picture to look exactly like yours!)

Switch roles. Let your child make a drawing and



you copy it. Keep doing this for as long as it is fun. This is also a good activity for two children to do together.

Shaped Play

Here is a game that gives your child three experiences at one time: following directions, learning shapes, and developing motor skills. You can do it outdoors or inside.

Outdoors, use chalk (on a sidewalk or driveway) or a stick (in the sand or dirt) to draw three shapes—square, circle, and triangle. Leave some space between the shapes. Give your child these directions:



1. Jump into the square before I count to three.
2. Hop around the circle.
3. Jump over the triangle.
4. Sit between the circle and the square.

You can think of many other directions. To play the game indoors, use masking tape to make shapes on the floor. If your child already knows these shapes, you can add some new ones.



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Animal Clouds

**You never know
What you might see,
Watching the clouds in the sky.**

**Sometimes a cat,
Sometimes a cow,
Oh, wow! A turtle went by!**

**Maybe a snail,
Maybe a whale,
Maybe a shark
swimming
high.**

**It's fun to
view
The animal
zoo**

Living way up in the sky.

Patricia Penn

Now What?

Here is a “rainy day” activity that can help children use their imagination. Turn on the TV—but leave the sound off. Find a program that shows people’s faces. Say to your child, “Tell me what you think these people are feeling.” You might need to give a prompt: “Does she look happy . . . or sad?” Together, try to guess what is happening in the scene. (You can also do this activity with pictures from books or magazines.)

What Do You See?

The next time you see a sky full of fluffy clouds, stop and take a look with your child. Do some clouds look like animals or people or other things? Talk about the different shapes you see.



FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Responding to Your Child's Feelings

Sometimes, parents have a hard time accepting a child's emotions—especially negative emotions. For example, we adults may have learned it is not nice to be angry. So, when a child shows anger, we don't like it.

But everyone has negative feelings sometimes. When we do, we want others to acknowledge the feeling, even if they do not agree with it. Children are no different. If you deny their feelings, they learn not to express them directly. They act them out in some other way.

An event that can be hard for a young child is to have a new baby come into the family. Much of your time and attention must go to the baby. When visitors come, they make a fuss over the baby. "Isn't it great to have a little sister?" they may ask your child. But it might not feel so great to your child!



Do not wait for your child to start acting out. Acknowledge the feelings: "I know you are upset because I spend so much time with the new baby. She really needs a lot of attention, doesn't she?" Together, you might list things your child can do that the baby cannot. Include your child in the conversation when visitors come. "Eric is so helpful with the baby. He gets me things I need when I give her a bath."

Avoid saying things like "Of course you don't hate the baby. You love her.

She's your sister." This can make children feel that you do not understand or accept their feelings. They may misbehave to get attention. They may even become difficult to deal with at school.

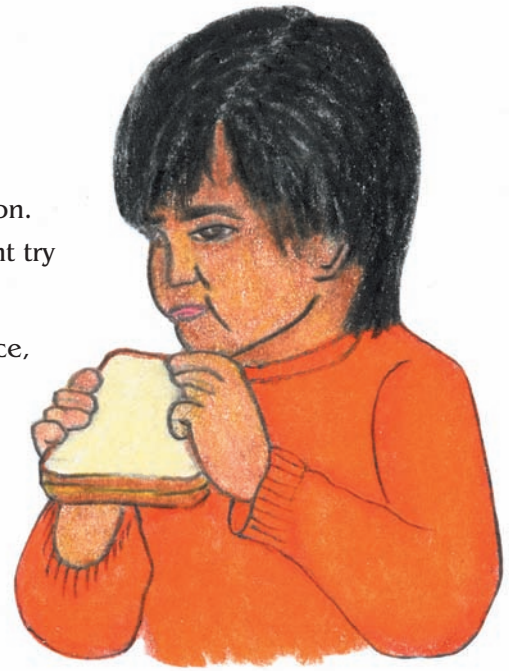
Parents may not like it when a child expresses antisocial feelings toward a new baby, but children are naturally outspoken. Focus on helping your child feel understood and accepted.

Peanut Butter Special

Small children and peanut butter seem to be a natural combination. Most children love it; even picky eaters like peanut butter. You might try this trick to create a new taste treat.

Mix some mashed banana, pureed pears or peaches, apple sauce, or other fruit with peanut butter. It will be even more nutritious, as well as lower in fat. Bonus: It's easier to spread. Your child will be able to make this favorite sandwich without tearing the bread.

If your child is allergic to peanut butter, try a sandwich filling made of refried beans mixed with salsa or cheese.

