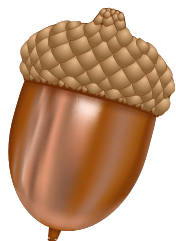


Counting Up, Down, and All Around!

Understanding how much or how many is an important skill for young children to develop. Help your child learn about number quantities by exploring the mathematical world around you! Here are some ideas to get you started.

How many are in my hand?

Find a bucket of small toys, rocks, acorns, or other tiny items. Take a handful and then have her look and guess how many pieces are in your hand. Count and check to see how close her guess is.



Practice counting

Have a real or pretend tea party and make sure each guest gets one napkin, plate, cup, and spoon. Also, if you give everyone a cupcake, how many will you need?



Count during everyday routines

Say, "I wonder how long it will take you to put your socks on." Then count aloud to model the number words (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.). Then ask your child to count how long it takes to put your socks on. Try counting numbers up to 20 (1-2-3-4, etc.) or counting down (10-9-8-7, etc.).



Create collections of items

Count out groups of small objects such as pinecones, pebbles, or pennies. Label your collection with the numeral indicating the quantity. Count items into compartments of an egg carton or containers labeled with numbers.



Notice numbers in nature

Sometimes we find things that have the same number of parts. A certain flower may always have six petals. Leaves may be attached in groups of three on trees. Dogs and cats have four legs. Some fruits, such as watermelon and apples, have many seeds. Other fruits, such as plums and apricots, have just one.



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Discover Letters and Words

Letters and words are all around! Explore the world of words with your child as you are out and about. You are helping your child develop early reading skills as you talk to your child about the words you see all around you.

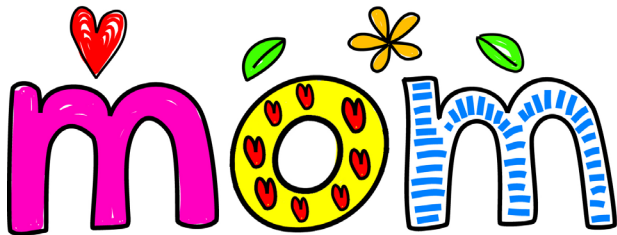
Go on a letter hunt

Choose one letter and find as many as you can of the same letter. Try copying the letters you find on paper.



Talk about letter sounds

Talk about letters as the building blocks of words. Identify the first, middle, and last letters. Figure out simple words together by helping your child make each letter sound individually in sequence.



Point out words in print

Talk about spaces, punctuation, and uppercase/lowercase letters. Your child will learn about how words are printed.



Play a name game

Names are powerful words because they represent special people in your child's life. Practice writing the names of people who are important to her.

Find letters in the neighborhood

Point out road signs and the sports and store logos you see as you drive around your town or neighborhood. Help your child see that these icons can provide information.



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Discover Shapes in Many Places

Young children love to find shapes all around them. Understanding shapes is an important mathematical skill for young children to develop. Here are some ways you can help your child learn about shapes and to talk about and work with them in meaningful ways.

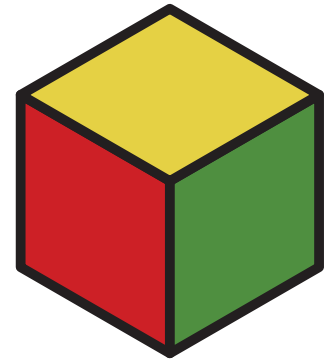
Point out familiar shapes

Talk about common two-dimensional shapes such as circles, squares, and triangles and three-dimensional shapes such as balls, cubes, and cones. Name the shapes children often see in nature, their home, and around their neighborhood.



Explore new dimensions

Introduce words for three-dimensional shapes. Talk about how a can has a round flat circle on top but the whole shape is called a cylinder. Show children one side of a block that has the shape of a square and explain that the whole shape is called a cube.



Expand their vocabulary about shapes

Use words that help children describe shapes accurately. Some words to include are *side*, *solid*, *surface*, *point*, *straight*, *curve*, *inside*, *flat*, *top*, and *angle*.



Explore the concept of shapes

Playing board games, participating in sports, building with blocks, and creating with recycled materials are all opportunities for children to problem solve with and talk about shapes.



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Feelings Are Fantastic

Young children are learning to manage their feelings and behavior. They are learning the words to express their feelings and how to show feelings in appropriate ways. Here are some ways you can help them to be successful as they learn these important skills.

Happy, sad, or mad?

Help children learn their feelings have names. Use words such as *happy*, *sad*, *angry*, *frustrated*, *jealous*, *embarrassed*, or *lonely*. For example, say, “You look like you feel sad that you don’t have a toy dinosaur like Sarah’s. People call the feeling being jealous. Is that how you feel?”

ANGRY



SAD



HAPPY



LONELY



Show how to share feelings

Young children learn appropriate ways to share feelings from those around them. Encourage children to use words to name their feelings. Let them hear you use words to talk about your feelings. “I was so frustrated this morning when I couldn’t find my keys.”

Describe behavior you want to see

Try to describe things children can do rather than telling them what they cannot do. For example, you can talk about using “gentle hands” when touching pets. Point out appropriate behavior. Say, “I see you are being careful not to knock things off the shelves as we walk through the store.”



We all have feelings

Let children know that all feelings are OK to have and talk about. Remind them that it is not OK to hurt others’ bodies or feelings or to destroy property. Use what you see in books or videos to teach about emotions. “Look at that little boy’s smile! He is so happy to see his new puppy.”

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Get Ready to Read

Set your young child up for reading and writing by building knowledge, skills, and habits that create a strong foundation for future literacy.

Knowledge

- Build conversation skills through play with peers
- Introduce new words
- Play letter, number, and counting games
- Go on community outings to stores, museums, and parks

Skills

- Talk about the print you see around you
- Write lists
- Enjoy read-aloud books and talk about the pictures you see



Habits

- Ask your child to tell you about what they draw/write
- Choose screen-time activities that encourage learning new words and letters
- Build reading and writing into everyday routines such as bedtime stories and grocery lists

Start early with babies and toddlers

- Name familiar people, places, and things in photos
- Encourage scribbling to build small hand muscles for writing
- Encourage bilingualism by singing songs and reading stories in your family's heritage language



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Get Them to School Every Day

Preschool is the ideal time to stress the importance of consistent on-time attendance and encourage strong attendance habits



Be enthusiastic!

Talk often to children about why school is important.



Be consistent

Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.



Be prepared

Lay out clothes and pack lunches and backpacks the night before.



Be flexible

Make a plan for getting to school in case something comes up.

Adapted from Attendance Works (www.attendanceworks.org)

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Going to Kindergarten?

