

You Are Your Child's First and Most Important Teacher

Positive Behaviors

Being able to learn in school includes many things. Certainly it is important to have the “readiness skills” developed so that a child has the background they need. Another important aspect of being able to learn involves behaviors that encourage learning.

ATTENTION: Children who are only 3 and 4 years old do not have a long attention span. We cannot expect them to listen for long periods of time. However, three and four year old children should be able to listen for short periods of time and should be able to complete an activity they begin. If your child is easily distracted, try removing the distractions. Don't have the TV or radio on when they are doing an activity or playing with a toy. Don't read to them while someone is talking in the same room. Try to get them to listen while you are talking to them. Try to increase the time they do something. Play with a puzzle for four minutes every day for a week. The next week, make it five minutes, then six, seven, and keep increasing up to ten. Do the same with reading and other activities. Start with short time periods and get them to listen and gradually increase the time. Keep the area free of distractions.

LISTENING SKILLS: Often we train our children not to listen to us because we repeat everything over and over and they know they can get it the third or fourth time. Tell them something once and no more than twice and expect them to know. Don't keep repeating. If they don't understand, talk to them about what it is they don't understand. Ask them to repeat what you said and tell you what it means.

Play listening games. You say something and have them repeat it back. Start with two things and gradually increase to four. Play the “I went to the store to buy...” game where each person adds something else and you try to remember and repeat the list in order. Say numbers and see if they can repeat them. Start with two numbers and gradually increase to four.

PERSONAL – SOCIAL SKILLS: Accept that some children are naturally shy and that is OK unless it is extreme. Remind children that teachers are their friends. Let them have friends over to play one or two at a time to build up confidence. Take them with you when you visit friends and relatives where they feel safe. Don't talk about it all the time or they will feel that they are expected to be shy and they will live up to that expectation.

Children can become very upset when they are separated from their parents. If you have not left your child very much during the first two or three years you will really help them if you start doing it a little at a time. Leave them with relatives at first, then maybe a friend, and later someone else such as a nursery school teacher, in a Bible School class, or with a baby-sitter. Once they get used to being separated and know you always come back they gain confidence. Many children get off to a rough start because they spend the first month of preschool or even kindergarten making the separation that could have been made earlier. Start working on this now if you haven't already.

Sometimes children have a hard time understanding what to do, there are several possible reasons for this. If the child has very little experience with "school" type things they may be confused because it is all new to them. They will probably do fine once they get used to it. Others have trouble because they aren't paying attention. In these cases, refer back to the listening suggestions. Other children may not yet be developmentally ready. If this is the case, they need experiences that will help them build their readiness. They might benefit from a preschool program to help build some of these early skills. In all cases you might have to spend a little extra time helping them get ready so that starting school will be a good experience.

Probably the single best thing you can do for your child from this day until they start a preschool, prekindergarten, or kindergarten program that will help them the most is **READ TO THEM EVERY DAY**. This builds attention, helps them learn to listen, increases their knowledge, and helps provide quality time with you. We wish you well.