

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

January 2018



SHORT NOTES

What's the source?

Share these ideas for keeping track of sources when your youngster writes reports for school. He can jot each fact on the front of an index card and list the book's title and author on the back. Or he could print out articles and highlight information he plans to use. The URL will be right there at the bottom of the page.

Winter wear

Not too cold, not too hot—your child will concentrate better in school if she's comfortable. Encourage her to dress in layers so she can remove or add as needed. For example, she might wear a sweater over a T-shirt or a vest on top of a blouse.

Developing diligence

When your youngster gives a job his wholehearted effort, he's being *diligent*. To demonstrate, suggest that he fold a few shirts before putting them in a drawer and then just throw in the rest. Ask him if he has done the job right. Point out that diligence will give him better results (unwrinkled shirts).

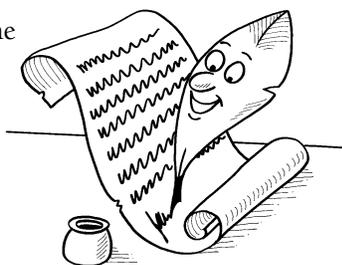
Worth quoting

"Hold on to a true friend with both your hands." *Nigerian proverb*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Where was the Declaration of Independence signed?

A: At the bottom.



Together time

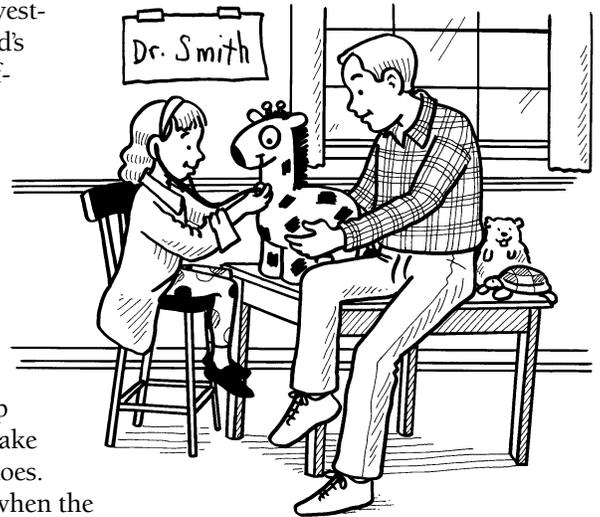
Family time is a worthy investment that can boost your child's communication skills and self-esteem. As a result, she may learn more and behave better in school. Try these ideas for fitting in more time with your youngster.

Maximize minutes

Sharing simple, everyday moments may lead to conversations about school or friends. Ask your child to help you with dinner. She could make the salad while you peel potatoes. Or sing along with the radio when the two of you are in the car or listening to music at home.

Have "play dates"

Join your youngster when she plays. She might teach you the rules for Trouble or Mousetrap, or you could show her a card game you liked at her age. Or pretend with her—maybe she'll be a veterinarian and you'll bring stuffed animals for checkups. Taking turns and role-playing build social skills she needs in school.



Plan ahead

With your child, list special activities you both enjoy, such as going to a flea market, visiting a nature center, or watching a basketball game. Put these on a calendar so you'll plan on them. She'll see that her company is important to you.

Tip: Silence or put away your phone to give your youngster your undivided attention while you chat or play.♥

Celebrate history

For a child, even yesterday can seem like a long time ago. Bring the past into the present for your youngster with these do-it-today activities.

● Celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

This civil rights leader helped to change the world.

How can your family make a difference? Have each person draw a star on a sheet of paper, then cut it out and write one way to help others on each of the star's points. *Examples:* "Make a meal for a sick neighbor." "Play with a classmate who doesn't have a lot of friends."

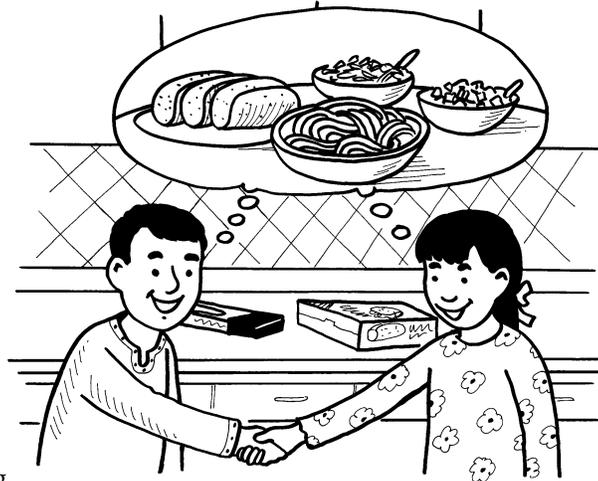
● **Create a personal history museum.** History isn't just about others—your family has its own history, too! Let your child turn a box into a museum filled with items that remind family members of "historic" moments. He might include his T-ball award or a photograph of his little sister in a school play.♥



