

Early Childhood Parents[®]

May 2018
Vol. 22, No. 9

make the difference!

Watertown Preschool Collaboration
and Family Resource Center



Set healthy limits on your child's use of mobile devices

Research shows that young children spend an average of 48 minutes each day using a smartphone or tablet. That's up from a 15-minute daily average just a few years ago.

The good news is that kids' *overall* screen time hasn't increased—the *kind* of screen they prefer is changing. The bad news is that monitoring their screen time is now even trickier. After all, unplugging is no longer as simple as turning off the TV and computer.

To set healthy limits on your child's mobile-device use:

- **Establish blackout times.** Set periods each day when *all* screens are off (yours, too!). If your child knows that 3-5 p.m. is "tech-free" time, for example, she'll get out of the habit of

reaching for a mobile device during those hours.

- **Power down before bed.** Screens and sleep don't mix. In fact, screens make falling asleep harder. So have your child stop using electronic devices at least one hour before lights-out. And keep them out of your child's room overnight.
- **Leave the tablet at home.** When you're out running errands or sitting in a waiting room, offer your child traditional ways to amuse herself. (Think crayons and paper, a deck of cards, etc.) Show her that her own creative brain is the best "device" she'll ever own!

Source: *The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Kids Age Zero to Eight 2017*, Common Sense Media, nismc.com/ec_devices.

Keep your child moving over the summer



Sometimes it is easy to overlook the importance of motor skills in school success. But making

sure your child is as healthy as possible is a vital step in helping him learn. Developed muscles, bones and joints are the "drivers" of your preschooler's motor skills.

Exercise is one important way to build your child's motor skills. Exercise can also help him:

- **Reduce stress.** Your child will be happier, calmer and better able to cope with the challenges of school and life.
 - **Maintain a healthy weight.** A child whose weight is at a healthy level is more likely to be an adult who keeps a healthy weight.
 - **Sleep better.** A rested child is one who is ready to learn.
- To keep your child moving this summer, encourage him to:
- **Run, walk and skip.**
 - **Participate in swim lessons.**
 - **Ride a big wheel or scooter.**
 - **Play a sport**, like kicking a soccer ball outside.
 - **Play hopscotch** or tag with a friend. Have a balancing contest.

Show your preschooler how to make the most of read-alouds



Experts agree that reading with your child is the best way to prepare her for school success.

The upcoming summer season is an ideal time to establish a daily reading habit. This will start your child off on the right track when she begins school again next fall. /

To make reading aloud a great experience for you and your child:

- **Take a moment** before you start reading to look at the book. Ask your child what she thinks the book is about. Can she get some ideas from the picture on the cover?
- **Read a few pages** and then pause to ask your child a question or two. A great question to ask is: "What do you think will happen next in this story?" This encourages your child to make a prediction. Predicting is an important skill for reading comprehension.
- **Hold your child's interest.** Try using a different voice for each character.

Ask your child, "What do you think this character sounds like? Can you make your voice do the character's voice?"

- **Let her read to you.** If your child is heading to kindergarten in the fall, she may be able to read some of the words in the book. Or, she may know a few sight words. Encourage her to point to a word if she knows it. Then give her the opportunity to read it.
- **Create anticipation.** With a longer book, stop at an exciting place so your child will look forward to reading again the next day!

Source: "Make the Most of Reading Aloud," ReadWriteThink, International Literacy Association, nswc.com/read_aloud.

"If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use in reading it at all."

—Oscar Wilde

Increase your child's self-esteem with love, acceptance & respect



Positive self-esteem is one of the building blocks of school success. All children need love, acceptance and respect

from those around them to develop a positive sense of self.

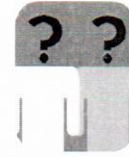
To give your preschooler's esteem a boost:

- **Ask his opinion.** "I didn't make dinner plans yet. What do you think we should eat?" "What's the best TV show for kids?" "What's the coolest place we've ever gone together?" Get your child's input on these kinds of questions and more.

