

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

January 2018



KID BITS

Testing little ears

It's normal for schools to do routine screenings at this age to make sure students can hear properly. You can also request a hearing test if you have a concern (*example*: your child has frequent ear infections and seems to have trouble hearing). If there's a problem, the nurse will suggest following up with your doctor.

Backpack check

Make it a fun part of your youngster's routine to share what she brings home in her backpack each day. You could pretend the contents are a "treasure" to explore or that she's brought you a "gift" to open. Displaying excitement about her hard work shows you value her efforts at school.

What do you do all day?

Give your child a peek at what you do on the job. You might read him a nice email from your boss or a compliment from a customer about a project you worked on. Or act out a typical day. If you're a cashier, give him play money, let him "shop" in your "store," and "ring up" his purchases.

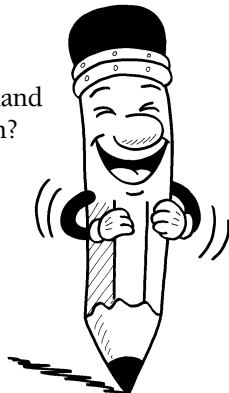
Worth quoting

"The richness I achieve comes from nature, the source of my inspiration."
Claude Monet

Just for fun

Teacher: Which hand do you write with?

Mary: Neither, I write with a pencil!



Read aloud every day

Children who are read to daily have larger vocabularies and better reading comprehension skills. Reading aloud to your youngster is also a great way to bond with her. Consider these tips.

Add drama

Where the story calls for it, growl like a bear, wiggle your eyebrows, or use a funny voice! Hamming it up engages your little one's imagination and adds to the entertainment. Plus, your actions give words meaning. If you shrug your shoulders when the character does, your child gets an instant example of the word *shrug*.

Inspire discussions

Ask open-ended questions about the book. You might invite your youngster to make predictions: "What do you think the bear will do when he sees the picnic?" Or ask her to think of similarities between the story and her life. She may say, "I've got a loose tooth just like the girl in the book!" This gets her



involved—and boosts her understanding of the story line.

Offer a variety

Kids love to hear the same story over and over—it's comforting, and they like being able to recognize words. That's fine, but also include new books to expose your little one to more plots, facts, and vocabulary. Try varying the reading level, too. Listening to more challenging books—both fiction and nonfiction—will help your youngster grow as a reader. ♥

Building-block engineer

Although your child may not realize it, he thinks like an engineer every time he builds with blocks. You can help him use engineering skills to build his tallest tower yet.

Encourage him to experiment with different sizes, shapes, and arrangements of blocks. How can he create a sturdy base that supports a taller tower? Help him count the levels as he tries. How many floors can he stack before the structure topples?

When it does fall, it's time to redesign his tower and test it again. With each new design, your child will learn more about what makes a building strong. ♥



A stick-with-it kid

Perseverance is a big idea for a little one! These kid-friendly activities will help your child understand that sticking with a challenging task pays off.

The “almost there” board. Try this idea when your youngster is working toward a goal (say, catching a ball). Let him draw a row of 5 boxes on a sheet of paper and number them 1–5. Help him write one step toward the goal in each box, each a little harder than the previous one.

Examples: “Catch a ball that someone rolls to me.” “Catch a



ball in the air with two hands.” He can check off each box as he masters the step.

“Can-do” badges. After your child accomplishes something he’s been working on, such as learning all the letters of the alphabet, let him decorate a paper plate with a picture of his achievement. Display his “badge” on his bedroom door, and add more as he meets new goals. When the going gets tough, have him look at the badges and tell the story of how he earned each one. He’ll remind himself that he’s a “can-do” kid!♥

Night-night: A bedtime routine

A regular bedtime ritual provides cues that help your youngster fall asleep and get the rest she needs so she can concentrate at school. Try these ideas.

1. Together, make a list of screen-free, quiet activities to switch to at least an hour before bed (color, do a puzzle). Choose one from the list each night.