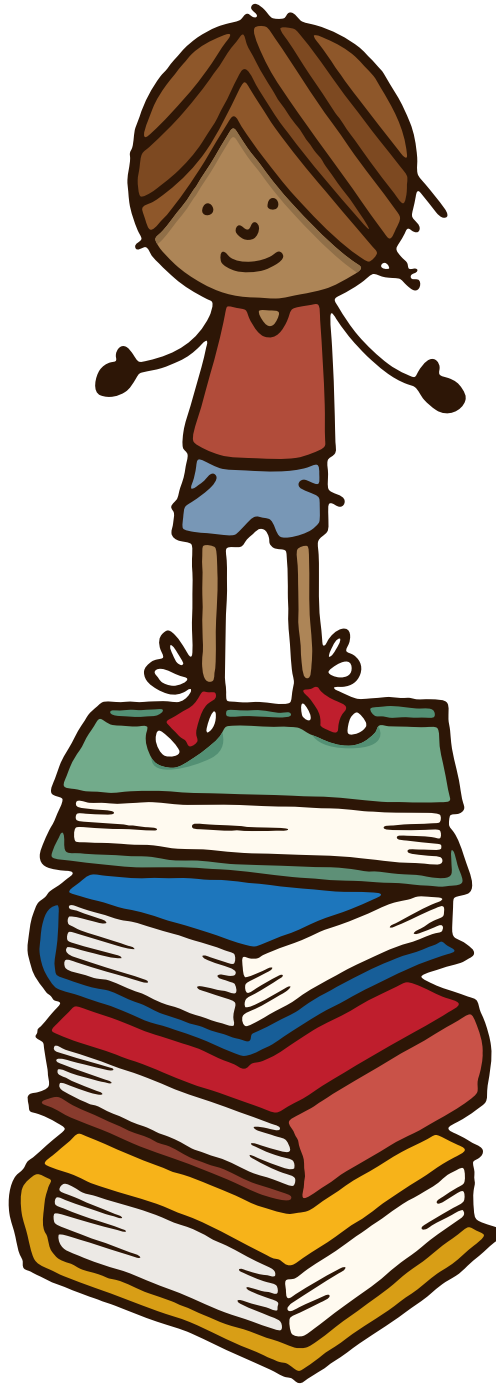
Getting required health checks, practicing key skills, and visiting your new school can help your child make a smooth transition.

Time for a checkup

- Children entering kindergarten must have a physical exam, dental exam, and eye exam.
- Immunizations are required for kindergarten entry. Talk to your health care provider or call the Illinois Public Health Department at (217) 782-4977 if you aren't sure which immunizations are required.

Visit your new school

- Call the school office if you have questions about what to expect.
- Attend special visiting days your school may offer for parents and children, including kindergarten screenings.



Practice kindergarten skills

- Explore pencils, crayons, and child-size scissors.
- Practice saying full name and how you get to and from school.
- Hang up a coat, go to the toilet, and wash hands without help.
- Follow simple rules and take turns.

What if my child needs special help?

Some children need extra support. Call your local school district office to find out about developmental screenings and other services.

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Healthy Children Eat Right

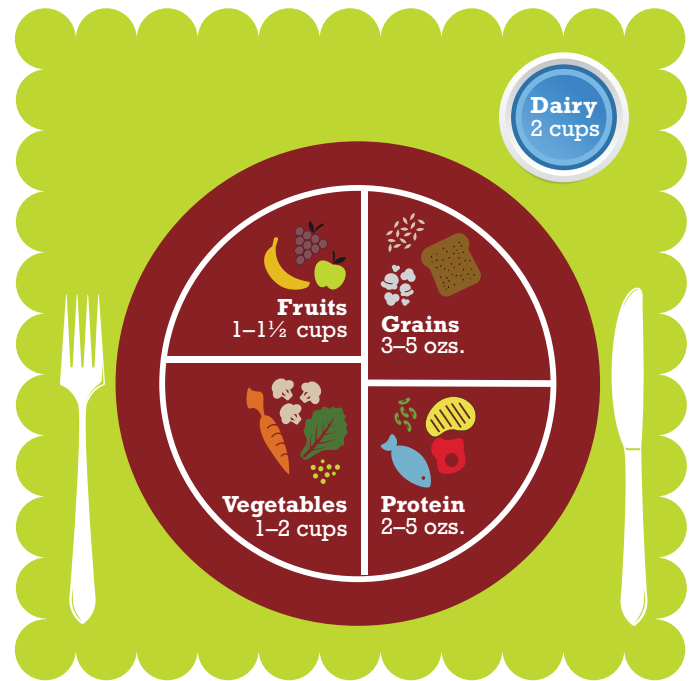
Good nutrition is basic for supporting preschoolers' healthy growth while avoiding obesity

What do 2- to 5-year-old children need in their daily diet?

The amount of food that your child needs depends on his or her age, size, and activity level.

Children should not be pressured to eat more than they want.

As you plan meals and snacks, keep in mind the food groups and portions shown on the plate on the right.



What about sweets?

It's best to limit these, but don't completely ban any food.



Teach good habits

Set a good example by offering more fresh foods.

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Investigate Together

How does rain get into the clouds? How do fish breathe under water? Young children love to investigate and find their own answers to their questions about the world. Encouraging your child's exploration and wonder helps build a strong foundation for early learning.

Go explore!

Young children love to explore the world around them. Encourage your child to use his senses to explore. Young children learn best by talking about their first-hand experiences.



Keep the questions coming

Encourage your child's questions. Help her think about where she can find out what she wants to know. Help your child discover there are many ways to find out answers, such as reading books, searching the Internet, asking experts, and observing the world.



Track your discoveries

Write down your child's ideas and observations. Show her that writing and words are tools for sharing information. Encourage your child to draw pictures of what she sees and what she remembers from different experiences and places.



Numbers are tools for discovery

Help your child count, classify, and measure things using numbers. Help him learn that numbers and math are tools for discovering the world. For example, help him sort out different shapes of blocks and count how many of each kind.



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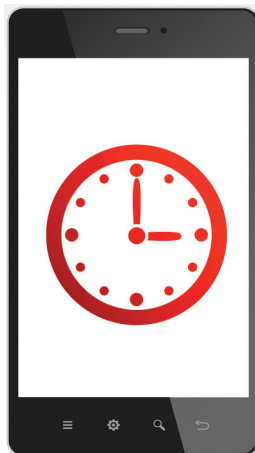
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Keep Up the Good Work

Sometimes it is hard to get a job done. Young children are learning to stick with tough jobs and to keep trying even when a task is hard to do. Here are some ways you can help them stay with tasks and try hard to complete them even when the job is tough.

Break it down

Help your child break down a big task into a smaller one. When your child is overwhelmed by a big task, you can say, "We can clean up one thing at a time. Let's clean up the blocks and then we can clean up the toy cars."



Set a timer

Some tasks are overwhelming because your child thinks it will take a long time. Encourage your child to try a difficult task for a short time and then take a break. Say to her, "Let's try putting your clothes away for five minutes. We can go and draw pictures when the timer rings."

Remember successes

Tell stories about times when your child worked hard to accomplish something. Say to her, "Remember when you could not write a letter? You looked carefully at the letters in your name and practiced making those shapes. Now you can write your whole name! Soon you will write a whole sentence."

Try it as a team

Encourage your child to work with others. Teamwork makes tasks easier. Say, "Let's see if we can work with your sister to rake all the leaves in the yard." Or, "Let's put out the spoons while your brother puts out the bowls for our cereal."