Keys to collaboration

Here's a skill that will come in handy when your child works with partners or groups: collaboration. He'll need to exchange opinions and solve problems throughout his school career and in future jobs. Share these tips.

Think before answering. In a good discussion, each person builds on others' responses. Practice by asking



one family member wants tacos for dinner and another wants pasta. Perhaps he'll suggest a "taco-spaghetti bar" where you have tortillas *and* noodles, with toppings for both.♥

a "Would you rather" question, such as "Would you rather fly like a bird or transport anywhere instantly?" Maybe you'll say "teleporting" is better because you'd get home from work quickly. Your youngster might reply, "I agree that teleporting would be faster, but I'd like to fly and look at the world below."

Negotiate thoughtfully. Appoint your child "consensus builder" for one week. His job is to think of compromises. Say

PARENT TO PARENT

Peer pressure: Stop and think

My daughter Chloe has a friend who dares her to do things that could lead to trouble. When the girls got a restroom pass from their teacher, this friend pressured her to sneak onto the playground. Chloe said it was hard to say no, and when she did, her friend called her a "scaredy-cat."

I told Chloe I was proud of her for doing the right thing. Then I shared an idea to use if she faces peer pressure. She can picture a



stop sign in her mind—that's her cue to *stop and think*. If she wouldn't want her teacher or me to see her saying yes, she should say no.

We also talked about how true friends will take "no" for an answer. I hope the "stop sign" strategy will help her handle tough situations in the future.♥



Q & A

Encourage active play

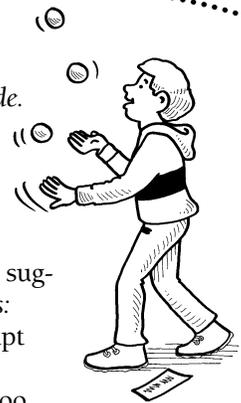
Q: My son used to get plenty of exercise by playing outside. Now that he's older, he spends more time sitting around than running around. How can I get him moving?

A: You're right to want your son to move more, since daily physical activity will keep him healthier.

Challenge your child to think of fun ways to be active, and suggest that he write each one on a separate index card. *Examples:* "Jump rope." "Juggle balls." "Play air guitar." Every day, prompt him to pick a few cards and do what they say.

Encourage him to enjoy physical activity with other kids, too, by joining a sports team or taking a class like karate or gymnastics. You can also help by being active *with* him. Go outside for a game of catch, follow along with a workout video, or play Ping-Pong at the community center.

Between these ideas—and recess and PE at school—your son can get the recommended hour or more of exercise per day.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Make a crystal "garden"

This sparkly science experiment will show your youngster how crystals form.

1. Save the shells from 4 eggs that you've cracked in half. Have your child rinse them and place into an empty egg carton.

2. Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ cup boiling water into a mug. Your youngster should stir in about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salt, a little at a time, until it won't dissolve anymore.

3. Let your child pour 1 tbsp. water into each shell and add a drop of food coloring.

4. Have her check the shells twice a day and record what she sees. Over several days, colorful crystals will form.

5. She could paint her crystals with clear nail polish to preserve them.

The science: As salt dissolves, the water molecules drive apart the salt molecules. When the water evaporates, the salt molecules go back together,

forming a regular geometric pattern called a *crystal*. Snowflakes and diamonds are real-world examples of crystals.♥



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SHORT NOTES

I love you because...

Family members can share what they love about each other with this writing activity. Have your youngster cut out paper hearts. Write love notes on them and hide for others to find. For example, maybe your child will put one under her sister's placemat that says, "I love you because you make me laugh."

On the road again

Carpooling with other parents is a great way to save time and money—and to get to know your youngster's classmates. When you drive, you'll probably hear them discuss school, sports, and friends. *Note:* Ask parents about booster seats—if a child uses one in his parents' car, he'll need one in yours, too.