2. Have your child draw a “map” for going to bed. She could chart her route to the tub for bath time, then to her bedroom for pajamas, and into bed for a story. Let her follow her map every night to keep the routine predictable.

3. Cap off bedtime with your youngster’s favorite way to say goodnight. Maybe she likes to snuggle while you sing a lullaby, or she might tuck in a stuffed animal before kissing you goodnight.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Practice fine-motor skills

My daughter Brianna sees an occupational therapist to improve fine-motor skills she needs for tasks like using a pencil, tying her shoes, and zipping her jacket. Last week, her OT gave us a list of clever exercises to do at home.

Brianna’s favorite is the boat race. She puts two toy boats in a sink full of water and squirts them with a spray bottle to make them sail across the “pond.” Right now she needs both hands to squeeze the nozzle, but as her muscles get stronger, her goal is to use one hand.

To build finger coordination, Brianna enjoys threading pipe cleaners through the holes in a small colander. She also likes to link paper clips—so far she has made bracelets, necklaces, and even bookmarks.

Yesterday my other daughter asked to practice with Brianna. The activities are fun for both kids, and I figure the more fine-motor practice, the better.♥



Q & A

Too much computer?

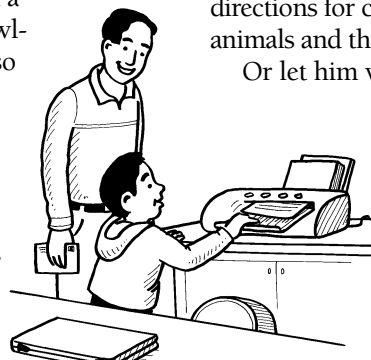
Q: My son Luke loves my laptop and wants to play on it instead of doing other things. How much is too much?

A: Your son is growing up in a world where computer knowledge is important. But he also needs to have non-screen experiences as well as time to run and play.

Try giving your child a specific limit: “You can use the computer until dinner is ready.” Consider making a rule about how many minutes he can have per day.

Also, you might encourage projects that your youngster can start on the computer and continue offline. Perhaps you could search the Internet with him to find directions for creating simple origami animals and then make some together.

Or let him write a letter and print it out to illustrate, sign, and mail. Doing hands-on activities like these will add learning to the time your child does spend on the computer.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5567

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2018



KID BITS

My own business card

Creating a pretend “business card” is a fun way for your child to learn her address and phone number. Show her a real one (yours, one from an office you visit), and then have her make her own using an index card. Help her write her name, address, and phone number. She could draw a small picture (ballet shoe, soccer ball) to show something she does.

A gracious host

Having friends over lets your youngster practice social skills. Explain that it’s nice to let his guest take the first tricycle ride, for example. Make sharing easier by allowing your child to put away one special toy before his friend arrives—everything else is for both youngsters to enjoy.

Not afraid of the dark

Help your child overcome her fear of the dark by making it “friendlier.” Try decorating her ceiling with glow-in-the-dark stars from a dollar store, or give her a night-light for her room. She may also feel better cuddling a stuffed animal who “likes” the dark, perhaps an owl or a raccoon.

Worth quoting

“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.” *Chinese proverb*

Just for fun

Q: What did the envelope say to the stamp?

A: Stick with me, and we’ll go places.



Playful ways to boost self-control

Little ones learn many skills through play, and self-control is no exception. These games and activities can help improve your youngster’s ability to slow down and think before he acts.

Stop and go

Name an action for your child to do, such as jumping up and down. Every time you call out, “Go,” he should start jumping. When you say “Stop,” he stands still. But if you say a random word instead of “Go” and “Stop” (“Bananas,” or “Jupiter,” for example), he should ignore you. He’ll need to listen carefully so he knows whether you’re giving a command—or just being silly!

Be a mirror

Face your youngster, and strike a pose. Maybe you’ll stand with one hand on your hip and the other on your head. Ask your child to copy you. Now, slowly move to a new pose while he moves with you as your mirror. He’ll practice



resisting the urge to make any other movements—after all, a mirror reflects only what’s in front of it.