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Keep Young Children Safe in the Car

Car accidents are the leading cause of death for young children in the United States. Always use child safety seats positioned in safe spots in the car. Remember these key rules to keep children safe:

Use the right seat for your child's weight and height

Use a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) rated car seat. Select a car seat based on your child's weight, height, and positioning needs. Children under age 2 must be properly secured in a rear-facing car seat. Children under age 8, weighing less than 40 pounds, must be secured in an approved child safety seat. Children taller or heavier than the recommended limits for forward-facing car seats need booster seats placed in the rear seat secured with seat belts.

Put children in a safe spot

The safest place for children of any age to ride is the rear seat of a vehicle. Each child and each safety seat require a separate seat belt. Truck beds are not a safe place for children to ride.



You are required to use a child safety seat

The parent or legal guardian of a child under age 8 must provide a child safety seat to anyone who transports his or her child. Children with physical disabilities that prevent the use of standard child safety seats are exempt from the law if the disability has been certified by a physician.

Make sure seats are installed correctly

Consult with a car seat technician if you have questions about installation or rules about your child safety seat. To find a technician in your area, go to <http://cert.safekids.org/get-car-seat-checked>

Never leave children alone in a vehicle

In just a few minutes left alone in a car, children can be in danger from heat and dehydration, even if the windows are partly open. A child can wriggle out of a seat, hit the controls, and cause the car to move.

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Keeping Healthy and Safe: Arriving at School or Childcare

Young children are learning new procedures for arriving at school or childcare. Adults can support them with simple explanations, visual supports, and practice.

Provide a Simple Explanation

Use simple phrases, such as “When you arrive at school, your parent will say goodbye at an outside door instead of at your classroom. When you arrive, someone will take your temperature.”

Use Visual Supports

Post pictures of parents and children saying goodbye outside.



Set Them Up for Success

Provide pictures of children getting their temperature taken.

Provide Practice and Encouragement

Help children and parents develop a drop-off routine, such as a special handshake or hug at the door. Encourage children to describe their routine to their classmates.

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Keeping Healthy and Safe: Face Coverings

Young children are learning to wear face coverings and to see others wearing them. Adults can support them with simple explanations, visual supports, and practice.

Provide a Simple Explanation

Use simple phrases, such as “People wear masks so they won’t pass their germs to another person.

When everyone wears masks, we all keep our germs to ourselves.”



Use Visual Supports

Provide pictures of masks. Post pictures of family members, classmates, teachers, and the children wearing masks.



Set Them Up for Success

Demonstrate the correct way to put on and wear a mask and remind them to avoid touching or fidgeting with their masks.



Provide Practice and Encouragement

Provide encouragement for children to wear face coverings and praise their success.



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Keeping Healthy and Safe: Fighting Germs

Young children are learning the importance of clean hands and clean environments. Adults can support them with simple explanations, visual supports, and practice.

Provide a Simple Explanation

Use simple phrases, such as “Washing hands is one of the best ways to get rid of germs! Washing our furniture and supplies helps germs go away, too!”

Use Visual Supports

Provide pictures of children washing their hands or using hand sanitizer.



Set Them Up for Success

Have children sing the ABCs as they scrub their hands to make sure they wash their hands long enough.

Provide Practice and Encouragement

Stamp children’s hands and have them scrub off the ink to make sure they thoroughly wash their hands.

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Keeping Healthy and Safe: Physical Distancing

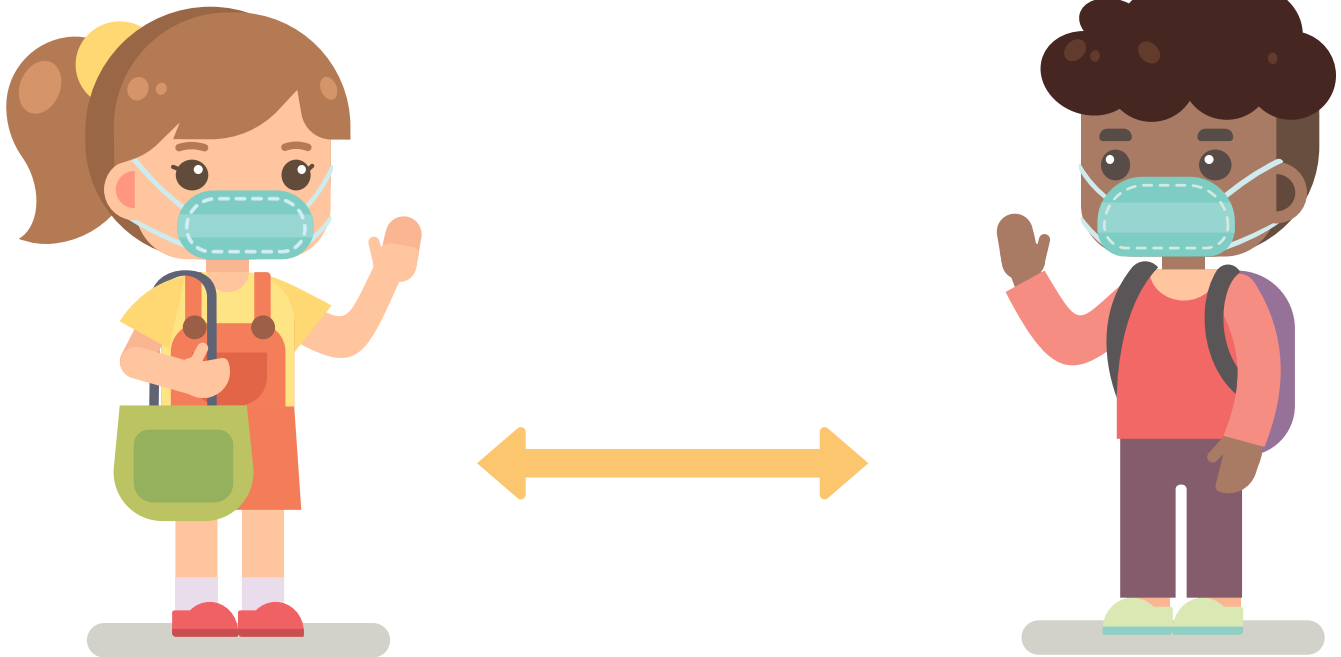
Young children are learning to sit or stand six 6 feet apart from each other, when possible. Adults can support them with simple explanations, visual supports, and practice.

Provide a Simple Explanation

Use simple phrases, such as:
“Germs can hop from person to person, and we don’t want that! When we scoot far apart, we won’t share germs.”

Use Visual Supports

Provide pictures of children having fun but standing far apart. Put tape or stickers on the floor to remind children to keep their distance.



Set Them Up for Success

Mark available seats with colorful tape, carpet squares, or stickers. Allow distance between tables and cots.

Provide Practice and Encouragement

Demonstrate new ways to show affection, such as air high fives, air hugs, silent cheers, and thumbs up.

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Keeping Healthy and Safe: Play Time

Young children are learning that sometimes, sharing toys and supplies is not helpful. Adults can support them with simple explanations, visual supports, and practice.

Provide a Simple Explanation

Use simple phrases, such as “It is so nice to want to share toys with friends, but our germs can get on these things. We can be kind by keeping our items to ourselves.”



Use Visual Supports

Post pictures of children playing, each with his or her own toys or supplies.