Indoor "recess"—at home

When winter weather keeps your family inside, ask your child to show you what she does during indoor recess at school. She could teach you games, crafts, or songs she enjoys. Then, encourage her to come up with new ideas to try at home or in class.

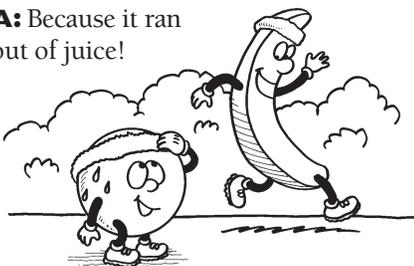
Worth quoting

"Life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale." *Hans Christian Andersen*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why did the orange lose the race?

A: Because it ran out of juice!



Olympic-sized learning

While the 2018 Winter Olympic Games are taking place thousands of miles away, your child can earn a "medal" in learning at home. Turn Olympic magic into educational gold with these suggestions.

Reading

Speed skating, ski jumping, luge...which Winter Olympics sports does your youngster enjoy watching? Head to the library together to pick out books about their history, the rules, and how the athletes train. *Idea:* Hold a "reading Olympics." Let family members count the books they read in February. At the end of the month, everyone can award medals to their three favorites.

Math

Your child will practice gathering, recording, and calculating data to find out which of his favorite countries wins the most medals. Encourage him to divide poster board into four columns: "Country," "Gold," "Silver," "Bronze." In column one, he can list teams he'd like

to follow. Every day, have him check a newspaper or olympic.org and add tally marks for each country's medals. After the Olympics end, he can total them up to see who got the most in each category.

Social studies

Where in the world do the Olympic athletes come from? To explore geography, help your youngster use a map to find countries represented in the Olympics. He might put star stickers on the countries on a wall map. Or let him print out a world map and make a dot on each competing country.♥



Decisions, decisions

Learning to make smaller decisions now will prepare your youngster to make bigger ones later. Here are ways to build her decision-making skills:

- Hearing you think through your choices gives your child an example to follow. You might say, "I'd like to visit Aunt Sue tonight, but then I might not finish this proposal for work. I'll go Saturday instead."
- When possible, give your youngster two to three specific options. That way, she can make a decision without feeling overwhelmed. *Example:* "Do you want to sweep or dust?" rather than "Which chore would you prefer to do?"♥



An anti-bullying attitude

Having a positive attitude toward others can help to keep your youngster from participating in bullying. With these ideas, she'll be more apt to be kind to others and want them to feel included.

1. Watch your words. Let your youngster know you expect her to speak kindly. Before she says something she's unsure about, she could ask herself if she would want *you* to hear it. If she overhears another



student calling a classmate names or gossiping, she could counter the unkind words with nice ones. (“I hear you’re really good at gymnastics.”)

2. Accept everyone.

Leaving people out on purpose is a form of bullying. Suggest that your child look for chances to make others feel that they belong. For example, she might ask to

join someone who normally sits alone on the bus. Or she could invite a new student to her birthday party. She'll see how good it feels to make someone's day—and perhaps she'll even gain a friend!♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Inspired by art

Art unleashes your child's imagination and lets him practice fine-motor skills. Try these tips to encourage him to experiment.



Use natural supplies

Challenge your youngster to find free art materials right in your backyard! For instance, he might use sticks or feathers as paintbrushes. Or he could draw on rocks with colored chalk.

Try new formats

Suggest that your child arrange objects (toys, fruits) on a table and sketch a *still life*. Or go outdoors where he can paint a *landscape* of natural scenery like trees or a pond. If he wants to draw a *portrait*, he could ask a family member to pose—or look in a mirror and create a self-portrait.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Safe to make mistakes

My third grader, Mark, gets discouraged when he can't do something correctly right away. While he was practicing his typing skills, he said, “Forget it, I'm no good at this,” and walked away from the computer.

I told Mark that mistakes are part of learning. I admitted that when I was his age, I wanted to quit the violin because I couldn't get the notes right on my favorite piece. Luckily, the school music teacher encouraged me to continue, and Mark knows that I enjoy playing the violin to this day.

To show Mark his mistakes were “stepping-stones,” I drew circles across a sheet of paper. Each time he made a mistake while typing, I suggested he cross out a stepping-stone and start the sentence again. I knew that if he kept trying, he'd type an error-free sentence before he got to the last stone—and I was right.