Count down

In a situation where your youngster tends to get antsy (say, waiting for food at a restaurant), have him pretend he’s an astronaut. Suggest that he put on his imaginary spacesuit and get ready for launch. Slowly count backward from 10 together. This will give him a chance to settle down. ♥

Reasons to write

Your child is probably excited about learning to write. Whether she’s just making squiggly lines or starting to form words, here are ways to nurture her new skill:

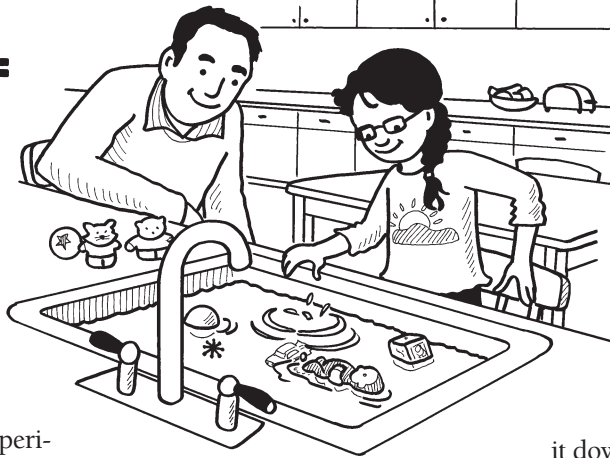
- Write lists together. Your youngster could list animals she’d like to visit at the zoo, jobs she might have when she grows up, or rainy-day activities to try.
- Let her leave messages for family members. You can help her spell the words on a sticky note (“Let’s play a game!”) and find a place to put it where it will be found. Or give her dry-erase markers to write a greeting on a window or a bathroom mirror. She can easily wipe off the glass when she’s finished. ♥



More curiosity = more learning

“Why are the trees bare in winter?” “What are clouds made of?” Kids this age wonder about everything—and that’s good, because curiosity fuels learning. Try these suggestions to feed your youngster’s natural inquisitiveness.

Encourage exploration. Hands-on experiments can satisfy your child’s curiosity and lead to new things to wonder about. For instance, if she wants to know whether toy cars will float, let her test them



to research on your next visit to the library or when you’re online together. That will give both of you a chance to learn new things—and your youngster will see that even grownups are still learning.♥

in a sink. As she experiments, she might wonder which of her other toys will sink and which will float. After she tries them, ask her what the toys that float or sink have in common.

Find out together. Don’t worry if you’re not sure why we get hiccups or why lightning comes before thunder. You can simply say, “That’s a good question. Let’s write it down.” Keep a notebook full of questions



PARENT TO PARENT

Q & A

Advice for parent volunteers

Q: This month, I will be volunteering in my daughter’s classroom. What should I expect?

A: It’s great that you’re going to help your daughter’s teacher. Your youngster will feel proud to see you in her classroom, and volunteering is one way to show her that you care about her school.



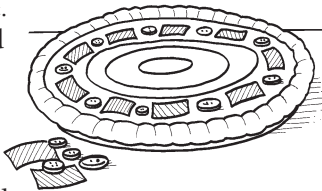
When you arrive at school, go to the office first, since you may need to sign in and get a badge. In the classroom, the teacher will explain what to do. She may have you work with a small group of children, perhaps doing jigsaw puzzles or making a snack. Or maybe she’ll ask you to make copies or cut out letters and numbers. After you leave the classroom, be sure to keep information about the students confidential.

Note: If you have younger children at home, arrange for someone to watch them while you volunteer. Consider swapping child care with another parent who volunteers at a different time.♥

Artsy patterns

My grandson Noah loves doing arts and crafts with me. He’s learning about patterns in school, so I thought our projects could be a great way to practice patterns at home.

