

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2014

Westerville City Schools

## KID BITS



### Rhyme time

While waiting at the doctor's office or in traffic, practice rhyming words with your youngster. For example, say, "What rhymes with star?" (*bar, car, far*). Take turns until you can't think of any more, and then pick a new word to rhyme. Playing with rhymes will help your child sound out words as he learns to read.

### Activities to share

Before holiday gatherings, let your youngster gather toys and activities that encourage sharing and playing together. She might collect board games, building blocks, and paper and crayons, for instance. Place the items in easy reach for use when company comes.

### Imaginary vacation

Taking a pretend trip is a fun way for your child to stretch his imagination. Have him close his eyes and imagine he's on a lake or in the mountains. Ask him to tell you what he sees and does. For a trip to the mountains, he could describe the green trees, snowy peaks, and uphill hikes.

### Worth quoting

"Never be afraid to sit awhile and think." *Lorraine Hansberry*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has a thumb and four fingers but isn't alive?

**A:** A glove!



## Handling life's letdowns

Does disappointment turn your child's smile into a pout? While it's tempting to try to fix everything for her, experts suggest teaching her ways to work through her feelings instead. These ideas will help her cope when things don't go her way.

### Set the stage for success

When you know a situation may be hard for your youngster, try to prepare her ahead of time. For example, does she get upset if she loses a game? Consider creating a family rule: after playing, everyone shakes hands and says, "Good game." Tell her that while it's okay to feel sad, throwing a fit takes the fun out of game time.

### Learn from setbacks

Today's meltdown can become tomorrow's success. Say your child got mad in school because she didn't get to be the line leader. Together, think of three ways she could react if she is in the same



situation again. *Examples:* Take deep breaths, think of another way she can be a classroom helper.

### Bounce back

Encourage your youngster to recover from a setback by looking on the bright side. If her friend cancels a play date, you might say, "I know you're disappointed. Can you think of something fun you could do instead?" Practice this strategy a few times, and she'll gradually learn to bounce back on her own. ♥

## Let's make music!

Playing and hearing music can increase your youngster's listening skills, memory, and coordination. And there's evidence that it helps with reading and math, too. Inspire him to enjoy music with these tips:

- Tap out four or five notes on a toy keyboard or xylophone, and see if your child can copy you. He'll need to listen carefully and remember the notes you played. Then, let him play notes for you to copy.
- Help your youngster make a drum. He can use construction paper and tape to cover a coffee or oatmeal canister and then decorate it with crayons. Put on a CD, a playlist, or the radio, and have him use wooden spoons to play to the beat of the song. ♥



# Today's forecast: Learning

Whether it's sunny and mild or cold and snowy, weather brings plenty of learning opportunities. Try these activities with your youngster.

**Read books.** Together, read stories that match the weather. Your child will begin to make connections between books and real life—an important reading comprehension skill. If it's snowing, you might sit by the window and read a book like *The Snowy Day* by

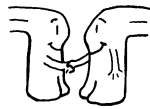


Ezra Jack Keats. What does your youngster see outside that matches the pictures? Or you could read about a different kind of weather and make comparisons (try *At the Beach* by Anne and Harlow Rockwell).

**Observe and draw.** Have your child record each day's weather. He can go outside to check the weather and then draw a

symbol (cloud, sun) on the calendar to match. At the end of the week, let him count and tell you how many of each symbol he drew. ("We had 4 cloudy days and 3 sunny days.") Ask, "Were there more cloudy days or sunny ones?"♥

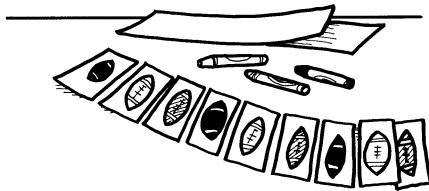
## ACTIVITY CORNER



### Pattern puzzle

Red, blue, red, blue... what comes next? This puzzle encourages your youngster to make patterns—a skill that will help her understand number patterns.

**Materials:** empty cereal or snack box, crayons, scissors



Cut a strip of cardboard from the box. Then, have your child draw a colorful pattern on the strip. She might alternate green, yellow, and purple footballs, for example, and then repeat the pattern. Next, help her cut the strip into individual puzzle squares with one football per square.

She can mix up the pieces and put the pattern back together. Ask her to name each color as she goes. If she gets stuck, suggest that she start from the beginning: "Green, yellow, purple, green..."♥

### Q & A Meeting siblings' needs

**Q:** My younger son, James, has special needs and requires extra attention from us. How can I explain this to my kindergartner, Evan, so he doesn't get so jealous?

**A:** Kindergartners may be too young to understand special needs, but they're beginning to pick up on differences. Acknowledge Evan's feelings, and explain the situation in basic terms. *Example:* "I know you're feeling left out. It's hard for James to do some of the things you can do, so we spend extra time helping him."

Then, try to set aside one-on-one time each day with your older son. If James goes to speech or physical therapy, you might take a walk with Evan during the appointment. Or play together after your little one goes to bed. If you have close relatives nearby, you could arrange for Evan to do special activities with them, too.♥



### PARENT TO PARENT Not Pinterest-perfect

I enjoy looking at all the creative crafts and activities on Pinterest and other websites. But when my daughter Sophie and I try projects, they rarely turn out like the ones in the photos.

I was telling my sister about this, and she just laughed. She reminded me of things we used to do with our parents. We didn't care if our windsocks were crooked or

if our dragon puppets looked like crocodiles. We loved them because they were fun to make.

My sister helped me see that being creative and having fun is more important than perfect projects. Also, my daughter is learning to take chances and try new things without worrying that she'll make a mistake. Our next project: caterpillars made out of egg cartons.♥



#### OUR PURPOSE

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

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