Set Them Up for Success

When possible, provide supplies for each child in a bin labeled with his or her name.

Provide Practice and Encouragement

Role play substitute behavior. Say “I like your doll. I’m going to get my doll and play near you!” instead of saying, “I like your doll. Can I play with it?”

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Keeping Healthy and Safe: Smaller Group Sizes

Young children are attending programs that may have smaller groups or different groups. Adults can support them with simple explanations, visual supports, and practice.

Provide a Simple Explanation

Use simple phrases, such as “Your group is smaller or different now so that people can have room to spread out. This helps us keep our germs to ourselves.”

Use Visual Supports

Post individual pictures of all the children in a class or group.



Set Them Up for Success

Support children who talk about friends who are no longer in their group. Encourage them to draw pictures for them or write letters to them.

Provide Practice and Encouragement

Play name games to help children learn the names of everyone in the current group.

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Keeping Track of Important Information

Children and families who experience homelessness have rights to schooling and benefits from public assistance programs. Facing homelessness can be a stressful experience. Having appropriate documentation can help you access services and benefits. Here are some ways you can stay organized during this stressful time:

Reach Out to Your School District for Help

Children experiencing homelessness can enroll in school without documentation. Your school district's homeless liaison is available to help you enroll your children in school and access public benefits. They will also help you locate the records that are needed.



Gather Important Documents

Keep important documents in an envelope, folder, or zip-top bag. These include birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates; medical records, including immunization records; and education records. Families experiencing homelessness can often obtain these documents without a fee at government offices. If you have a cell phone, take photos for a backup copy.

Choose a Key Contact Person

Talk to a friend, family member, or other support person you trust about your housing situation. Make sure this person always knows how to contact you. Ask them to hold a second copy of the important documents in a safe location.

For more information, visit <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/toolkits/experiencing-homelessness/>

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For other tip sheets, please go to <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/>

12/19

Learning by Listening to Language

Exploring the sounds of language is an important part of learning how to read and write. Spend time listening, talking, and reading together to build your child's skills and confidence. These games will help your child begin to demonstrate an understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.

Play a game of "I Spy"

Say, "I see something in the room that starts with a b...b...b... letter B." See if your child can guess the object: b...b...b... ball!



Rhyme time!

Say, "Do you see the cat? Help me think of rhymes! He's sitting on a mat and talking to the rat." Then repeat the rhyming words, "Cat, mat, rat!" Make up silly rhymes such as "apple, bapple, zapple, dapple."



Sing favorite songs together

Listen for rhyming words, make up new verses, and write down your favorites. Try singing,

"Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool. Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full." Ask your child to listen for the words that rhyme. *Wool* and *full*! Can you think of another idea? How about, "Meow, meow, kitty cat, have you any *mice*? No ma'am, no ma'am, but a couple would be *nice*!"



Stretch out the sounds of simple words

Say, "I see a dog. D O G. It starts with a 'D' sound and ends with a 'G' sound. The 'O' sound is in the middle. D O G." Try spelling the word together.



Talk about the words you see around you

"I see letters on that sign. Let's figure out what it says. O P E N. Let's put them together." Say the sounds and words slowly: "O' ... saying the sound in its name. 'P' popping on my lips. ... 'E' saying 'eh' like elephant. ... 'N' saying the last sound. O P E N. The store is open! We figured it out!"



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Making Sense of Numbers

Learning how numbers can be added, subtracted, multiplied, and divided is important for young children. Help your child discover the mathematical world by finding opportunities to bring numbers into conversations and play.

Add them up!

When playing with tiny toys such as marbles or small blocks, have your child take two handfuls. Count how many pieces are in each hand. Have your child hold her hands together and figure out how many she has all together.



Find number groups

Talk about what you see. Say, "I see three birds on the fence and each bird has two wings—there are six wings. I see two cars and each car has four wheels—that's eight wheels all together."

Count them down!

How many are in the bowl? Encourage your child to count the number of pieces in her bowl when you are eating foods such as pretzels, grapes, or crackers. Stop and recount after she eats a few pieces. Figure out how many are left in the bowl.



Divvy them up!

Help your child create equal shares for each person when you are playing with toys or creating with art materials. Give each person one piece at a time. When all the pieces are gone, have each person count to see how many are in his share.



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Play With Your Toddler – Indoors

Turn off the screens! Get moving with your toddler!



Help him roll a ball to knock over plastic bottles.



March in place or dance to music with her.



Let him splash and play in the tub.



Help him stack boxes and cans or pots and pans.



Put toys or books in a pillowcase for her to carry.



Drape a sheet over a table to make a cave or playhouse for her to crawl through.



**Set a good example.
Let your child see you being active!**

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Positive Guidance for Young Children: Be Consistent

Young children are learning to manage their behaviors and feelings. They may need many reminders of what appropriate behavior looks like. Clear directions from adults in a calm, firm tone of voice help children know what to do.

Teach expectations

Talk about how you expect children to act in a group, at meal times, and during cleanup times. Show them what you mean by modeling the desired behaviors.

Respond consistently

When adults are consistent with consequences and responses, children will understand what has happened in the past and what they can expect in the future.



Keep a schedule

When children are tired, hungry, or thirsty, it is more difficult for them to engage in appropriate behavior. Keep a consistent schedule so children's physical needs are met.

Use natural consequences

Children learn through cause and effect. If your child spills crackers on the floor, have her help pick them up.

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Positive Guidance for Young Children: Be Thoughtful

Young children are learning to manage their behaviors and feelings. Your responses matter to children in these moments. Sometimes adults need to stop behaviors that are unsafe or extremely disruptive and help children understand how to behave appropriately. Here are some ways adults can help children:

Redirect behavior

Substitute a “can’t do” behavior for a “can do” behavior. If your child tends to draw on the walls, stock up on drawing paper and let her know where she can find it so she can draw when she’s interested. Encourage children to help think of “can do” behaviors to replace problematic ones.

Wait until the child is calm

Young children who are upset or excited may have a hard time listening to adults. Use calming strategies such as taking deep breaths. Talk about the problem after the child is calm.

Limit your response when possible

Children may act out because they want attention or to avoid a task or situation.

Consider overlooking behaviors such as whining, bad language, and tantrums when they will not harm the child or others. Focus on teaching children how to interact appropriately. This helps them to gain positive attention.

Organize to help children succeed

Sometimes children need help understanding our expectations. For

example, if clothes and toys are often left lying about, start using baskets and low hooks for easier cleanup.