- **Respect his interests.** You don't always have to join in. Often, just saying something like "I notice you really like to build with blocks" is enough.
- **Appreciate his help.** Feeling competent builds self-esteem. Have your child help you with a small chore at least twice a day.
- **Value his company.** Take your child places with you when it is appropriate for him to join you. Tell him you are glad he is along.

Source: K. DeBord, Ph.D., "Self-Esteem in Children," North Carolina Cooperative Extension, North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University.

Are you finding ways to expand your child's world?



It's wonderful for preschoolers to enjoy familiar places and activities. But they also need new experiences to teach them about the world.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're providing your preschooler with engaging learning adventures:

- ___ **1. Do you make** it a habit to try new things as a family, such as interesting foods and sports?
- ___ **2. Do you visit** new places with your child, such as museums and parks?
- ___ **3. Do you go** to the library every week so your child can check out new books?
- ___ **4. Do you plan** opportunities for your child to meet and play with new friends?
- ___ **5. Do you ask** your child to participate in new activities, such as baking or finger painting?

How well are you doing?

If you answered mostly *yes*, you're doing a great job of teaching your child about the world. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Parents
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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1267

For subscription information call or write:
The Parent Institute, 1-800-756-5525,
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May.
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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

Study shows that building respect in early years is effective



Over time, kids become respectful not just because it's right, but because they understand how it feels.

They realize that it feels good to be asked politely, thanked and treated nicely. But they need parents' help to learn this.

A study of moms and preschoolers published by the Economic and Social Research Council shows that:

- **Talking to preschoolers** often about people's thoughts and feelings makes a difference. For example, "That little boy is crying. Why do you think he's upset?" Or, "Grandpa is frowning. How do you think he's feeling?" These conversations give your preschooler opportunities to be understanding.

- **Discussions about feelings** have long-term benefits. Talking with your preschooler now may help her for many years to come—well into elementary school, when having positive social skills will make it easier to get along with classmates and teachers.
- **Being a positive role model** is important. When talking about other people's emotions, use a warm tone. Research suggests this increases kids' cooperation. Keep in mind that in addition to discussing real-life emotions, it helps to address how characters in books, movies and TV shows might be feeling.

Source: N. Yuill and others, "The Relation Between Parenting, Children's Social Understanding and Language," Economic and Social Research Council.

Simple activities make summer learning fun for preschoolers



Your preschooler doesn't need to sit at a desk to keep learning over the summer. A few simple and fun activities will

keep him engaged and motivated. When preschool resumes in the fall, he'll be ready for a successful year.

Here are a few to try:

- **Make mealtime learning time.** Have your child sort utensils or count plates. Teach him about wholes, halves and quarters by folding napkins. Have conversations during meals. The bonding that takes place over family meals benefits children socially and academically.
- **Be scrappy.** Help your child put together a scrapbook of his summer memories. He can paste in photos or drawings of his experiences. Then, let him dictate captions for you to write underneath.
- **Get more from a trip to the store.** Have your child help you look for the items you need. Read a word on a label and ask your child to point to the word and repeat it back to you. Show him the price and explain that this tells customers how much money they will need to buy the item.
- **Put on a show.** Being able to speak in front of others is a skill that will help your preschooler at school and in life. Make puppets from socks, or just use stuffed animals and bring them to life. Help your child think up a situation, such as visiting a friend or going on a trip. Then help him act it out using the puppets or dolls. Have him practice the show for his friends or other adults.

Q: I am a little concerned about my daughter's ability to pay attention in kindergarten next fall. I know kindergarten will involve more seat work than preschool did. Can you explain the attention span needed for kindergarten and give me tips for helping my child?

Questions & Answers

A: Kindergarten does involve more seat work, but this work will take place in small chunks. Kindergarten teachers are well aware that their charges are ages five or six and have a strong need to be active.

In kindergarten, your child will be expected to pay attention to the teacher or to one activity for at least 15 minutes at a time. As the year goes on, she may have to pay attention for up to 25 minutes (for an engaging activity).