Now Mark has a way to track his progress with typing and other things that require persistence.♥



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Q & A

Study with a pencil in hand

Q: When my daughter studies for a test, she simply reads through her notes or textbook chapter once and announces she's finished. How can I help her study more effectively?

A: Reading is an important part of studying. But writing and drawing can help cement the information in her mind—in fun and interesting ways.

For example, if she's studying a textbook chapter, she could write answers to

the end-of-chapter questions or even design her own quiz. When she studies with a classmate, they might write questions on index cards and play “quiz show.”

Sketching pictures is another good study strategy. To prepare for a test on planets, she can draw and label the solar system. Or she could draw pizzas and write fractions on the slices while studying for a math test.♥



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March 2018



SHORT NOTES

School events

Show your child that his school is important by asking about and attending events. Encourage him to post notices about plays, award ceremonies, or talent shows on a family bulletin board. You could also put them into your electronic calendar and turn on notifications to remind you.

Musical vocabulary

Enjoying music with your youngster can help her vocabulary grow. Try introducing her to your favorite songs from when you were growing up, and have her share music she likes. Together, listen for new words, and discuss their meanings.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than half of all smokers took their first puff by age 14, so it's not too early to talk to your child about smoking. And with e-cigarette use on the rise, he may think they're a safe alternative. Explain that most e-cigarettes still contain nicotine, which is addictive.

Worth quoting

"We grow great by dreams."
Woodrow Wilson

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What do you get when you cross a rooster and a giraffe?

A: An animal that can wake people on the top floor of a building.



Be "super" respectful

Being respectful is one way your youngster can build strong relationships with teachers, classmates, and family members. Here are tips for helping her understand and show respect.

Imagine your powers!

If your child were a respect "superhero," what would her super-powers be? Let her draw a picture of herself in this role. She might be carrying a backpack full of supplies for writing thank-you notes. Or perhaps she'll be wearing a bracelet with a "grabber" that picks up litter to show respect for the environment.

Roll for respect

Have your youngster number a sheet of paper 1–6. Beside each number, she could list a person (custodian, bus driver, neighbor). Take turns rolling a die and naming a way to show respect for that person. If 2 is for bus driver, she



might say, "Follow bus rules." That demonstrates respect for the job he does.

Write a poem

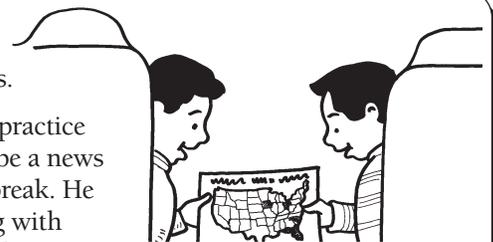
Suggest that your child write the word RESPECT down the left side of a sheet of paper. She can make an *acrostic* poem by writing a way to show respect that begins with each letter in the word. *Examples:* "Really listen when others speak" for R, "Everyone's equal—treat them that way" for E.♥

Break for learning

During spring break, inspire your child to enjoy learning adventures outside the classroom. Consider these ideas.

● **Live coverage.** Let your youngster practice writing and speaking by pretending to be a news reporter covering your family's spring break. He might write about activities like playing with cousins or making his favorite meal with you. At the end of the week, invite him to read his "broadcast" to the family.

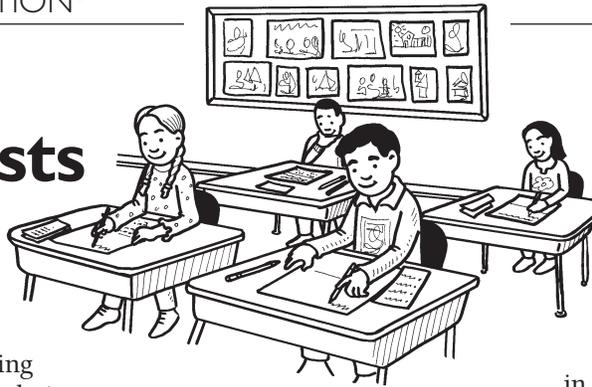
● **Spot the state.** Print out a United States map online, or have your child draw one, and take it in the car. Everyone calls out license plates they see from different states, and your youngster finds and colors each state on his map. How many states will he locate by the end of spring break?♥



Ready for standardized tests

Springtime is state test time for many students. Encourage your child to do his best with this advice.