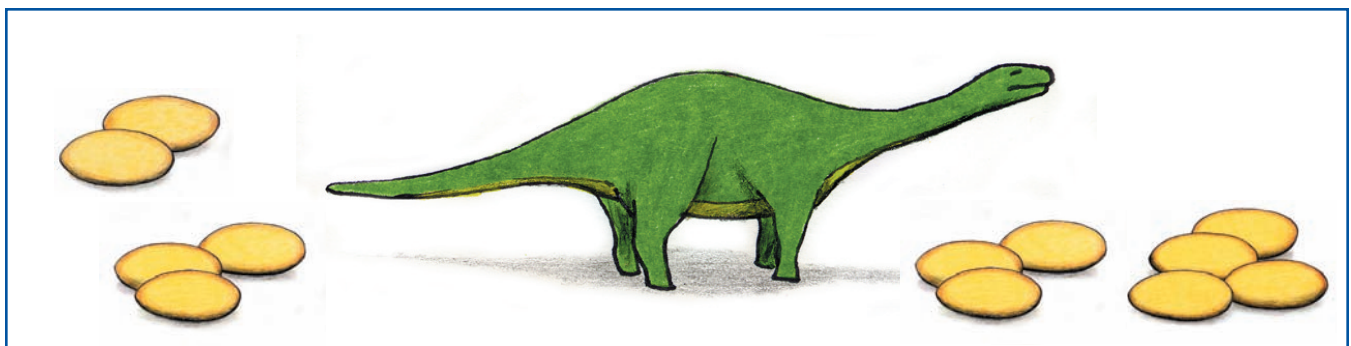
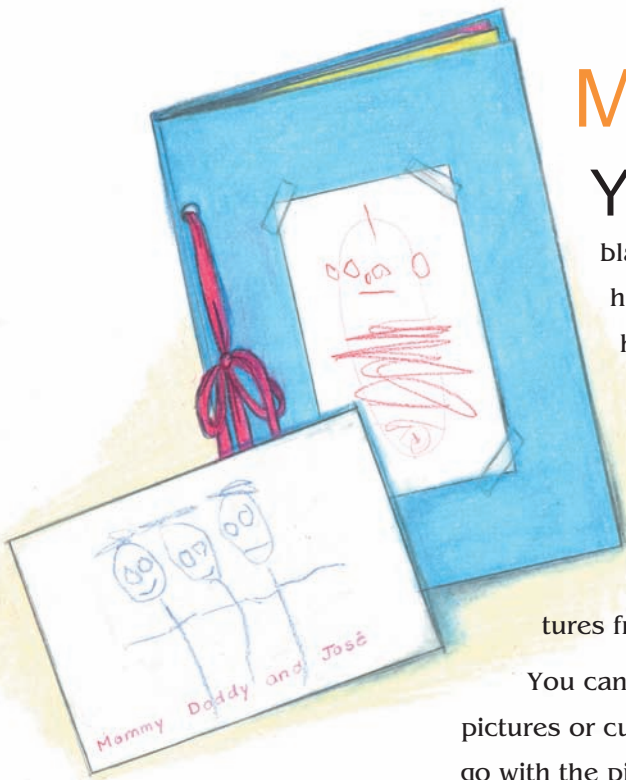


My Own Book

Young children love little books of their own. You can make a blank book easily. Cut a sheet of blank paper or notebook paper in half crosswise. Lay one half on top of the other and fold. You now have an 8-page book. You can add pages if you want to make a longer book. Add a cover made of construction paper, if you like. Staple or stitch the folded side so the pages will not fall out.

Have your child tell you a story. You can write the story in the blank book. Leave plenty of room for illustrations. Your child can then draw pictures to go with the story (or cut pictures from old magazines or newspapers).

You can also do the book the other way around. Have the child draw pictures or cut them out for the book. Then your child can tell you a story to go with the pictures, and you can write the story in the book.








"This dinosaur laid a dozen eggs. Can you help me count them?" Point as your child counts.

Ant House

It may be hard to believe, but it's a fact. More than a million different insects are known to science. And more are being found all the time.

They are everywhere, and we treat most of them as pests. But they can be very interesting for children to watch. Your child's curiosity in insects will be useful later when he or she studies science. One project you and your child might enjoy together is an ant house. Here is what you will need:

-  a clear glass or plastic jar (a short, fat one is best) with a lid.
-  soil and a piece of old wood or twig
-  food (cereal, crumbs, sweetened water)
-  a piece of black paper that will wrap around the jar
-  ants






Let your child do as much of the ant house as possible. Put the soil in the jar. On top, add the wood, food, and ants. Punch some tiny air holes in the lid (make sure they are too small for the ants to get through). Put the lid on the jar. Cover the jar with black paper.

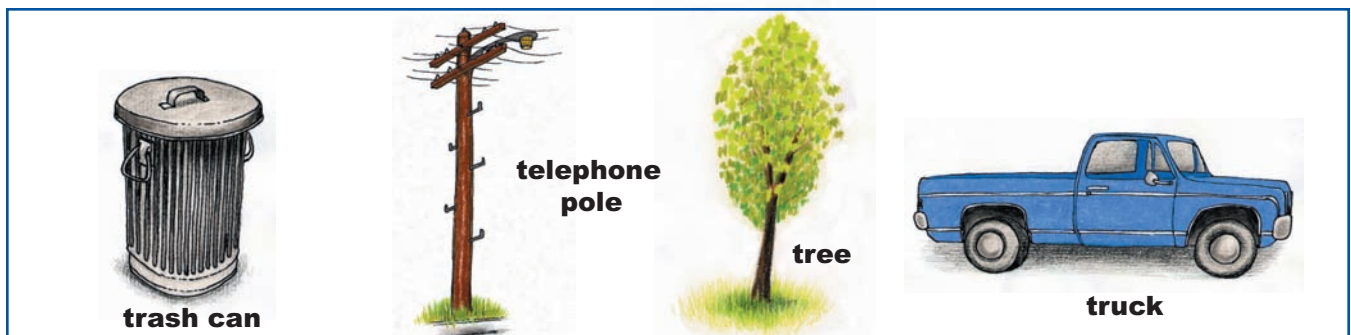
When you want to watch the ants work, take off the black paper. You will be amazed at how long your child will watch the ants at work.

After a week or so, return the ants to the great outdoors.



Fun Facts about Ants

-  Ants have six legs.
-  Ants use their antennae for smelling.
-  Ants are very strong. An ant can lift a piece of food that is much heavier than the ant itself!
-  Ants are famous for working together. A group of ants that lives together is called a colony.
-  All the ants in the world, put together, are heavier than all people in the world, put together.



Go outdoors for a treasure hunt. Look for these things that start with a "t" sound.

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

Doctor, Nurse

**I fell out of bed
And I bumped my head.**

**Hospital, doctor,
Hospital, nurse—
Make it feel better
So I won't feel worse.**

**A cough I've got
And I need a shot.**

**Hospital, doctor,
Hospital, nurse—
Make it feel better
So I won't feel worse.**

**Poison ivy on my face,
Poison ivy everywhere!**

**Hospital, doctor,
Hospital, nurse—
Make it feel better
So I won't feel worse.**

Carla Thomas McClure



Jingles

Jingles are catchy rhymes that are easy to remember. They may have words or phrases that are repeated. Television commercials often include very short jingles that help people remember a product. “Doctor, Nurse” is a jingle that can help your child think of the hospital as a good place for sick people to go. When you read it, use a sing-songy voice, like you are saying a jump rope jingle. The second time you read it, ask your child to say the repeated verse along with you each time.