I suggested that we color together in my “grown-up” coloring book. I started coloring a swirly design, alternating its stripes purple, blue, purple, blue. I asked Noah to color the next stripe in the pattern, and he made it purple.



Then, Noah wanted to make his own patterns. I gave him craft supplies like crepe-paper scraps and buttons, and he glued them in a pattern around the border of a paper plate.

Now Noah points out patterns to me all the time—in the scarf I’m knitting, on my couch where we snuggle up and read, and on a cake we decorated together!♥

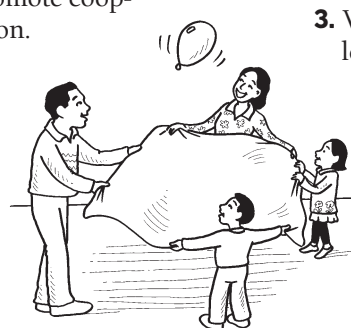
ACTIVITY CORNER

Parachute games

You and your child can play parachute games at home with just a flat bedsheet. Have each family member hold one side of the sheet, and enjoy these activities that promote cooperation and coordination.

1. Take turns deciding how everyone will move the “parachute.” Lift it up high, or make low waves, for example. Keep going until everyone has had a chance to give an instruction.

2. Place a ball on the sheet, and lift to roll the ball from player to player. Your child can count how many times the ball is passed before it falls off. How high will he count?



3. Work together to launch a balloon as high as possible.

4. Fill the center of the sheet with “popcorn” (several crumpled sheets of paper). Everyone shakes the sheet and calls, “Pop, pop, pop!” until all the popcorn “pops” off the parachute.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5567

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2018

KID BITS

Plan ahead for summer

Hot summer days may seem far away, but it's not too early to think about summer child care, since many day camps fill up fast. Ask in the school office or call your parks and recreation department to learn what's available. Also, find out whether your family qualifies for a reduced fee.

Accepting others

Talking about differences in ways your little one can understand will help her learn acceptance. Together, think of how people you know are different and the same. Maybe her best friend has freckles and your child doesn't—but they both have brown hair. She'll begin to see that these things don't matter.

Take numbers apart

Secretly choose a number between 1 and 10, and use two hands to show your youngster that many fingers. For 7, you might hold up 5 fingers and 2 fingers. Then, he can show 7 in another way (4 fingers and 3 fingers). Keep going until you run out of combinations, then play again with a new number.

Worth quoting

"No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn." *Hal Borland*

Just for fun

Q: What has hands but cannot clap?

A: A clock.



Fun on the farm

Moo! Oink! Baa! Whether your little one reads about farms, visits a real one, or plays farm at home, she can learn about animals, discover new vocabulary, and use her imagination. Here's how.

Barnyard stories

Read picture books about farms, and help your youngster make a list of farm words. She could illustrate her list to remember what each word means. She'll learn vocabulary like *calf*, *silo*, *pasture*, and *harvest*. *Tip:* Ask your youngster's teacher or a librarian for book suggestions.

Family field trip

Call your county extension office or go online to find a farm that's open to the public. During your visit, ask your child to identify animals or point out places or activities she recognizes from a book. ("Look, there's *grain* for the *hens*!") Also, workers might tell her which crops grow



on the farm or explain how they use the equipment.

Pretend play

Let your youngster use her imagination to make a miniature farm. She could cover a baking sheet with green paper to create a pasture for toy cows. A shallow bowl of water with blue food coloring might become a "pond" for rubber ducks. Encourage her to act out daily life on a farm by feeding chickens, brushing horses, and putting pigs to bed in the barn.♥

Kid-friendly snacks

With a little help, your child can whip up nutritious snacks. Enjoy working in the kitchen together with these ideas.

● **Yogurt sundae.** Suggest that your little chef mix whole-grain cereal, fresh fruit, and plain yogurt in a bowl, then top with a strawberry.

● **Bread-less sandwich.** Cut a cored apple into thin round slices. Have your youngster put a piece of cheddar cheese or spread nut butter between two slices.