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Positive Guidance for Young Children: Plan Ahead

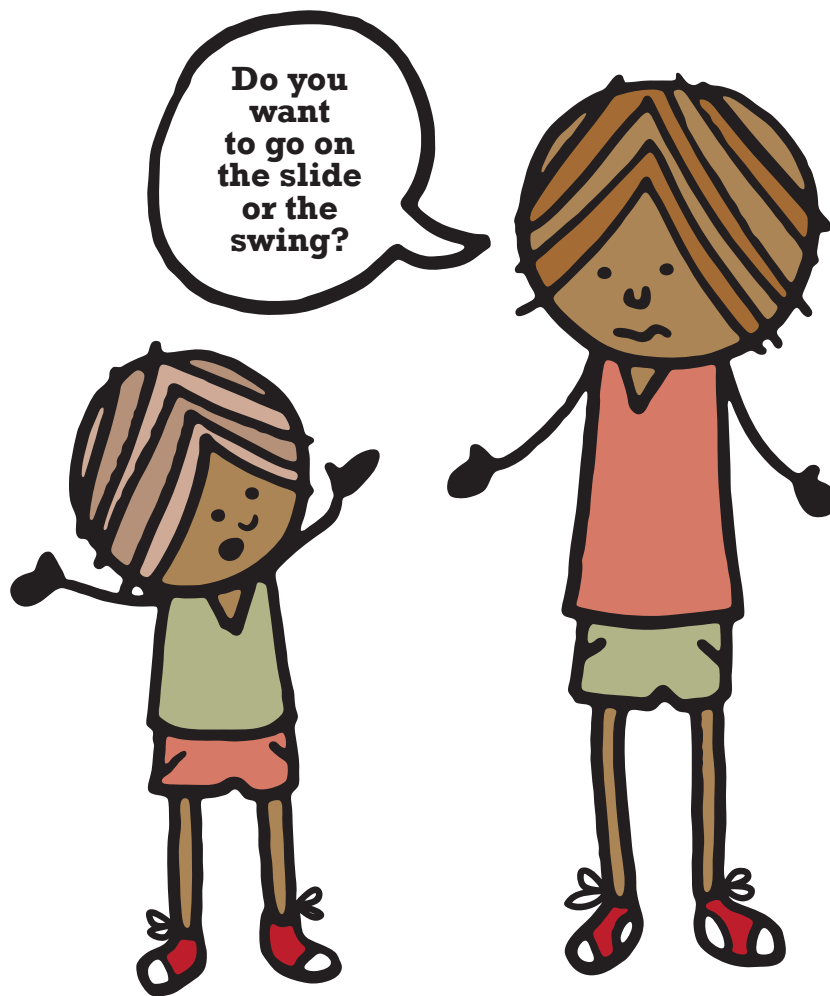
Young children are curious and actively explore the world. This curiosity and exploration may look like inappropriate behavior when they do not follow directions from adults or touch items they should not. Plan and prevent problem behaviors using these strategies:

Describe what you want to see

Clearly state your expectations for their behavior and show children what you mean. Say “let’s walk” instead of “don’t run.”

Use the “first/then” rule

Tie what you expect to what children want. For example, “First pick up the toys, then I will read you a story.”



Provide acceptable choices

Offer options that are appropriate to the child, such as “Do you want to wear the red shirt or yellow shirt?”

Use clear language

Avoid giving children unintentional choices. For example, questions such as “Are you ready to go?” can give

children the opportunity to say “no.”

Set up spaces to encourage appropriate behavior

Keep items that are breakable and unsafe out of the reach of children. Put items where they should be used. For example, keep crayons on a table for drawing. Keep a basket of books near a sofa where children can sit and read.

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Positive Guidance for Young Children: Take a Break and Calm Down

Young children are learning to manage their behavior and feelings. At times, they may be “out of control” and need an adult to help them calm down and learn how to express their emotions in appropriate ways.

Take a break

Sometimes children need some time to manage their feelings. Some adults call this “time-out.” When a child engages in dangerous behaviors such as biting and hitting, a caregiver may need to remove the child from the situation to help them refocus on safe and appropriate choices.

Stay close by

Remain near the child during a break, especially when their emotions are strong. Help the child become calm so they can rejoin the group or activity.



Show them how to calm down

Teach strategies such as deep breathing, hugging a stuffed animal, or counting to 10.

Make a plan

Talk about what will happen next on the schedule, after you have addressed the challenging behavior and the child has calmed down. Compliment the children on the

appropriate behaviors they display to help them learn what you expect.

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Read and Write Together

Understanding stories and information that is read aloud is an important skill for young children. Make time to read aloud with your child and talk together about the stories and information you read.

Find new books

Travel to your local library and explore the storybooks and informational books. Children can learn from a wide variety of books.



Ask questions as you read

Ask your child what she sees in the pictures. Encourage her to predict what might happen next. Ask her why she thinks a character might act in certain way.



Read stories again and again!

Encourage your child to retell you the story from the pictures. This helps your child recall the important parts of the story and understand the main ideas.



Make your own books

Write down your child's ideas about drawings he has made. Fold and staple those drawings to make a book. By hearing his own words read aloud, he learns that the printed text communicates the meaning of his ideas.



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Read With Your Toddler!

How to share books with a busy, independent toddler.



Let your child choose a sturdy picture book.



Sit where you are both comfortable.



Let your child touch the book, point to pictures, and help you turn the pages.



Name what you see, or read the words clearly.



Read for as long as your child is interested – 30 seconds or 10 minutes.



Does your child get distracted? Just try again later.

Making reading a part of family life will help your child be ready to do well in school.

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Returning to Childcare During COVID-19

Families returning to childcare during the COVID-19 situation may have many questions and concerns. Children may show anger, sadness, or frustration. Having big feelings is normal during this transition. Help your child by talking openly about their feelings. Here are some ways that you can support your child during this challenging time.

Talk about what is the same. Your child will still:

- Receive the same level of care.
- Receive snacks and meals.
- Have time to play.
- Have time to read books.
- Have time for large motor play.
- Have positive interactions with teachers and other caregivers.



Try strategies to help your child understand the changes at childcare.

- Use pretend play to talk about the new routines such as drop-off and pickup.
- Read books about childcare. Talk about what will be different and what will be the same as before COVID-19.
- Consider ways to help children manage their feelings, such as using breathing or short calming phrases.
- Get back to your routines for bedtime, waking up, meals, getting out the door, and getting dressed.
- Stay positive and upbeat with your child and the caregivers.
- Consider creating a special goodbye routine. This can be a special song or kissing their hand before you leave.



Ask your childcare provider questions to help you feel comfortable and confident.

- What are the new drop-off and pickup procedures?
- Can my child bring something from home to keep at the center?
- Will my child be with the same group of children and caregivers all day?
- How will health screenings be done?
- How will you comfort my child if they get upset?
- Will all of my child's friends be there?
- What changes will be made to naptime?
- Will my child's teacher be there?
- Can I still observe my child's classroom?