To boost your preschooler's attention span:

- **Limit screen time.** Zoning out in front of the TV is a passive activity. It promotes a child's desire to be entertained with constant changes of scenery.
- **Encourage time with toys** such as puzzles and blocks. Playing with these builds concentration.
- **Practice following directions.** Start with one-step directions, such as, "Hang your jacket on the hook." Move on to two-step directions, such as, "Bring me the bag and then hang your jacket on the hook." When she masters this, try three steps or more.
- **Read!** This is the best activity of all. Your child learns to engage with the story and use her imagination. Also encourage her to look at books on her own.

The Kindergarten Experience

Make first-grade readiness part of summer fun



The kindergarten year is coming to an end and your child will soon be entering first grade!

While this transition is exciting, it can be a bit intimidating for kids and parents. Thankfully, it can also be fun!

To make sure your child is ready, plan enjoyable summer activities that emphasize first-grade skills, such as:

- **Reading.** Keep the library's calendar of events handy. In addition to attending story times and special programs, visit often to check out books. Read with your child every day and spend time discussing materials. Talk about the difference between fact and fiction.
- **Writing.** Keep a journal of your family's experiences, such as swimming, traveling and seeing the ocean. Have your child add drawings and words to each page.
- **Counting.** Children love counting interesting things, such as blocks, steps and toys. Once your child has mastered the basics, move on to counting by twos, fives and tens.
- **Printing names.** Students may be required to write their first and last names on school papers. When doing summer projects, encourage your child to add her name with pride!
- **Social skills.** Continue to enforce rules and routines at home. Give your child lots of opportunities to play and interact with other children. Talk about how to recognize others' feelings. Help your child practice sharing.

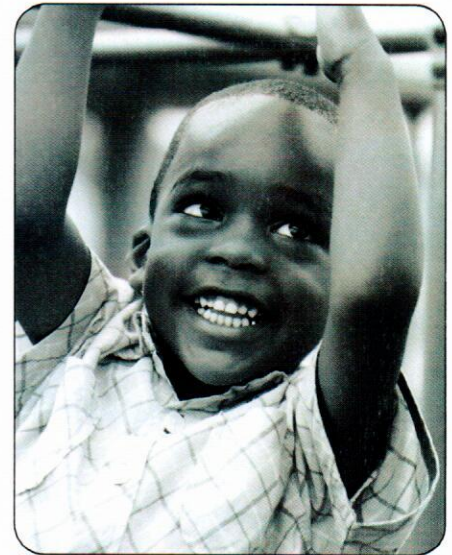
Three strategies keep your kindergartner safe this summer

Summer exploring away from the familiar confines of your home or yard demands a different kind of discipline.

And now that your child is a kindergartner, he may think he's all grown up. But even school-age children need to stay with or near a responsible adult when they are out.

Talk to your kindergartner about ways he can stay safe this summer and follow these three tips:

1. **Be hands on.** Tell your child when you are in a place where he must hold your hand—such as crossing a street or entering a crowd.
2. **Be “eyes on.”** When you are at a playground, teach your child to stay where he can see you and you can see him at all times.
3. **Establish a safe spot** or person that your child can go to if he is lost. A



safe person could be a person in uniform or an employee. A safe spot could be on a bench, near a sign, or inside a store—in sight, out of traffic and away from water.

Maintain your child's routines this summer to yield fall success



Summer is almost here, and even though your schedule is about to change, your priorities aren't. That means

certain habits should stay the same.

Your child's return to school in the fall will be easier if you maintain these routines:

- **Stick to a regular bedtime.** You might adjust your child's bedtime for summer fun, but enforce it consistently.
- **Start on the right foot.** Help your child follow school morning

routines *every* morning. For example, he should wake up, get dressed, brush his teeth, comb his hair and eat a nutritious breakfast.

- **Visit the library regularly.** At most schools, students make regular trips to the library. Keep this up so your child is used to checking out, reading and returning books.
- **Limit screen time.** No matter how much free time your child has, set healthy limits for the amount of time your child spends in front of the TV, computer and mobile devices.