Be strategic. Suggest that your youngster use strategies that increase his chances of getting the right answer. If he has to answer multiple-choice questions about a passage, he could read the questions first so he knows what to look for in the text. For fill-in-the-blank items, he might read the sentence with each possible answer to see which one makes the most sense.



Plan before writing. Your child will do better on a short answer or essay section if he takes time to plan what he will write. This may be as simple as listing his main points on scrap paper. Then, he can write about each point in a separate paragraph in his essay. Or he might create an outline. His essay will be more organized, and he'll be more likely to include all the important information.

Idea: Tell your youngster to stay calm and confident. Remind him that he has been preparing for the test simply by going to school and completing his work.♥

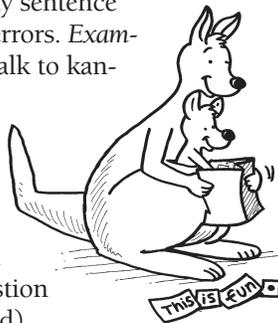


ACTIVITY CORNER

Grammar detective

Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation will help your youngster write clearly and effectively. Practice together with these activities:

- Write a funny sentence that contains errors. *Example:* "can you talk to kangaroos." Let your child read it and correct your mistakes (capitalize the C in *can*, put a question mark at the end). Then, she could write a sentence with errors for you to fix.



- Together, cut out words and punctuation marks from newspaper or magazine headlines. Put them in a bag, and have your youngster pull out one at a time until she can form a sentence using correct grammar and punctuation.♥

Q & A Build sibling bonds

Q: *I'd like my kids to be close, but they bicker a lot. How can I help them have a better relationship?*

A: It's common for siblings to squabble. What's important is that they form a connection that helps them enjoy each other (at least sometimes) and handle disagreements. Try giving them tasks that require them to rely on each other. For instance, one might wash dishes and the other dry them, and then they could put them away together. Also, encourage them to spend time doing something they both enjoy, like hitting baseballs or playing with toy dinosaurs. Finally, use their disagreements to build their conflict-resolution skills. When they argue, let them take turns setting a timer for 1 minute and explaining their side to the other. If they can't come up with a solution, suggest they take a break by going into separate rooms. They can try again when they've both calmed down and had a chance to think.♥



PARENT TO PARENT Protecting your child online

My fifth grader, Sadie, likes to watch videos on a kid-friendly website. I worried that she might come across something inappropriate, so I looked at the site's help page.

Luckily, I found several safety features. I marked Sadie's account private and disabled the "comment" option. And I changed her search settings so mature content will be less likely to pop up.

I explained to Sadie that the changes would help keep her safe from strangers and away from videos that may upset or confuse her. But since I know settings aren't foolproof, I told her to come to me if she sees anything that bothers her. I also reminded her not to upload anything without my permission and to never post personal information.

I still keep an eye on Sadie's internet use, but I feel like she's better protected now. Plus, she's learning good habits for the future.♥



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April 2018



SHORT NOTES

“I remember that!”

Your child may recall information better if she uses strategies to cement facts and details in her mind. For example, she might close her eyes and visualize each type of coin with its value written on it. Or she could silently repeat instructions immediately after the teacher gives them.

Learn about birds

Making a bird feeder will encourage your youngster to observe nature. Have him coat an empty toilet paper tube with peanut butter and roll it in birdseed. Hang it from a tree branch. Then, your child can sketch his feathered visitors and try to identify them using a library book or website.

DID YOU KNOW?

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day is April 26. If your employer allows it, give your youngster an on-site glimpse of your job. Show her what you do, and try to assign her a special job. She might help with a window display or organize your files, for instance.