For related Web resources, see “Returning to Childcare During COVID-19” at <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/>

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Rights of Families Experiencing Homelessness

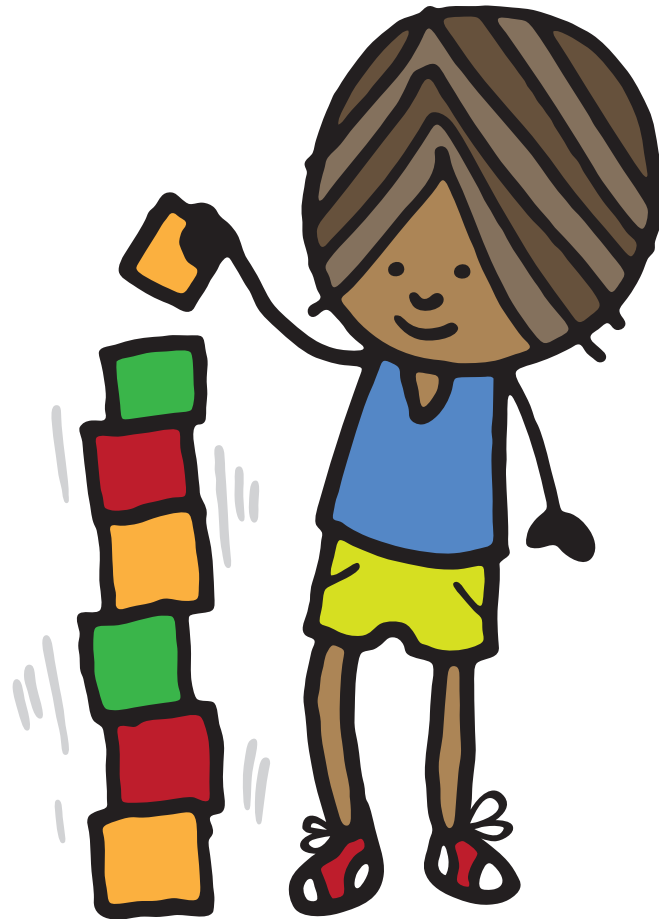
A young child's development and learning are supported by consistent relationships and stable routines. Children and families experiencing homelessness have attendance, enrollment, and transportation rights that allow them to maintain a stable school placement for the remainder of the school year. Every Illinois school district has a designated homeless liaison who can help you understand these rights:

You can enroll anytime

Children can enroll, attend classes, and participate in school activities immediately, even without records or other documentation.

You can attend a school nearby

Children can attend the public school closest to where the family lives if it is in the best interest of the child.



You can stay in your school

Children can stay in their school of origin, or the school in which they were last enrolled, if it is in the best interest of the child.

You can get free transportation

Children can receive transportation to and from school until the end of the year, even if this requires crossing district boundaries.

Your school district has resources for you

School districts should provide information on free meals, school supplies, and medical, dental, and other health-related services.

For more information, visit <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/toolkits/experiencing-homelessness/>



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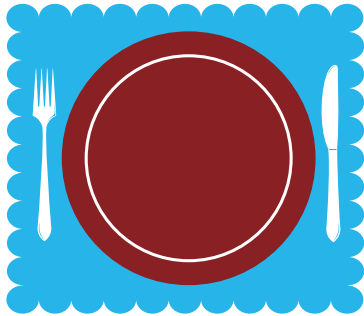


Sorting, Classifying, and Organizing

Sorting and organizing things into sets and groups is an important math skill for young children to develop. Have fun exploring your world while you practice these skills. Children can classify objects, ideas, sounds, smells, or flavors into groups of like items.

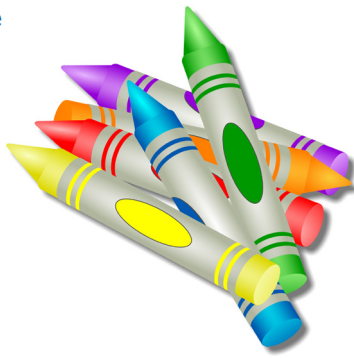
Sort during cleanup

Sort the socks, shirts, and pants during laundry time. Organize spoons, forks, and dull knives in a basket when putting away clean dishes. Decide which drawer, basket, or closet is the right place for each item.



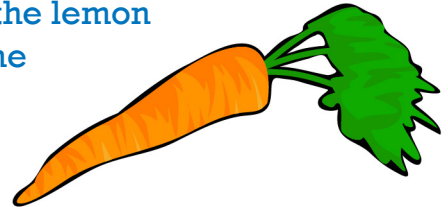
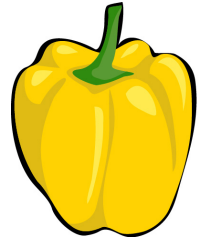
Create collections!

Children can use egg cartons or sheets of paper with two or more sections for grouping similar things. Use natural objects such as rocks, sticks, or pinecones that you find outdoors. Small objects such as coins, crayons, or stickers that you find around the house are also good for sorting.



Group foods

Talk about groups of different kinds of foods during meals. Classify food by type, color, texture, and flavor. For example, say “the corn and bell pepper are both yellow. Is the carrot yellow or a different color?” Or “The apple is sweet and the lemon is sour. Is the strawberry sweet or sour?”



Talk about attributes

Ask about the attributes of people and pets around you. Who is wearing shoes and who is wearing boots? Who has shoes with laces and who has shoes without laces? Who has gloves and who has mittens? Who has fur and who has feathers? Who has a red shirt and who has a different color shirt?



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Supporting Adult-Child Relationships

Young children thrive when the adults around them show they care. Young children learn they have value and develop a sense of self-worth through warm interactions with primary caregivers. Your children learn from your words and actions whenever they are with you.

Playtime is practice time

Your child practices social and communication skills during playtime by learning to share ideas, take turns, and express emotions. As you play, demonstrate kindness, thoughtfulness, and working together to solve problems.

Set a good example

Your child learns how to treat people kindly by watching you. Show your child cooperative and kind behaviors when you interact with other adults. He notices when you say “Thank you” when a cashier hands you change or when you say “Excuse me” to the stock clerk in the grocery store when you need help finding an item.



Build connections

Encourage your child’s connections with relatives, neighbors, child care providers, and teachers. He will turn to these safe adults for help when he has a problem. Say, “This is such a nice drawing. I think Uncle Joe would like it. Let’s send it to him.”

Use appropriate language

Explain appropriate ways to talk to adults. Teach your child to use kind words and polite manners. Your child notices your tone of voice and body language. This includes using appropriate ways to address people such as calling the dentist “Dr. Patel” or calling a neighbor “Mrs. Jones” if that is how she prefers to be addressed.

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Supporting Children with Limited Verbal Skills

These strategies are helpful to all children but are particularly helpful for those with limited verbal skills.

Support communication

Provide an outlet for young children to express their wants and needs in these areas:

- Demonstrating feelings/emotions
- Requesting
- Rejecting/refusing

Providing an outlet for expression helps prevent challenging behavior.



Build routines

Help children understand daily expectations and happenings. Routines provide predictability and a sense of security.

Knowing what to expect helps children make appropriate decisions.

Offer visual supports

Children with limited verbal skills need other ways to communicate. Communication strategies include:

- Pictures
- Communication boards
- Communication devices
- Sign language

Alternate forms of communication allow children to express their ideas by pointing to images and using gestures.



Provide schedules

Visual schedules help children make sense of their day. Post them in common spaces and use them to:

- Promote awareness of activities and routines
- Alert children to upcoming changes

Knowing what to expect reduces anxiety and allows children to prepare for upcoming events.

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Talk Together

Everyday conversations are opportunities to help your child learn new words. Talking with you each day provides time to practice good manners. Talking together about the world around you builds your child's listening and speaking skills.

Explain the rules for polite conversations

Talk about manners people expect, such as waiting for the other person to finish their sentence, saying "Excuse me" when interrupting, and making requests using the words such as *please* and *thank you*.

That looks like Daddy's car.

Yes, it is green and has four doors just like Daddy's car.