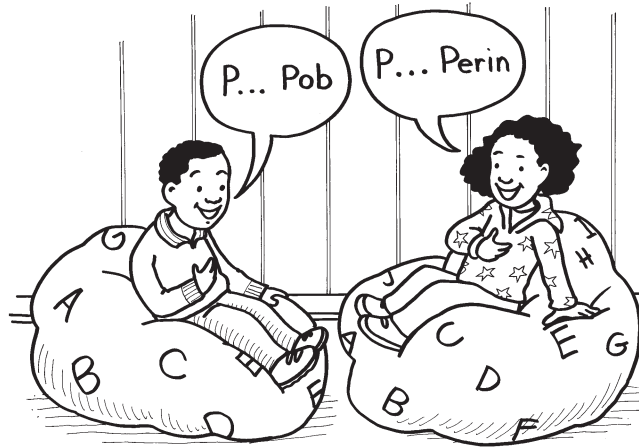
● **Guacamole in a bag.** Cut an avocado in half, remove the pit, and let your child spoon the flesh into a plastic zipper bag. He can add 1 tbsp. diced tomato and 1 tsp. lime juice. Seal tightly. Now he can gently knead the bag until it looks like guac!♥



Name games

Develop your youngster's *phonemic awareness*—his ability to notice sounds and syllables in words—by playing with names. Try these activities.

Sound switch. Your child will laugh while he practices beginning sounds. Ask him to pick any letter in the alphabet (say, P) and pretend it's the new first letter in his name (*Michael* becomes *Pichael*). Encourage him to do the same for other names in your



family (*Pimothy* for *Timothy*, *Pom* for *Mom*). *Tip:* If someone's name starts with a vowel, he can just add the new letter (*Perin* for *Erin*).

Syllable clap. Help your youngster hear separate syllables in names—this will help him sound out parts of words when he reads. First, take turns “clapping” your names, one clap

per syllable. *Sebastian* would clap three times (*Se-bas-tian*), and *Nancy* would clap twice (*Nan-cy*). Now, clap words with the same number of syllables as your name (*car-ni-val* for *Sebastian*, *spring-time* for *Nancy*).♥

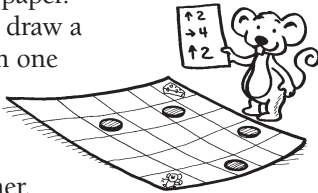
ACTIVITY CORNER



A budding programmer

A *coder* writes instructions that tell computers what to do. Your child can get an early start on programming by leading a “mouse” to “cheese”—no computer required.

1. Help your youngster draw a 5 x 5 grid on a piece of paper. Now, she can draw a cute mouse in one corner and a chunk of cheese in the opposite corner.



2. Have her place pennies in a few squares—these are obstacles for the mouse to avoid.

3. Together, write code to help the mouse find his lunch! She might use arrows to tell him which direction to move and numbers to show him how many boxes to cross. *Example:* →3, ↑2, ←1, ↑2, →3.

4. Let her use the code to trace her finger from the mouse to the cheese. Then, rearrange the obstacles, and write new code.♥

Q & A

Head off bullying

Q: My best friend's son is a year younger than mine. Lately when we get together, my child teases hers. What can I do?

A: You can use this situation to talk to your son about teasing and bullying. Encourage him to think about how he might feel if someone—especially an older child—teased him. Explain that because this boy is younger, he may feel afraid or unable to defend himself. He might also look up to your child and even copy his behavior by teasing others.