Worth quoting

“We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same.” *Anne Frank*

JUST FOR FUN

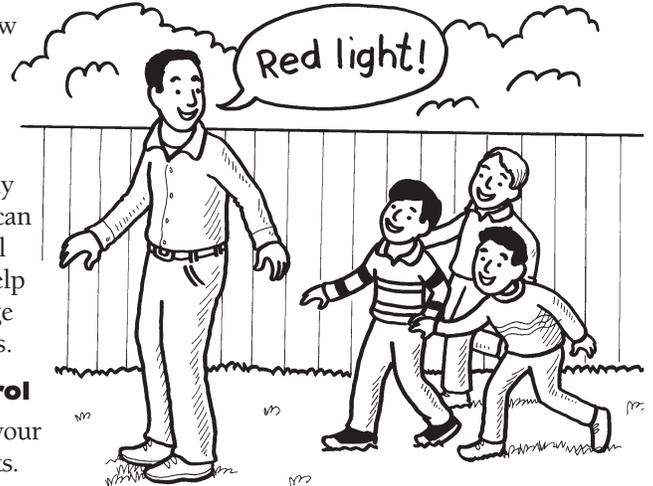
Q: You can see me in water, but I never get wet. What am I?

A: My reflection.



In charge of me

If your child knows how to manage his emotions and behavior, he'll do better at getting along with others and handling the ups and downs of everyday life. These skills, in turn, can make him more successful in school and at home. Help your youngster take charge of himself with these ideas.



Encourage self-control

- Play games that require your child to think before he acts. For instance, try Red Light, Green Light. Name a way for him to cross the room or yard (skip, hop, tiptoe). He'll have to resist the urge to move unless you give him the “Green light” and make himself stop when you say “Red light.”
- Tell your youngster what you expect before heading into situations that are hard for him. Maybe he tends to put random items in the grocery cart. Describe what you want him to do instead, such as getting permission before taking groceries off a shelf. Then, let him know you notice when he does what you asked.

Be a coach

- Ask questions or make gentle suggestions when your child is frustrated. Say he's upset because he can't solve a math problem for homework. You could ask, “Where could you find help?” Or recommend that he take a break or temporarily switch to another assignment.
- Talk about how you deal with your own feelings. You might say, “I'm aggravated about this notice from the cable company. I'll call customer service once I've had a chance to calm down.”♥

Play it safe

Visiting playgrounds gives your youngster a chance to be active and social. Keep her safe with these precautions.

Supervision. Watch your child closely as she plays. Or consider taking turns with a neighbor who has kids—that gives your youngster the added benefit of having a playmate.

Equipment use. Remind her to go down the slide instead of up it and to swing from monkey bars rather than climbing on top of them. Also, she should stand or walk a safe distance away from swings that other children are using.



Note: Tell your youngster never to chase after a ball that rolls into the street. She can ask you or another adult to get it for her.♥

Kindness: Spring into action

Being kind is always in season—and it can give your child a more positive outlook and help her think of others. Try these tips for encouraging kindness.

Surprise, surprise! Together, brainstorm ways your youngster could surprise someone with kindness. She might leave a cheerful message for a neighbor (“You



brighten my day”) with sidewalk chalk and sign her name. Or perhaps she’ll make a list of things she admires about a sibling and put it where he will find it. At school, maybe she’ll let a classmate go ahead of her at the water fountain.

Reach out. As a family, think about how to show

kindness in your community. Deliver Meals on Wheels, and have your child decorate place mats to include. Or save spare change in a jar—when it’s full, buy crayons and coloring books from the dollar store and donate them to a children’s hospital.♥

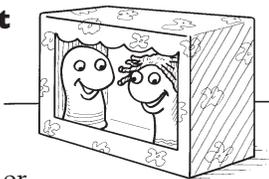
ACTIVITY CORNER

A passion for hobbies

Having a hobby gives your youngster a productive way to spend free time while building skills he can apply in school. Encourage him to develop a hobby with this advice.

Find a good fit

Notice what your child is interested in. If he likes putting on puppet shows or building things, look for supplies at home or visit a craft store. He might discover odds and ends to make a puppet theater or discover a robot-building kit.



Provide opportunity

Make sure your youngster has time to explore his hobby—limiting screen time can help! Also, give him a portable container for storing supplies or his collection of trading cards or stamps. He’ll have an easy way to enjoy his hobby wherever he goes.

Boost knowledge

Suggest that your child read books or watch how-to videos. A hobby shop may offer free classes. Or the school, library, or community center might have a club or class related to his hobby.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

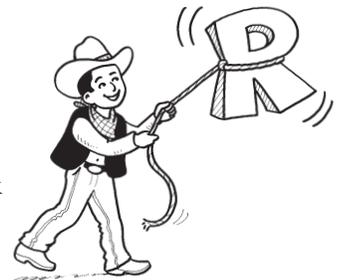
How to give effective feedback

My third grader, Jack, gets speech therapy to help him say his Rs. His therapist shared ideas for giving him feedback when I work with him at home—and her suggestions are useful for more than just speech practice.