Model active listening

Rephrase what your child says and add to his ideas to extend the conversation. Look into your child's eyes and stop what you are doing so he can see that he has your full attention. Help your child learn to take turns and listen to others' ideas.

Stay on topic

Help your child expand her ideas on a topic by asking follow-up questions. Repeat what you talked about at the end of a conversation, such as "We

talked about so many ideas about the zoo during lunch today. You remembered seeing elephants, lions, and penguins at the zoo."

Encourage good listening

Encourage your child by pointing out ways to help someone know that they are listening carefully, such as standing or sitting still and

making eye contact with the speaker. Encourage her to ask her friends questions and then listen to their ideas.



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Talk, Listen, and Learn

Young children are developing their ability to express themselves through language. You can help your child build vocabulary and conversation skills by talking together.

Talk about your daily routine

Say, "Let's think of all the things we will do today. First, we will eat breakfast. Next, we will put on our coats, and then we will walk to the bus stop." Encourage your child to tell you what will happen first, second, and third.



Encourage descriptions

Look around and encourage your child to describe the things he sees. Say, "Tell me about the pictures on that store window," or "Tell me about the sounds of nature you hear. Do you hear the wind rustle or the birds chirping?"



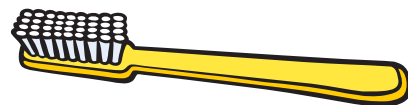
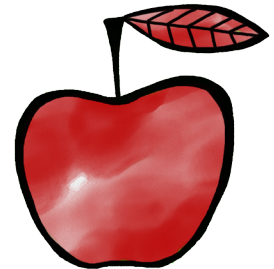
Read together

Encourage your child to describe pictures in books and magazines. Say, "Tell me what you see in the picture." Repeat what your child says and expand on her ideas. Say, "Yes, I see the tiger in the picture, too! That tiger has orange and black stripes on her fur."



Build vocabulary

Expand your child's knowledge of descriptive words. Say, "This apple is *crunchy* on my teeth and the skin is *shiny*," or "The toothbrush bristles feel *prickly* on my tongue."



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Talking to Your Child's Teacher

Do you wonder how to build a good relationship with your child's teacher? Here are some words to help you connect.

“Here’s how to get in touch with me”

This is important if your schedule changes often or you can't always take calls.

“I want to ask you something. When could we touch base?”

Right before and after school are often hectic times for teachers. Set another time to talk.



“I appreciate it when you _____”

Teachers like to hear when something works well!

“Our family is going through a change. Can I tell you more about it?”

Family situations might make your child extra tired, worried, or happy. Teachers want to respect your privacy and support your child.

Children benefit when their families have good connections with their teachers!

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Tech Time for Infants and Toddlers

Because we use technology in many ways every day, infants and toddlers often have early interactions with electronic media. Here are some ways families and caregivers can find a healthy balance with technology and electronic media in their lives.

Use technology together

Talk and interact while using technology. Conversations help your child understand what she sees and how technology works. Talk about the content to help your child understand what she sees.

Be a good role model

Your child is watching your technology use, which can often interfere with daily routines. Put down your device and give your child your full attention.

Use electronic media away from meal and sleep spaces.

Choose wisely

Choose age-appropriate programming. Infants and younger toddlers (under 18 months) can participate in interactive video chatting with relatives, but they do not benefit from programming or toys that claim to improve children's intelligence. Older toddlers (18–36 months) may benefit from some simple, child-directed programming with support from adults.



Balance your time

Infants and toddlers need hands-on practice with real objects. They benefit most from their interactions with people through play and conversations. Use technology

to complement other activities rather than relying solely on technology to entertain, teach, or otherwise occupy your child's time.

Remember safety

Young children are attracted to blinking lights and screens. Childproof as needed, especially heavy electronic items such as big screen TVs, which are tip-over hazards.

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Tech Time for Young Children

We use technology in many ways during everyday routines, and young children don't want to be left out. Here are some ways families and caregivers can find a healthy balance with technology and electronic media in their daily lives.

Use technology together

Talk and interact while using technology. Conversations help your child understand what she sees and how technology works. Talk about what you see to help your child understand it.



Be a good role model

Your child is watching your technology use, which can often interfere with sleep and meal times. Find a healthy balance between when you use technology and when you take a break from it.

Choose wisely

Young children have trouble telling the difference between reality and fantasy. Choose age-appropriate, nonviolent media for young children.

Encourage learning

Choose educational games and programming that help children learn. Show them that technology can also help them find important, useful information.

Balance your time

Young children need hands-on play with real objects. They benefit most from their interactions with people through play and conversations. Use technology to enrich and build upon other experiences. Develop a family plan for media and decide ahead of time when and what to watch.

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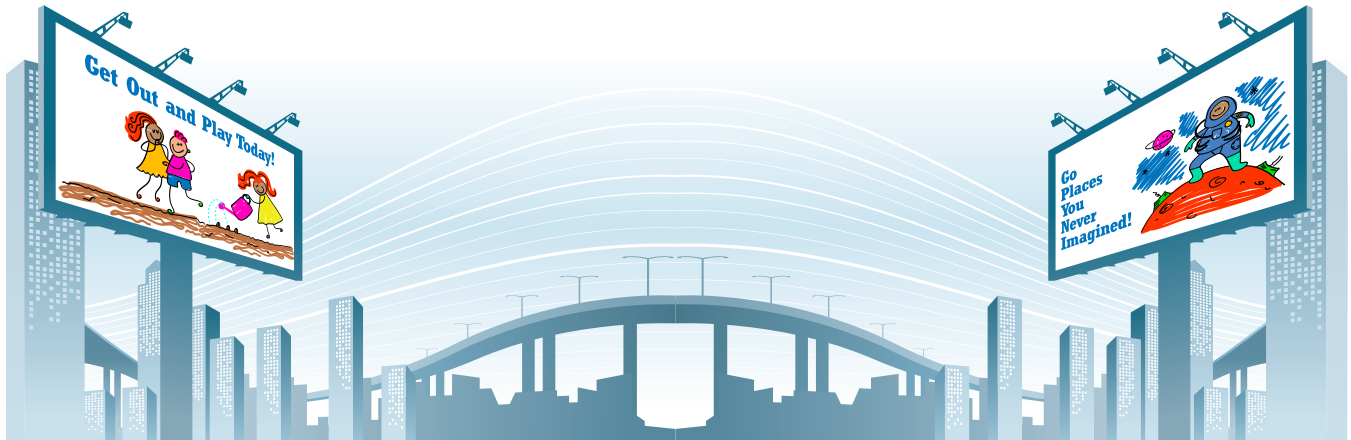
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Art Is All Around

Keep children engaged when you have to wait



Notice all the art around you

Take a closer look at murals, billboards, and framed prints.

Ask your child: "What's going on in that picture?"

Talk about the lines, colors, and shapes you and your child notice.



Keep art handy

Take paper, crayons, and pencils with you. A hard drawing pad helps.



Draw with your child

Draw what you see or remember. Talk about your finished artwork.