Healing Talk

Some children fear doctors, hospitals, and shots. You can ease those fears by talking about the good things doctors and nurses do. Tell about how they have helped family members when they were sick or hurt. Let your child know that getting a shot hurts a little for you, too! Explain that vaccinations keep us from getting sick. If you talk about these things now, your child’s next visit to the doctor might go more smoothly.

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

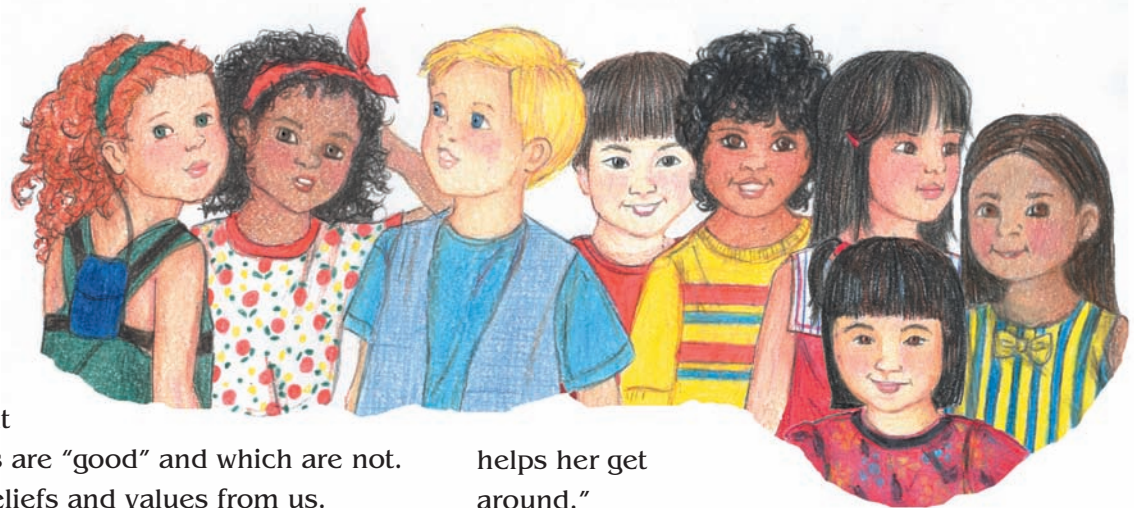
You Can Help Your Child Resist Bias

Between the ages of two and five, children become aware of gender, race, and physical disabilities. They notice the differences. They also form values about

which differences are “good” and which are not. They get those beliefs and values from us.

Answer questions. Adults are sometimes uncomfortable talking about differences. We avoid answering our children’s questions. We teach them it is not polite to notice differences or to ask about them.

When we do this, we fail to give children information they need. Without meaning to, we can teach them that some differences are “bad.” For example, what if your child asks, “Why is that girl in a wheelchair?” Your first thought might be to say, “Shh! It’s not nice to ask.” This might make your child think that being in a wheelchair is shameful. Here is a better answer: “She is using a wheelchair because her legs are not strong enough for her to walk. The chair



helps her get around.”

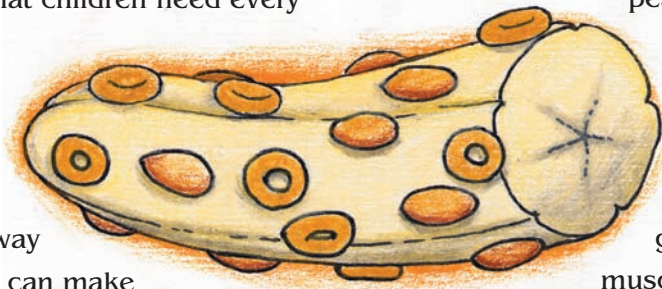
Give facts. Another question some children might ask is “Why is his skin so dark?” If you say, “It doesn’t matter. We are all the same on the inside,” you are not giving an answer. Your child might think there must be something bad about the skin color since you are avoiding the question. Instead, you could say, “We all have something called melanin in our skin that determines how dark we are.” Explain that many of us have ancestors from Africa or South America, where people have more melanin (sounds like “melon in”) to protect their skin from the hotter sun there.

You can teach your child to accept differences as a normal part of life.

Crunchy Bananas

Bananas are an ideal snack. They are easy for young children to peel. They are packed with vitamins and minerals that children need every day. They are available year-round at the grocery store.

You and your child might enjoy a different way of serving bananas. You can make this tasty snack together. Crush some unsalted, dry-roasted peanuts. (It's fun for a child to put



