

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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KID BITS

Research holidays

Why do we have Father's Day? How about Independence Day? As part of your family's celebrations this summer, help your youngster research each holiday in a library book or online. Together, learn about why it started and how people observe it. Then, think of a new holiday tradition for your family to try!

Little citizens

When you obey a law or rule with your child, point it out, and ask why she thinks it's important. For example, she might say that wearing a bike helmet keeps her from hurting her head if she falls. Or she could note that more people get to play if you stick to the tennis court's posted time limit. She'll learn about being a good citizen.

Thoughtful teacher gifts

Consider helping your youngster find an end-of-year gift related to his teacher's interests. If the teacher loves to read, he could give her a bookstore gift card or a bookmark. Or if she follows a sports team, your child might pick out a key chain or a sweatshirt with the team logo.

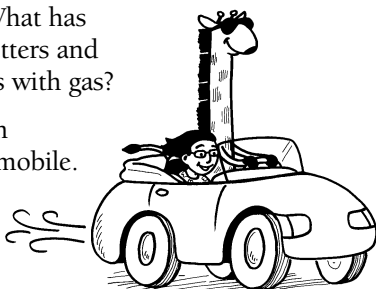
Worth quoting

"The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side." *Margaret Carty*

Just for fun

Q: What has 10 letters and starts with gas?

A: An automobile.



Learning with nature

The outdoors makes a great classroom! By enjoying nature together, your child can work on subjects like science, math, and writing. Here's how.

Start a gardening notebook

How many beans will grow on a green bean plant? How tall will a sunflower get? A gardening notebook is the perfect place for your youngster to record her observations of vegetables and flowers. Plant seeds with her, and, as they grow, she can sketch them in her notebook. Help her label their parts ("stem," "petal") or write other information ("I counted 17 beans").

Run a bug hotel

Punch a few holes in the lid of a clean plastic container to make a "hotel" for bugs. Then, have your child prepare for guests by stocking it with twigs. She can choose a bug (caterpillar, ladybug), carefully place it inside, and give it different kinds of leaves to see what it prefers. Let



the bug "check out" of the hotel (set it free), and try another type of bug. Which one is the best climber? Which one ate the most?

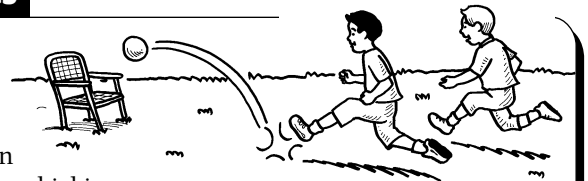
Create natural art projects

Nature is full of art supplies. Your child can dip acorns or maple seeds into finger paint and "stamp" them onto paper to make pictures. She could also drag blades of grass through the paint and then across her paper. Or she might paint rocks and leave them to dry in the sun.♥

Homemade yard games

Keep your youngster active with easy-to-make family games like these:

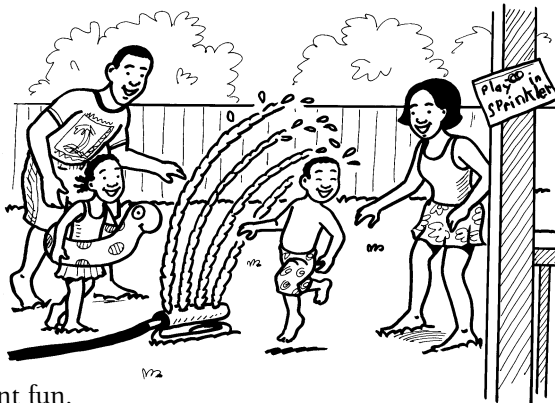
- Choose a target, such as a lawn chair or a trash can, and take turns kicking a playground ball toward it. The person who gets closest picks the next target.
- Ask your child to line up hula hoops or buckets. Then, players try to toss an empty water bottle into each one. If you miss one, your turn ends.
- Use brooms to sweep a tennis ball back and forth to each other across the driveway or sidewalk. See how many times you can pass the ball without missing.♥



Routines for a pleasant summer

When school is out, having a routine lets your youngster know what to expect and can keep him from misbehaving or being bored. Help make days run smoothly with these tips.

Keep some things predictable. Relaxed summer days are perfect for spur-of-the-moment fun, but try to have a few activities that repeat regularly. Your child might have a play date every Tuesday or go to the park on Saturday afternoons, for instance.



Share the plan. Each day, talk about what will happen tomorrow. You could discuss it over dinner or before bedtime. “We are going to spend the morning at Grandma’s. And after that, we’re going on a picnic for lunch.”

Leave wiggle room. Set aside time each day or week

for an activity your youngster chooses. Help him write ideas on index cards (“Play in the sprinkler,” “Finger paint,” “Visit the library”). Then, keep the cards in a recipe box or zipper bag, and let him pick one out.♥

The power of poetry



Poems are packed with rhymes, interesting words, and ways to have fun with language—powerful stuff when you’re learning to read. Use these activities to appreciate poetry with your child.

Look for rhymes

Choose a rhyming book such as *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*, and ask your youngster to tell you



which words rhyme (*bed, head, said*). Can she think of more words that rhyme with the ones she picked? She might come up with *red, bread, and fed*. Together, make up your own poem that includes the rhyming words!

Find words

Read poems aloud. Suggest that your child keep a list of words she likes—they could be words that are fun to say (*topsy-turvy, polliwog*) or that make her think of something fun (*peppermint, carousel*). Look up words she doesn’t know. Then, try to use words from her list during conversations.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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ACTIVITY CORNER

Run a lemonade stand

Lemonade stands are a hot-weather staple in many neighborhoods. Consider letting your youngster set one up, and she’ll practice a variety of skills with every cup served.



- 1. Decide what to sell.** Encourage your child to make her business stand out. Maybe she’ll serve different flavors of lemonade by adding fresh strawberries or blueberries. She could give each one a creative name (“Tickled Pink,” “Blueberry Blast”). She might also offer snacks, such as cookies cut into shapes.
- 2. Design a sign.** Help your youngster list menu items and prices. Suggest that she add a slogan to attract customers. *Example:* “The most colorful lemonade on the block!”
- 3. Make lemonade.** Together, read the recipe or the package directions. Let her measure and stir the ingredients.
- 4. Serve customers.** Your child can say things like, “May I help you?” or “Would you like a cookie with your lemonade?” When the person pays, help her count the money and give change.♥

Q & A

Get creative with chores

Q: My son complains so much when it’s time to do chores that it’s usually easier just to do them myself. How can I make chores less of a struggle?

A: Chores are rarely at the top of anyone’s list of favorite things to do. However, with a little creativity, you may get your son to pitch in more willingly.

Start with chores you know he can do, like using a handheld vacuum or putting away stuffed animals. Then, turn it into a game.

For example, you might play a song and have him race to vacuum the stairs before it ends. Or he could make each stuffed animal run to its spot on his bed.

You can also build in learning by giving directions like, “Dust everything that’s a square” or “Put away three grocery items that start with the letter c.”♥