Before your friend's next visit, help your son brainstorm kind things to say. He might compliment the boy on his shoes or T-shirt, or he could ask him what he likes about school. Then, consider having them play in the same room with you in case he needs a reminder about how to be kind.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Learning to stay focused

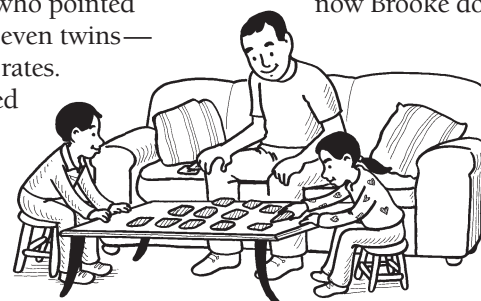
I noticed that one of my twins, Brooke, seemed to have a shorter attention span than her brother did. Her focus would wander when our family played board games, for example. I mentioned this to her teacher, who pointed out that children—even twins—develop at different rates.

She recommended ways to stretch Brooke's attention span. For instance, she suggested that we play Memory with fewer cards

and gradually work up to a full-length game. Or we could set a timer for 10 minutes when we play Crazy 8s, and the winner is the player with the fewest cards when time's up.

We've tried these strategies, and now Brooke doesn't lose interest

before a game ends. The other day, she didn't want to stop playing cards when the timer went off—and we played for almost 30 minutes!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
 800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
 www.rfeonline.com
 ISSN 1540-5567

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2018



KID BITS

Respect personal space

Help your youngster understand personal space with the “hula-hoop strategy.” Have her place a stuffed animal in a hula hoop, and explain that the space inside the hoop belongs to that animal. Then if you notice her crowding someone, remind her to visualize a hula hoop around that person.

“I’m an expert”

Boost your child’s speaking skills and confidence by encouraging him to share his expertise with others. Together, make a badge out of construction paper that says, “Ask me about ___,” and fill in the blank with his specialty. *Examples:* pandas, finger painting, building castles with blocks. Let him wear the badge to your next family get-together.

Capture character

Reinforce good character by catching your youngster in the act—with a photo. If you notice her helping her little brother zip his jacket, for instance, snap a picture. She could glue the pictures on poster board and hang it up to make a “Wall of Good Character.”

Worth quoting

“The earth laughs in flowers.”
E.E. Cummings

Just for fun

Q: What goes up when the rain comes down?

A: An umbrella!



Growing a responsible child

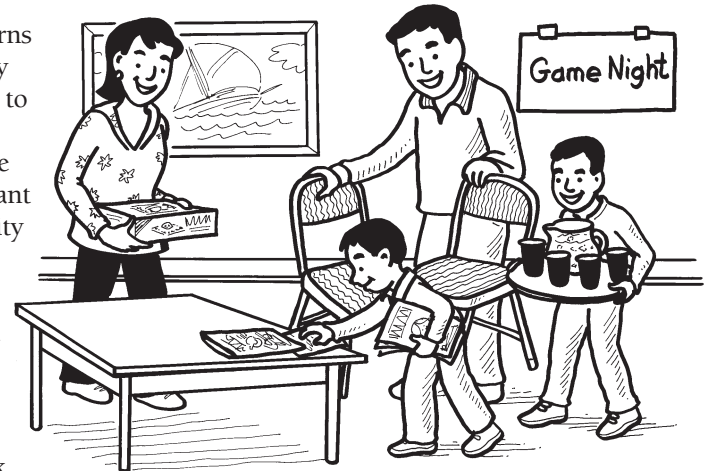
When your child learns responsibility at an early age, he’ll be more likely to grow into a dependable teenager and adult. Here are everyday ways to plant the seeds of responsibility in your youngster.

Sow the idea

Use the word *responsible* to describe your youngster’s actions. (“It was responsible of you to put your library book in your school bag.”) Also, talk about what you’re thinking when you show responsibility—he’s likely to imitate your behavior. You could say, “I want to sit down and read, but I’m responsible for making sure we all have clean clothes tomorrow. I’d better start the laundry first.”

Nurture it

Even the youngest child can handle simple responsibilities like hanging up his jacket or flattening cereal boxes for recycling. Together, make a list of things your youngster is capable of doing, and



give him at least one job each day. Help him print each day’s task on a dry-erase board as a reminder.