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Curious Young Scientists

Keep children engaged when you have to wait



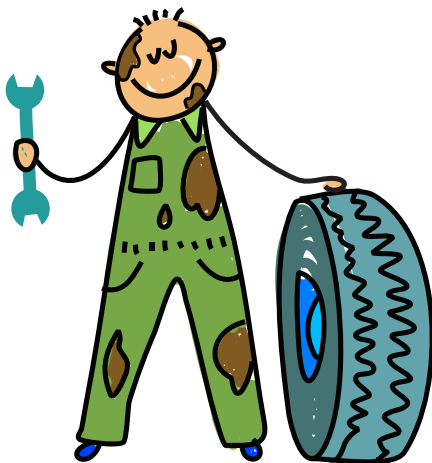
Observe the world

Help your child notice sights, smells, and sounds around you.



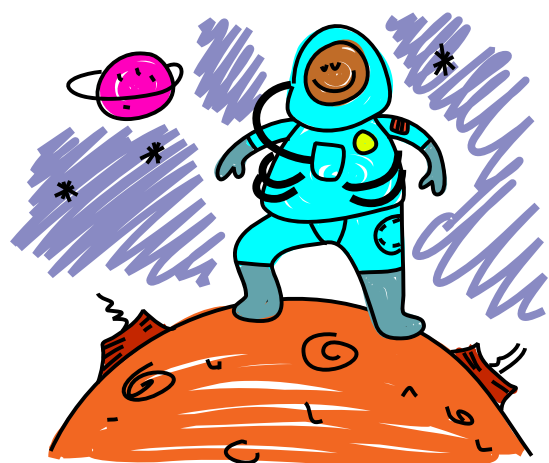
Think like scientists

Talk about causes: "What's making Mommy's hair go sideways?"



Make predictions

Let's guess how long it will take Daddy to change the tire?



Imagine!

Ask questions: "What would you do if we could go into space?"

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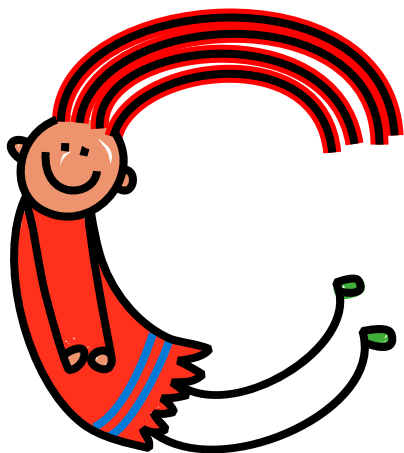
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Get Physical

Keep children engaged when you have to wait



Let's pretend!

Flop your bodies like rag dolls.
Then be stiff like robots.



Time to play!

Fingerplays, clapping games,
and songs get hands moving.



Challenge time!

Make up challenges: "Stand on
one foot while I count to 10."



Snuggle up!

Sometimes hugging
is the best physical activity.

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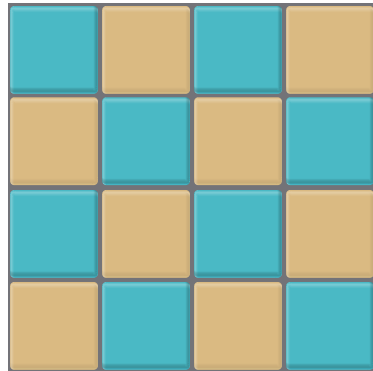
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Math Is Everywhere

Keep children engaged when you have to wait

Note sequences and patterns

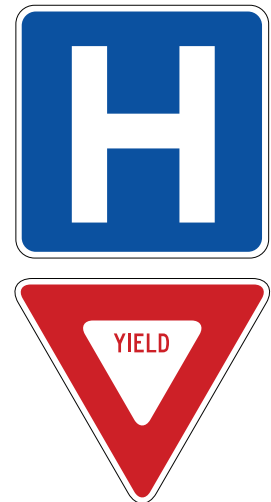
Order is important in math. Notice sequences with your child: "Looks like we're the second in line!"



Find simple patterns together, such as the colors of floor tiles or how far apart light fixtures are placed.

Spot spatial relations

This has to do with shapes and locations of objects. You can "hunt" for shapes together: squares, triangles, rectangles, and circles. Use words like *on*, *under*, and *inside* to describe where you see the shapes. Drawing shapes in the air can also be fun.



Estimate and predict

Children often like to make educated guesses. "Which is higher, a stack of five dimes or five pennies?" Make a guess first, and then check to see how close your guess came.



Measure and estimate time

Your child may like timing games: "How many times can you count to 10 before we are first in line?" "How long can you stand on one leg?"



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Music and Movement

Keep children engaged when you have to wait

Move to the beat

Tap, clap, shimmy, or sway in time to music in the car or while waiting in line. Pretend to play band instruments, such as an "air guitar."



Sing along

Take turns choosing songs to sing together or make up songs about what you are doing.



Listen

Investigate sounds together! Talk about musical concepts such as loud or soft and high or low pitches.



Create sounds

Make sound effects with voices, fingers, and objects. Imitate animal noises or machinery sounds.



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Work and Play Together

Children need to be able to work and play with other children who may have different ideas, experiences, or characteristics. Making and keeping friends are important skills for children to learn. Here are some ways you can help your child learn to get along with others.

Set a good example

Your child learns how to treat people kindly by watching you. Show your child cooperative and kind behaviors when you interact with other people.

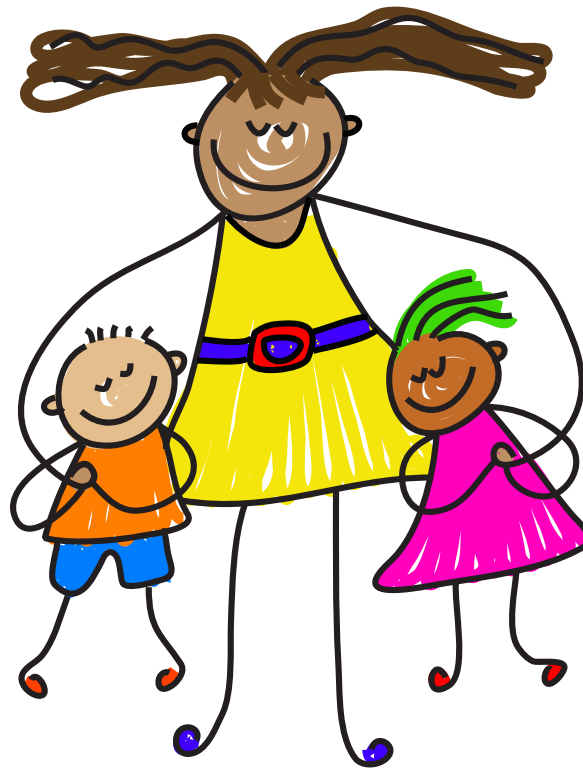


Talk about what kind friends do

Explain taking turns and sharing. Stay close by to help children with sharing and taking turns. Provide encouragement for these types of behavior.

Provide opportunities to play

Your child can learn friendship skills by playing with cousins, neighbors, classmates, and siblings. Encourage playtime activities in which children work together. Children learn as they pretend, build, and talk together.



Teach them to talk it through

Help your child talk through problems with other children. Encourage her to share her feelings and to listen to other people's feelings. Explain that the way she feels about a problem may be different from the way another person may feel.

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