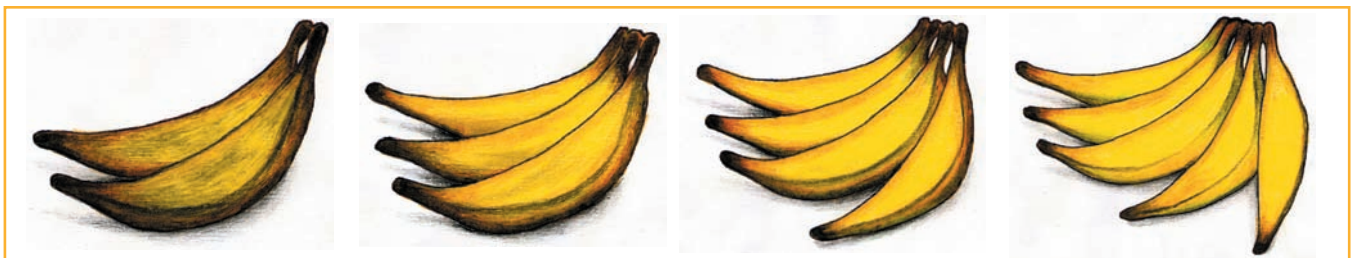
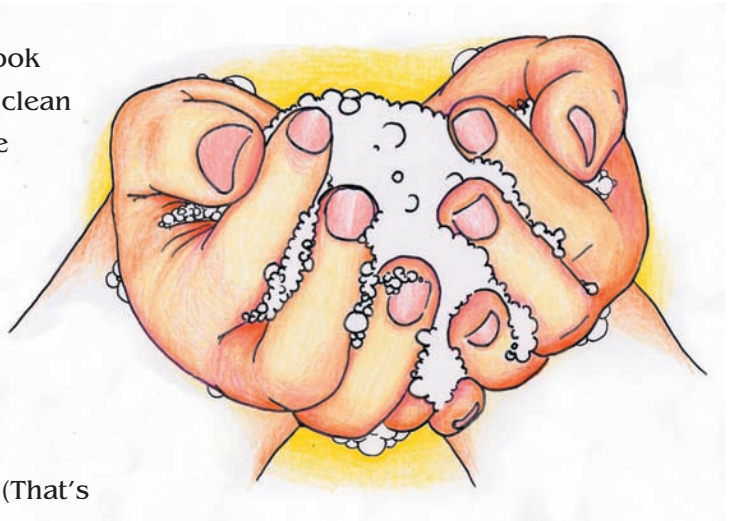
some nuts in a plastic bag and roll them with a rolling pin.) Then roll banana halves in the crushed peanuts to make a crunchy banana. If the banana is very large, break it into thirds.

Bananas are also delicious rolled in Cheerios. It's good for your child's small-muscle development to press the Cheerios onto the banana one at a time. The banana should be quite ripe.

Get Ready to Cook

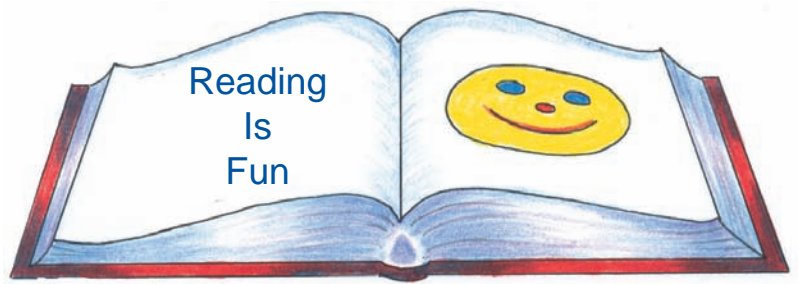
When you and your child are preparing to cook together, talk about how important it is to have clean hands when working with food. Together, do the steps to good handwashing.

1. Wet your hands with warm running water.
2. Rub soap on your hands and rub them together.
3. Be sure to wash the fronts and backs of hands, between fingers, and under finger nails. Wash hands for about 15 seconds. (That's about long enough to sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.")
4. Rinse well under warm running water.
5. Dry your hands.



Ask, "Which bunch of bananas is largest? Which is smallest? How many bunches are there?"

More Choices from the Library



Here are more books that children's librarians recommend for reading aloud to preschool children. Some of these books are classics. Maybe you read them yourself when you were a child! If you cannot get these at your local

library, ask the librarian to suggest other books. If you find a book that your child likes a lot, try other books by the same author.

Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs
by Judi Barrett

Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!
by Mo Willems

Franklin Is Messy by Paulette Bourgeois

Hazel's Amazing Mother by Rosemary Wells

How I Became a Pirate by Melinda Long

I Can Read with My Eyes Shut! by Dr. Seuss

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie
by Laura Joffe Numeroff

Julius, the Baby of the World by Kevin Henkes

Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile by Bernard Waber

Miss Suzy by Miriam Young

My Five Senses by Alike

Oh, the Places You'll Go! by Dr. Seuss

Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch

Sam Who Never Forgets by Eve Rice

Socks for Supper by Jack Kent

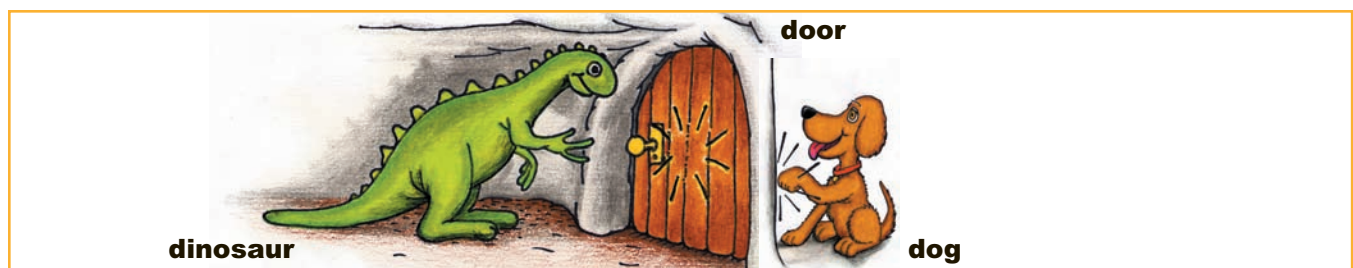
The Napping House by Audrey Wooddog

The Quiet Farmer by Marni McGee

Thump and Plunk by Janice May Udry

Sing Along!

Many libraries have recordings of children's songs and nursery rhymes on CD, audiotape, or videotape. Check with your librarian.



Say, "Once upon a time, a little dog knocked on a dinosaur's door."
Ask your child to tell you a story about what happened next.

Read-Aloud **RHYMES**

Reflections of Me

**When I look in the mirror,
What do I see?**

**When I look in the mirror,
I look back at me.**

**When I look in the mirror,
I like what I see.**

**I like what I see,
For it's good to be me!**



**I'm always right there,
Whenever I peek—
Once I smiled back at me
From my Mom's cookie
sheet.**

**When I look in a puddle,
I sometimes see me.
Try it, and tell me . . .
What do you see?**

Ron Diss

The M Sound

What sounds can you make with your mouth shut?" Ask your child this question. Then try it together. You will probably notice that you can make the "m" sound this way. Take turns making the "m" sound and saying a word that starts with the sound. Some "m" words from the poem are *mirror*, *Mom*, and *me*. You will think of many more. Write the letter *m* and show it to your child. You might also ask, "What 'm' sound do we make when we eat something that tastes really good?" The answer, of course, is "Mmmmm."