First, she recommended that I be specific so Jack knows exactly what he did well. I might tell him, “You said your Rs correctly at the beginning *and* the end of river.” I’ve been trying out the therapist’s advice in other situations, too. Recently, I said, “It was nice of you to help your brother reach that toy,” instead of, “You’re a good brother.”

I also encourage Jack by being positive. When he mispronounces a word, I’ll say something like, “You’ve almost got it! Try again.” That strategy also comes in handy when he wipes down the kitchen table but leaves a few crumbs, for example.

The more I use these techniques, the more natural they feel. Jack’s speech is improving, and I feel like my parenting is, too.♥



Q & A Reading between the lines

Q: My daughter’s teacher said the class is learning to make inferences—or, as Sadie explained it, “read between the lines.” What are fun ways to work on this at home?

A: Try using everyday situations to let your child practice inferring. You might have family members put umbrellas and rain boots by the door before bed and ask, “What can you infer?” (It’s supposed to rain

tomorrow.) Or set out a colander, and boil a pot of water. She might infer that you’re making macaroni for dinner.

When your daughter makes a statement like “The dog sure doesn’t like thunder!” say, “How can you tell?” She may point out that he hides under the table or is glued to your side during storms.

Ask these same questions when you read together: “What can you infer?” and “How can you tell?” Her real-life practice is sure to come in handy.♥



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May 2018



SHORT NOTES

The art of flexibility

Being flexible will allow your child to switch gears if plans change at the last minute or something doesn't work out as expected. Help him learn to "flex" his mind by playing board games with new rules you make up. Also, discuss how it's possible to do the same thing in different ways, such as taking two routes to the same house.

Hands-on studying

With household materials like sugar or rice, your youngster could add variety to her studying. Suggest that she spread sugar or rice into a baking dish and write spelling words or math facts with her finger. Using her senses can cement the information in her mind.

Annual checkup time?

If your child needs a checkup before school starts in the fall, book his appointment early. Pediatricians' schedules fill up quickly in the summer. *Tip:* Most schools require specific immunizations, so check that your youngster is up to date.

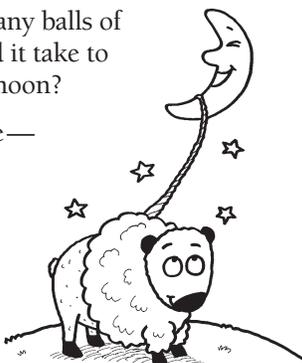
Worth quoting

"If you look the right way, you can see that the whole world is a garden."
Frances Hodgson Burnett

JUST FOR FUN

Q: How many balls of yarn would it take to reach the moon?

A: Just one—
if it's big enough!



Month-by-month learning

How can you keep the learning going while school is out? Try these fun ideas for taking advantage of monthly celebrations! Your child's skills will stay sharp, and you'll enjoy family time, too.

May

Let your youngster cycle her way to math practice during *National Bike Month*. Encourage her to set a goal for time spent biking, and then take regular family bike rides. She can create a graph to track her progress. Perhaps she'll make a picture graph and draw 1 bike wheel for every 15 minutes of cycling. She'll be able to calculate her time at a glance.

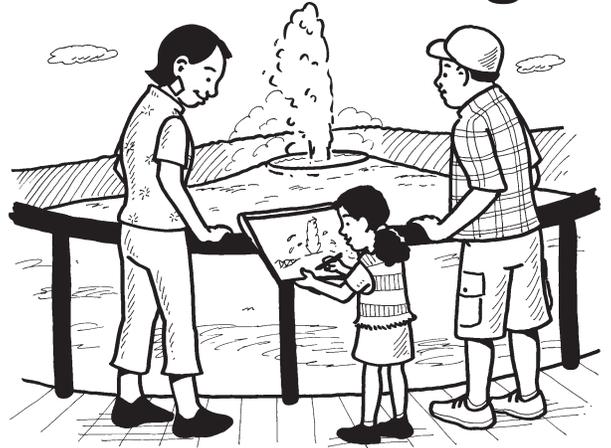
June

Inspire your child to use persuasive writing during *National Safety Month*. Together, brainstorm safe behaviors (wear seat belts in the car, stay indoors during thunderstorms). Next, have her make posters with slogans ("Be on the safe side: Buckle up before you ride!"), facts ("Seat belts save lives"), and photos of family members following the rule.