Watch it bloom

Make your youngster part of the “team” by having him pitch in along with the rest of your family. (“It’s game night, but we need to straighten up the family room. Let’s work together to finish quickly so we have time for more games!”) Your child will feel included, and you’ll show him the benefits of sharing responsibility.♥

My history

Family history activities let your youngster connect with her heritage. Consider these suggestions:

- Look at a map together, and find the states or countries that family members came from. Ask your librarian for children’s books set in those places, and read them aloud to your child.
- Explore family memorabilia, such as photo albums, yearbooks, or scrapbooks. Your youngster will love getting glimpses of relatives when they were younger.
- Let your child ask family members about important events in their history. Her grandmother might describe her wedding, and her aunt may remember the day she became a big sister to you!♥



Big thoughts for little thinkers

At this age, your youngster is developing different kinds of thinking skills that she'll use throughout school—and all her life. Try these ideas.

Flexible thinking. Play “What could it be?” Name an object, and take turns describing a creative way to use it. Your child might say that a Frisbee could be a steering wheel or a plate. Or a comb might be a miniature rake or a toy fence.



Logical thinking. Try puzzles like this one. Get 4 pennies, 4 nickels, 4 dimes, and 4 quarters. Arrange them in 4 rows of 4. Can your youngster rearrange them so that no two of the same coins are beside each other in the same row or column?

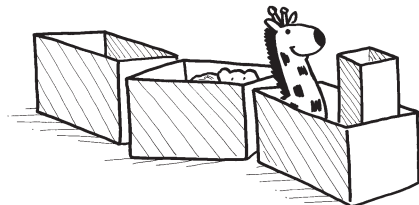
Critical thinking. Ask your child to retell a familiar story from a different character's point of view.

For instance, how would the mom tell the story of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Judith Viorst)? Your youngster will need to consider how the mother thinks and acts to decide how the story would change.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Bring learning home

Recently, my son Miguel's class did a unit on wind and learned to fly kites. That's all he talked about for days! He wanted to make his own kite, so we looked online and found some easy-to-follow instructions.



When I mentioned Miguel's interest to his teacher, she was thrilled. She explained that doing activities related to what's happening in school is a great way to keep him learning at home. Since the class is doing a train unit now, Miguel and I are planning to visit a local railway museum. We are also collecting large cardboard boxes so he can make a train to play with at home.

We had a lot of fun flying our homemade kite, and Miguel is looking forward to teaching me what he learns about trains.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
 800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
 www.rfeonline.com
 ISSN 1540-5567



Q & A Ways to build large motor skills

Q: My daughter prefers quiet activities to running around. How can I help her work on large motor skills so she enjoys being active, too?

A: Any active play, such as kicking a ball or riding a tricycle, will build your child's large motor skills.

Visit neighborhood playgrounds together, and encourage her to try different activities like walking on a balance beam or climbing a “rock wall.” At home, she might have fun painting words or pictures on an outdoor wall of your home or on a fence with a large paintbrush and water. Or let her “skate” around the kitchen on two paper plates.

Your child will benefit from having strong muscles and good coordination for playing and for school. For instance, she uses large motor skills in class when she paints on an easel, participates in Field Day, or plays games in PE.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER Backyard astronomy

The night sky is filled with twinkling discoveries for your young astronomer to make. On a clear evening, stretch out on a blanket in the backyard, look up, and enjoy these activities.

Make a “telescope”

An empty paper towel tube can help your child focus on a specific spot in the sky. Let him gaze through his telescope and describe what he sees.

Compare stars

Have your youngster look for stars that are bigger, smaller,

brighter, or dimmer than others. He may also spot stars that appear to be different colors, such as green, blue, or red.

Find constellations

Use a book or an app to identify constellations. Give him black paper and white crayons to draw the constellations he spots in the sky. Or your youngster could locate his own constellation—perhaps he'll notice a group of stars in the shape of a heart or a dolphin.

Idea: Tell your child that stars twinkle but planets don't. Can he find a planet in the sky?♥