Big Words

Reflection is a big word that your child will be proud to learn. To show what it means, stand in front of a mirror with your child. Ask, "Who do you see in the mirror?" Your child might say "me" or "you and me." Say, "Right!" Then explain: "When you look into a mirror, what you see is called a *reflection*. It's like a picture of the real you. Can you say *reflection*?" Help your child by breaking the word into smaller parts, called syllables. Say each part slowly and clearly (re-fleck-shun) and ask your child to say it back. Let your child hear you use the new word over the next few days.

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____

Dealing with School Changes

Will your child attend kindergarten next year? This is a big step in a child's life—and a big change for the family, too. You can make this exciting time go more smoothly for you and your child.

Put yourself in your child's shoes. Changes can be stressful for everyone. Your child may be anxious about attending a new school, riding the bus, or having a new teacher. Your child might be in a larger class, need to pay attention for longer periods of time, and work more independently. You can help your child feel more confident.

Prepare your child for the change. Talk about things that will stay the same and things that will be different. "Some of your preschool friends will be in the class with you, but you'll make new friends, too. You will still have story time and snack time, but you might not have nap time. We'll still have breakfast together each morning, but you will ride the bus to school."

Keep reading aloud and doing other things to help your child learn and grow. Have a few simple rules and routines at home so that your child is used to follow-

ing instructions. Also, offer cues about social behaviors that will be expected in kindergarten: "I like the way you took turns with the others. You're acting like a kindergartener already!"

Find out about the new program.

Learning more about the new school and its kindergarten program can help both you and your child. Call the school or arrange to take your child for a visit. Once you know who the new teacher will be, introduce your child. If the kindergarten program has an open house, let your child meet the new teacher.

Communicate. As the school year begins, let the new teacher know about your child's needs, interests, and talents. Let your child know that you understand what a big change kindergarten can be. Listen carefully. Ask questions. Offer support. Be patient. Being calm, caring, and confident will help your child adjust to school changes.



The Alphabet: Making Letters

All the words we speak in English are made up of only 26 letters. Amazing, isn't it? You can use this alphabet chart to help your child recognize the letters and name them. You might say, "Point to a letter, and I'll name that letter and the sound it makes." Or say a word that begins with that letter's sound. Point out

that uppercase and lowercase letters look different but sound the same. Teach your child how to write his or her name. Explain that the first letter in a name is uppercased. Show how other letters are made, too. (The numbers and arrows in the chart show you the way schools teach children to do it.)



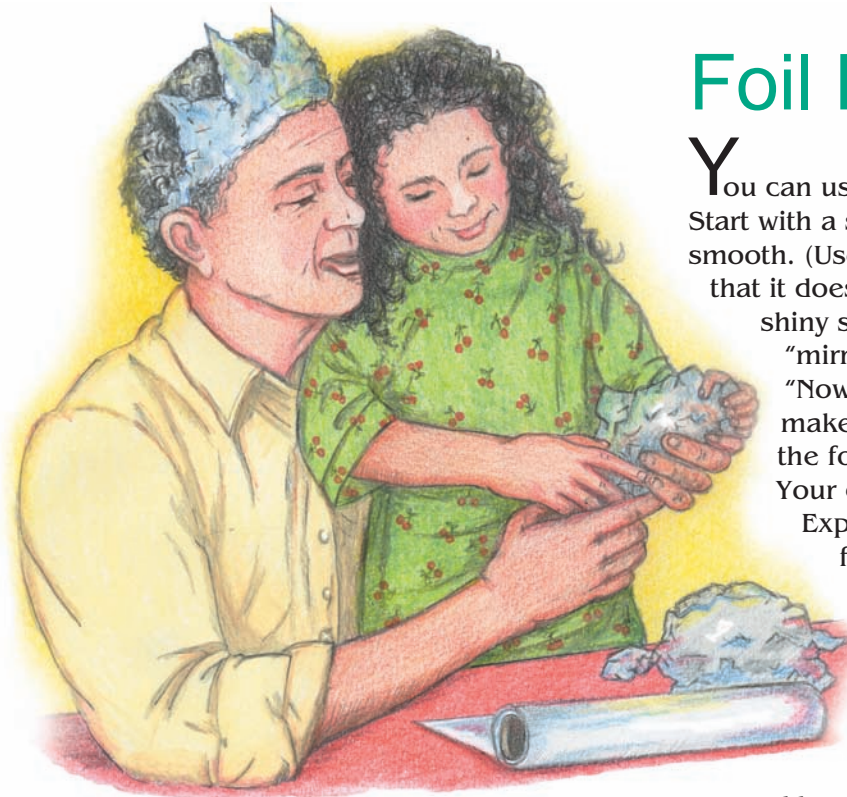
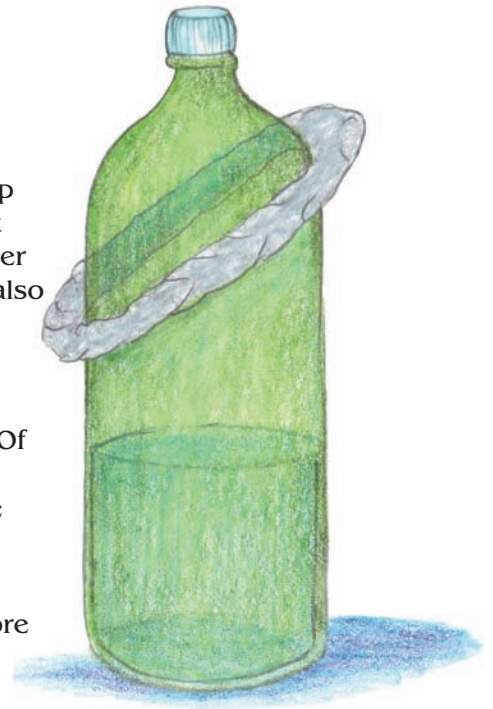
It's never too late for learning. If you are interested in getting a General Educational Development (GED) diploma, call your local board of education. Someone there can tell you how to go about it.