It's a wrap

Help your youngster bring the school year to a successful close with this to-do list:

- Thank teachers and other school staff. Your child could make cards or write thoughtful notes to show his appreciation.
- Suggest that he offer to assist his teacher with year-end jobs like taking down bulletin boards or packing up classroom games.
- Have your youngster find and return any books he borrowed from his teacher or the school library.♥



July

Celebrate *National Park and Recreation Month* by exploring nature. Visit local parks, and have your youngster record her observations and use them to design field guides. Take along paper and colored pencils so she can sketch and label plants and animals, describe streams, or map out trails.

August

Build communication skills with *National Radio Day*. Challenge your child to "launch" a radio station. She should think about her audience and purpose—who her listeners would be and the type of programming they would want. Now she can develop scripts and record broadcasts!♥



Gaining life skills

The older your youngster gets, the more he'll be able to do for himself. Teach him basic life skills with these ideas.

Do tasks together. Your child may be too young to cook dinner or clean the entire bathroom by himself, but he can move toward doing those jobs by helping you. Give him a task, such as stirring casserole ingredients and pouring the mixture



into a baking dish—then you put it in the oven. Or you might scrub the shower while he wipes down the mirror and sink.

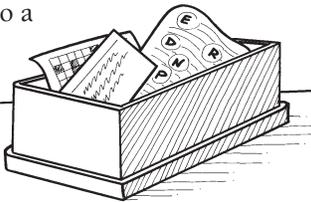
Hand over the reins. Decide what tasks your youngster may be ready for by thinking about what he can already do. If he knows how to make his bed, maybe you'll teach him to change the sheets. Demonstrate putting on the fitted sheet, tucking in the top sheet, and replacing the pillowcase. The next time, let him try it by himself with you nearby for help. Eventually he'll be ready to do it on his own.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

“Escape” puzzles

Escape rooms, where players have to solve puzzles to get out, are popular these days. Here's a way to bring the idea home for free. The bonus? Your youngster will work on logical thinking as she and her friends play.

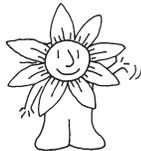
1. Choose a story line. Each child should think of a “mission,” perhaps one related to a topic they're studying or a book they're reading.



Example: “Escape Mars before a dust storm strikes.” She can write the scenario on an index card and place it in a shoebox.

2. Create clues. Have each player make up five puzzles to put in her box. For a Mars puzzle, your youngster might circle letters in a magazine article that can be arranged to spell *red planet* or make a crossword puzzle with words like *spaceship* and *cold*.

3. Escape! Now the children trade boxes and do the puzzles. The first person to solve all five has “escaped.” After they're all finished, they can make new boxes and play again.♥



Q & A Keep a family journal

Q: I'd like for my son to write more this summer. Any suggestions?

A: Your son may be motivated to write more if you make it a family event. Consider starting a household journal, and you'll wind up with a record of your summer together!



Place a notebook and a cup of pens or pencils in a visible spot, maybe on the kitchen counter. Ask everyone to write at least one entry per week. You might write about everyday things, such as swinging on a swing set, or special events like an Independence Day parade. Perhaps your child will add pictures to illustrate journal entries. Or he could tape in mementos like ticket stubs and photographs.

At the end of each week, take turns reading entries aloud. When he goes back to school in the fall, your son may want to share your journal with his new teacher. This is a nice way for her to learn something about your child and his family.♥

PARENT TO PARENT Talk about drugs

Our local police department held an information night about keeping kids away from drugs and alcohol. My daughter Bella is only 8, so I wasn't planning to attend until a friend asked me to go with her. I'm glad I did.

I found out that it is important to talk to children about drugs early and often. Taking the officers' advice, I went home and brought up the subject in a way Bella could understand. I explained that drugs

and alcohol are unhealthy and make it hard for people to do things they enjoy, such as swimming or reading. I also pointed out that these substances are illegal for kids and that if anyone asks her to try them, she should tell me or another adult right away.

Bella promised to say no to drugs. Of course, I know it may not be that easy when she's older and facing peer pressure. But at least the door is open, and we will keep talking about this challenging topic.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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