

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School
Willingboro School District



February 2020

Build time into your child's day for listening and polite speaking

Listening is a key part of classroom learning. To learn by listening, your child will need not only to pay attention and think, but also to wait to speak until it's his turn.

When you encourage and model respectful listening and talking skills at home, your child is more likely to use them effectively in school. Practice during:

- **Family meals.** Chatting at the table is an ideal way for your preschooler to strengthen conversation skills. Have family members take turns telling something about their day. Make a rule that when someone is talking, others don't speak.
- **Read aloud time.** Reading aloud with your child develops his ability to learn by listening. Ask questions about the book. "Can you tell me which part of the story you liked best?" "Does this story remind you of any other stories we've read?"
- **Playtime.** Games such as Simon Says have been around forever because they are fun and they teach young children to listen carefully. So do songs with actions, such as Hokey Pokey. You can also replace the words to your family's favorite songs with the syllable "la" and have everyone take turns guessing what the song is. Even when your child knows the answer, he will have to wait until it is his turn to guess.



Get crafty with homemade valentines

Making valentines together is a great way to show your love for your child—and help her develop school skills and kindness toward others.

Consider making and giving:

- **Handprint cards.** Draw some large hearts on paper and help your child cut them out. Pour some nontoxic paint into a shallow dish, then let her dip her palm into it and press it on each heart. Add a message such as "Love goes heart in hand." Show your child how to sign her name.
 - **Cookie hearts.** Have your child help with measuring, rolling and cutting out the cookies with a plastic heart-shaped cutter. After baking, decorate them together any way you wish.
 - **Pipe cleaner valentines.** Show your preschooler how to thread beads on a pipe cleaner. Shape it into a heart and help her twist the ends tightly together.
- Help your child deliver her valentines and experience the pleasure of spreading love and kindness.

Make attendance a priority

Even in preschool, attendance makes a difference. Missing just two days a month can have a negative effect on a child's reading and math skills, and kindergarten readiness.

Commit to getting your child to school on time every day. Ask about his learning and how you can help. The better prepared you are, the better prepared he'll be.

Source: "Early and Often: Showing up in Preschool Matters 2.0," Attendance Works, niswc.com/priority.

Investigate the five senses

Help your child understand what her senses can help her do. Together, experiment with:

1. **Sight:** Have your child look at several items on a tray, then cover her eyes. Take one item away. When she opens her eyes, can she say what's missing?
2. **Touch:** Place small items in a paper bag. Have her reach in and guess what an item is by feeling it.
3. **Smell:** Lead your child around the house with her eyes closed. What smells can she name?
4. **Hearing:** Go outside after dark. Can she name the sources of the sounds she hears?
5. **Taste:** Pour some salt and sugar in piles on a plate. They look the same. They feel the same. Do they taste the same?



Children thrive on routines

Routines provide structure and help kids feel secure. And studies show that following routines for bedtime, meals, reading and playtime also supports young children's school readiness. Routines don't need to be complex. Simple, regular patterns and rituals are all it takes.



Source: L.K. Ferretti and K.L. Bub, "Family Routines and School Readiness During the Transition to Kindergarten," *Early Education and Development*, Taylor & Francis.



My child is turning into a lump. What can I do?

Q: My child would rather play quietly than be physically active. I worry that she isn't getting the exercise she needs. How can I encourage her to get moving?

A: Regular exercise is important for preschoolers. It strengthens bodies and builds motor skills. It also has a positive effect on learning. To make fitness an enjoyable part of your child's life:

- **Schedule regular times** for physical activity when your child is likely to have the most energy.
- **Get creative.** Fitness doesn't have to involve boring exercises. You and your child could build a snowman or play a game of tag. You can even "ice skate" on the kitchen floor in your socks.
- **Plan activities** that make your child feel successful. Don't choose sports that require more agility than she has. Let your child pick the activity at least once a week.
- **Use exercise** instead of sugary treats as a reward. "After we finish picking up the toys, we can put on scarves and pretend to be butterflies!"
- **Limit screen time.** Watching a video or playing with an app doesn't require much physical or mental energy. Offer active alternatives.



Are you using discipline to teach?

Many parents find it challenging to discipline their child in ways that teach, rather than punish. Are you practicing effective discipline with your preschooler? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you focus** on just a few important rules—and explain them in words your child understands?
2. **Do you apply** rules consistently, so your preschooler always knows what to expect?
3. **Do you set** expectations for your child that are appropriate for his age—not too tough or too lenient?
4. **Do you stay** calm when your child misbehaves? Explain the correct behavior that you would like to see.
5. **Do you compliment** your child's good behavior more than you scold him for errors?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are using discipline to teach good behavior. For each *no*, try that idea.

"To raise problem solvers, focus on solutions, not retribution."

—L.R. Knost

Chores teach responsibility

Preschoolers learn a lot by doing. When you give your child chores to do at home, she learns to be responsible. She also learns that maintaining a home is a group effort and her work helps everyone. Children who are three and up can:

- **Feed a pet** dry food and give it water.
- **Clean using simple tools**, such as a feather duster or a small hand broom.
- **Wipe down doorknobs**, bannisters and other frequently touched places.
- **Collect shoes** that have been left out and put them away.

Nurture good character

Praise and consequences can motivate kids to behave the way parents want. But ultimately, you want your child to behave well because it's the right thing to do. To encourage this:

- **Provide unconditional love.**
- **Be a role model.** If you always speak to others—and about them—with respect, chances are your child will, too.
- **Teach your child to apologize** and make amends when he makes a mistake.
- **Help him notice opportunities** to do good deeds. "Dad's phone is on the floor. Let's pick it up and give it to him."

Talk about relative size

A grape is small when compared to an orange. But when compared to a raisin, it's big. To explore the concept of relative size, help your child measure and compare the sizes of things around her. Use words like *bigger*, *smaller*, *shorter* and *longer*. "This crayon is four inches long and that banana is eight inches. The crayon is *shorter* than the banana. The banana is *longer* than the crayon."



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