Ring Toss

A game of ring toss is fun for children. It also helps them develop muscle coordination. You can make a game with things you have at home. An empty plastic bottle can be the pole. Put just enough water in the bottle to weight it, then screw the cap on tightly. (You could also use sand or other dry material, such as dried beans, to weight the bottle.)

Let your child help make rings from aluminum foil twisted into circles. The rings should be about twice as big around as the pole. Of course you can use foil that you have saved from other uses. You don't have to have one long piece of foil; two shorter pieces can be overlapped and rolled together to form a ring.

Give your child three or four rings to throw onto the pole. Let younger children stand very close to the target. As they become more accurate, they can move farther away.



Foil Fun

You can use aluminum foil to do a magic trick. Start with a square sheet of foil that is very smooth. (Use scissors to cut the foil off the roll so that it does not wrinkle.) Place it on the table, shiny side up. Let your child look in the foil "mirror" to find his or her reflection. Say, "Now I am going to do a magic trick to make your reflection disappear." Crinkle the foil loosely, then flatten it on the table. Your child's reflection will have vanished! Explain that we can see ourselves in the foil only if it is very smooth.

When you are finished, tell your child, "Let's not waste the foil. Why don't you see if you can make something with it?" Your child can mold the foil to make a toy. Some ideas are a crown, a headband, a necklace, a mask, animal shapes, or a ball.



Point to a letter and say its name.

Say, "Can you find this letter in the alphabet chart?" Do one letter at a time.



Read-Aloud RHYMES

To Be a **Bee**

**I'd like to be a bee.
A bee I'd like to be.
I'd buzz all day,
Then buzz away—
I'd like to be a bee.**

**But since I'm not a bee,
I guess I'll just be me.
I'll work and play,
And hum all day—
It's fun to be just me.**

Carla Thomas McClure



Find a **B**

Write a lowercase *b* on a sheet of paper. Show the paper to your child. Explain that when a person reads aloud, the letter *b* tells the reader to make a "b" sound. Say, "I am going to read the poem again, very slowly. This time, whenever you hear me make the 'b' sound, say, 'I hear a b!'" Then let your child hunt for *b*'s on this page. Mark them with a yellow crayon.

Get some **Z's**

Write the letter *z* on a sheet of paper. Show the paper to your child. Explain that when a person reads aloud, the letter *z* tells the reader to make a "z" sound, like the sound at the end of the word *buzz*. Ask your child to make the "z" sound whenever he hears it in the following sentences:

I saw a zebra at the zoo.

The car went "zoom, zoom!"

Zip the zipper.

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FAMILY

Connections Pre-K

For the family of _____



A Sunshine Gram for All Parents-as-Teachers

Do you know how important you are? You are your child's first teacher. You will have a bigger influence on your child's life than anyone else. You are a successful and effective teacher for your child because you know just what your child needs.

- You know that the amount of time you have to make an impact on your child is very short. You take the time to spend with your child, knowing that other things can wait.
- You read aloud to your child. You understand that reading aloud sends your child an important message: You think reading is important. You know that reading with your child is a time for closeness and happiness. You also know it is important for your child to see you reading on your own.
- You listen to your child. You tune in to your child's interests, uniqueness, and needs. You realize that the beginning of learning to listen is having someone

listen to you. You listen to your child. You know that some of your best talks happen as you work, play, and walk together.

- You use discipline as a way to help your child learn self-discipline. You are not afraid to be in charge because you know that children need to have adults in charge. You have reasonable rules that fit your child's age and abilities. You are firm but not harsh.
- You show your child love, kindness, and approval. You know that when children receive these things at home, they learn to like themselves. They also learn to show love and kindness to others.

*Children are born hunting for directions.
Parents are meant to give direction.
Parents are maps.*

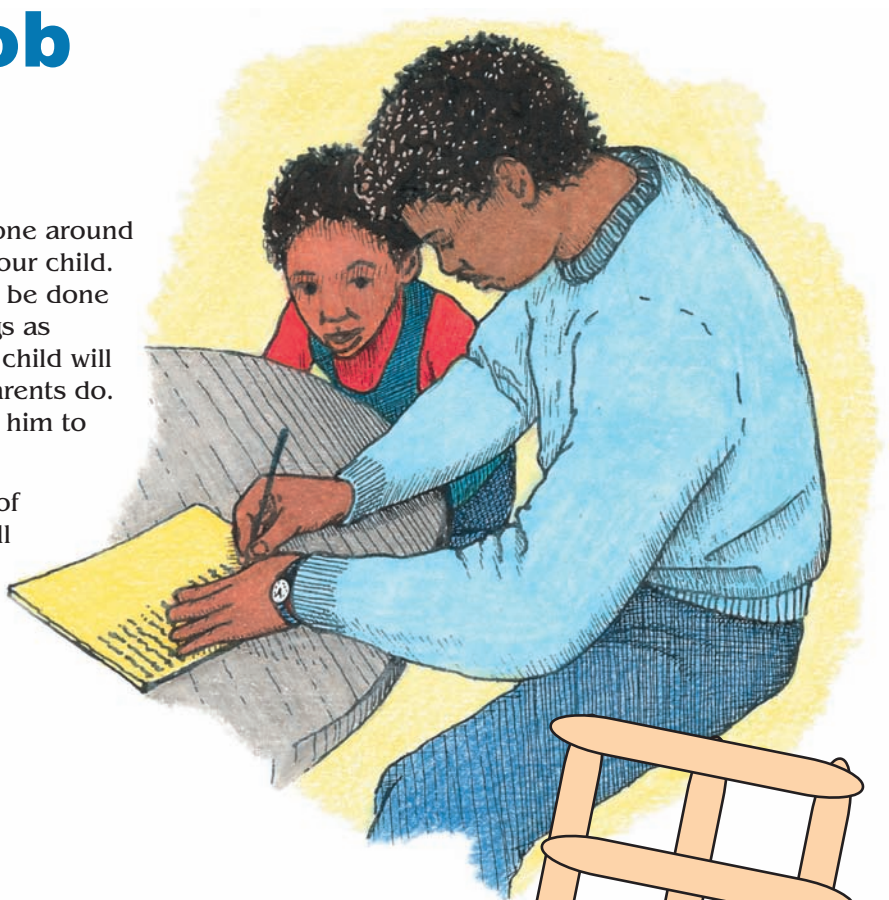
Dr. Roger Rosenblatt

Getting the Job Done

There is always a lot of work to be done around the house. Take a "house walk" with your child. Talk about some of the jobs that must be done regularly. You can point out such things as washing dishes and making beds. The child will probably think of things he sees his parents do. He may also remember things you ask him to do, such as picking up toys.

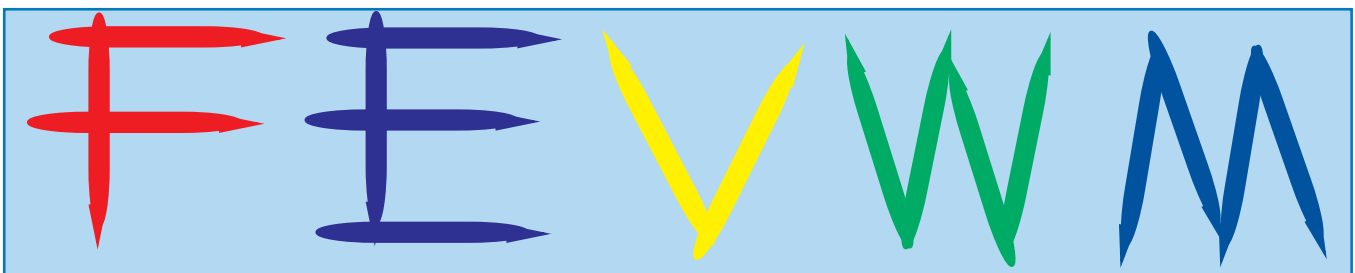
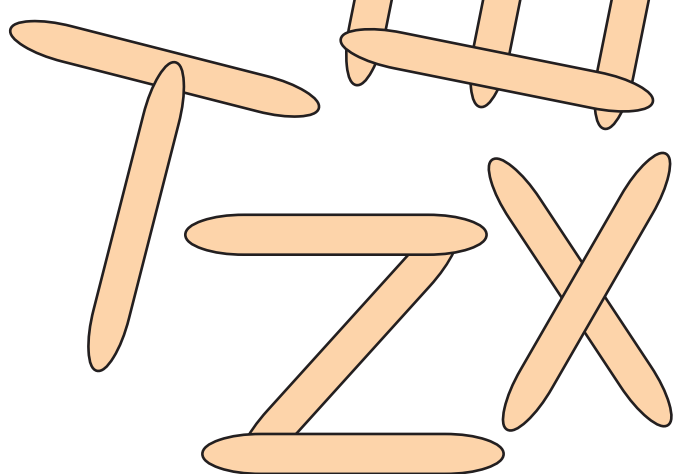
Sit down together and make a list of jobs. Talk with your child about how all family members are responsible for their home. Help your child choose some jobs on your list that he can do. Some examples:

- set the table
- feed the pet
- dust the furniture
- fold clothes and put them away
- make the bed



Popsicle Stick Patterns

With Popsicle sticks, you can make patterns for your child to copy. (Toothpicks work, too.) Cut or break some of the sticks in half for short parts of the patterns. The examples here are just a beginning. Children also enjoy creating their own original designs.



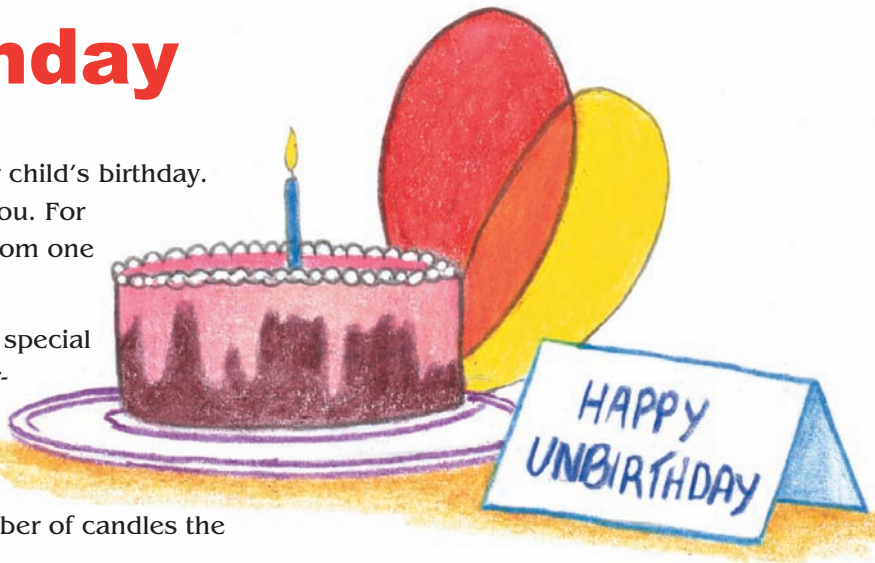
Point to a letter. Say its name and tell how it sounds. Give your child some toothpicks (or Popsicle sticks) and say, "Can you make the letter with these sticks?"

Happy Unbirthday

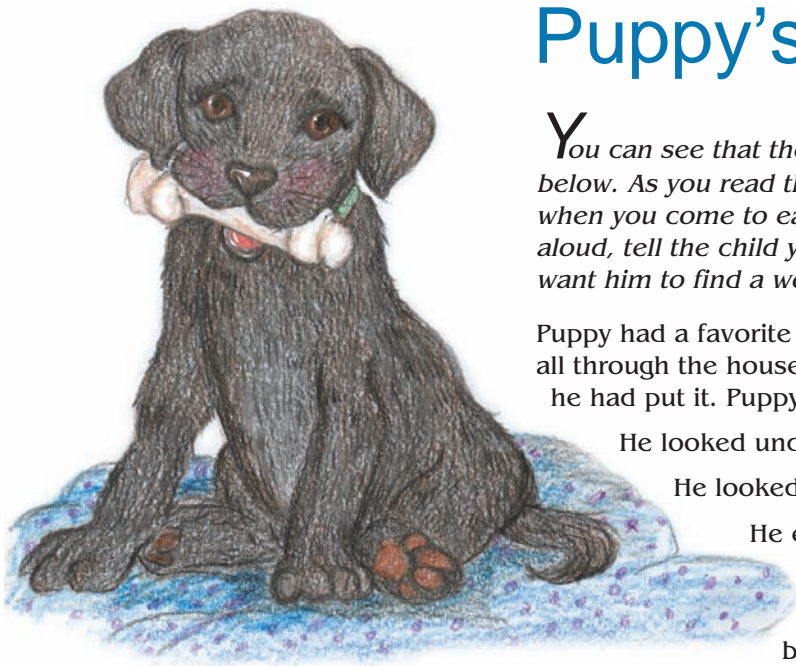
Of course you make a big fuss over your child's birthday. Birthdays probably come all too soon for you. For young children, it seems like a long time from one birthday to the next.

Here is a way to let children know how special they are to you. Pretend you are in Wonderland. Have a very merry unbirthday. It's easy. Let your child decide what to have for dinner. Make a special dessert. It could be an unbirthday cake, with whatever number of candles the child wants.

Spend extra time together. Read favorite stories and poems. Take a special walk. Sing "Happy Unbirthday to You." The theme for the day is: "I'm so glad you're my child."



Puppy's Lost Bone



You can see that there are blank spaces in the very short story below. As you read the story to your child, pause for just a second when you come to each blank. When you finish reading the story aloud, tell the child you are going to read it again. This time, you want him to find a word to fill each blank.

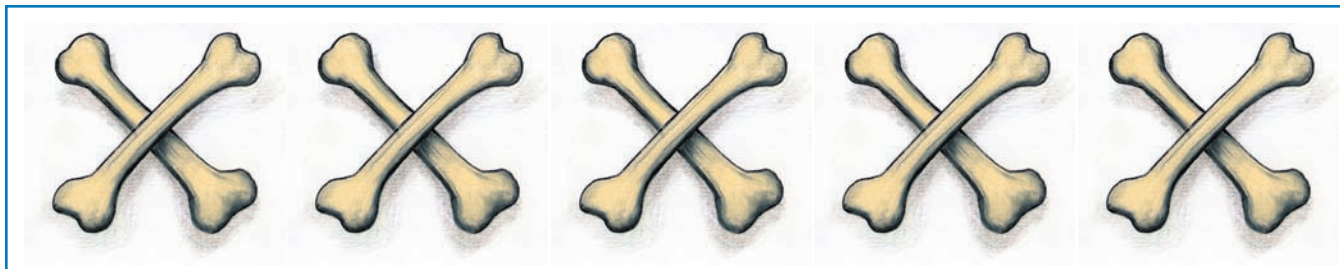
Puppy had a favorite toy bone. He liked to hide the bone in places all through the house. One day he hid the bone and forgot where he had put it. Puppy looked everywhere.

He looked under the _____.

He looked in the _____.

He even looked behind the _____.

Finally he stopped to rest. He lay down on his favorite pillow. That was when he remembered where he had hidden the bone. He stuck his head under the pillow and pulled out his favorite toy—a bone.



**Say, "Doctors use X-rays to take pictures of the bones inside our bodies."
Point as you count the bones. Then count the X's.**

My Dolphin

Every now and then,
I like to ride my dolphin.
We can't swim in the yard,
So we go in the ocean.

Don't stay too long," says Mommy,
But we like to swim out far
To hear the mermaids singing
And the sea horse play guitar.

We're always home for dinner,
For my dolphin loves to eat.
He's much too big to fit inside
An ordinary seat.

I sure do love my dolphin.
At night when I can't sleep,
I always count blue dolphins
Instead of counting sheep!

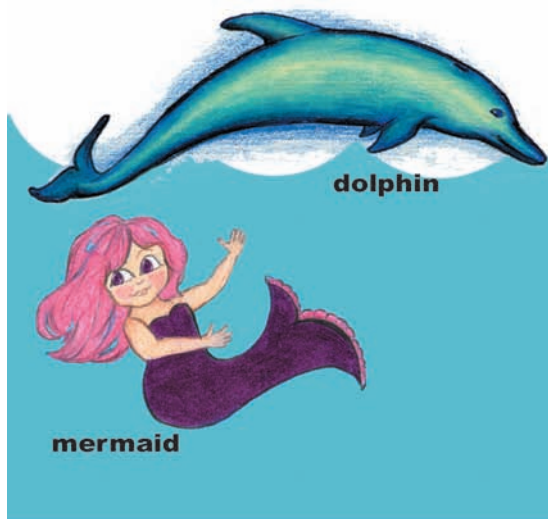
Carla Thomas McClure



Memory Game

Ask these questions, and see if your child can remember the answers from the poem. If your child can't remember, say, "Listen for the answers as I read the poem again."

1. Where did the girl ride her dolphin?
2. Why couldn't the dolphin sit in an ordinary seat?
3. The girl counted dolphins to help her sleep. What color were they?



dolphin

mermaid

Ocean Words

This poem has words that your child might not know: dolphin, ocean, mermaids, sea horse. These words are not easy to explain. The best way to teach what they mean is to show your child pictures as you talk about the poem. You might explain that sea horses are small creatures that really do live in the ocean, but scientists have never found a real mermaid.



sea horse