

# Early Childhood Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Katy Independent School District

*make the difference!*



## Let your preschooler try new skills in a safe environment

**R**esponsibility goes hand in hand with independence. To be truly responsible, your child must be able to perform a task completely on her own. Here is a way to get started and some additional steps to take:

- **Model the skill for your child.**

If you want your child to become responsible for making her bed, have her watch you do it a few times.

- **Practice the skill** with your child.

After your child is familiar with how to make a bed, make the bed together. You could pull up the sheet, while she pulls up the comforter and puts the pillow on top.

- **Watch your child.** She should make the bed herself for a period of days while you supervise. This step may be the longest in the

process. Don't expect the bed made the way you would make it. The idea is not perfection. It is to develop your child's desire to do it and belief that she can do it.

- **Work the skill** into your child's routine. Usually, performing a task for 21 straight days will make it familiar enough to become a habit. Another helpful idea is to perform the task at around the same time every day. If your child gets used to getting up, getting dressed and making her bed, in the same order, around the same time every day, you will not have to remind her about the task.

**Source:** B. Tucker, "Building Responsibility—How Do I Teach my Children to be More Responsible? Working with the Young Child: Ages 4–8," University of Arizona, College of Agriculture, <http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/family/az1037.pdf>.

## Motivate your preschooler to read, read, read



When you imagine your preschooler as a successful student, you probably imagine him reading—a

lot! To help this dream come true, start now.

It's never too early (or too late) to read with your child. For example:

- **Snuggle up and enjoy books** together. If your child is too young to follow a story, spend extra time discussing what you see. Choose books with familiar, clear and colorful pictures.
- **Involve your child** in reading the book. He can turn pages, name items and answer questions, such as "What is the puppy doing?" and "What color are the boy's eyes?"
- **Make reading fun** by using interesting voices for different characters. Your enthusiasm about the story will be contagious. Introduce your child to some new books, but also read his favorite ones over and over.

**Source:** A. Sterling Honig, Ph.D., "Building a Reader from Scratch," Scholastic, [www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3754226](http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3754226).

## Improve conversations with your preschooler in three steps



It's normal to struggle when communicating with young children.

Parents want to know everything ("What did you do at preschool today?"), and kids need help expressing themselves ("Nothing."). To encourage your child to share:

- 1. Start on his level.** Squat down and make eye contact. Give an upbeat greeting, such as, "Hi, sweetheart!" He may start talking on his own. If so, let him take the lead—even if you wanted to discuss something else. Focus on enjoying—not directing—the conversation.
- 2. Make comments.** Instead of asking lots of questions (which adds pressure), make statements like, "Cool! You finger painted today." Or "Ben's mom gave us this photo from your play date. You were at

the park!" Then be patient and see how your child responds.

- 3. Be a role model.** Talk about your day, and tell the story in order—counting events on your fingers. "First, we went to the mall. Next, we stopped at Grandma's. Finally, we came home for lunch." If your child's school sends home a calendar, use it to start conversations about his day. Talk about the projects he brings home, too.

**Source:** A. Freedman and G. Nicolet, "Give 'Em Something to Talk About," Washington Parent, [www.washingtonparent.com/articles/1003/talk.php](http://www.washingtonparent.com/articles/1003/talk.php).

**"I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework."**

—Lily Tomlin  
as character "Edith Ann"

## Make sure your family hurdles common breakfast 'obstacles'



Research shows that children who eat a healthy breakfast are more alert, do better on tests and behave better

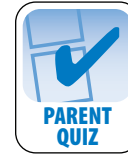
than those who don't. Yet somehow research also shows that up to 35 percent of school children (and half of adults) still don't eat breakfast. Don't be one of them. Hurdle these common breakfast "obstacles:"

- **We don't have time** to eat breakfast. Get up 15 minutes earlier. If your child can't get up in the morning, her bedtime is probably too late. Strive for an earlier bedtime, earlier wake up time, and leave time to enjoy breakfast.

- **My preschooler isn't hungry** in the morning. Don't insist on a big breakfast. Still, she needs to eat something before school. Try a banana, a small yogurt, a mini-bagel or one slice of whole grain toast with peanut butter. Even a glass of milk (remember, milk is food) is better than nothing.
- **My preschooler doesn't like** breakfast foods. That's not a problem. She can have a sandwich, leftovers from last night's dinner, even soup. Any nutritious food works.

**Source:** J. Mullhollem & C. Gill, "Eating a good breakfast boosts chances for school success," Penn State Live, Pennsylvania State University, <http://live.psu.edu/story/47703>.

## Are you building your preschooler's math skills?



Preschoolers enjoy learning that math is part of everyday life. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're making math concepts fun:

- 1. Do you count** interesting things with your child, such as blocks and how many letters are in his name?
- 2. Do you find numbers** on signs, clocks, price tags, license plates, food containers and elsewhere?
- 3. Do you look for basic shapes**, including circles, squares, triangles and rectangles? ("Your plate is a circle. The cracker is square.")
- 4. Do you use math words** in family conversations, such as *long*, *short*, *big*, *small*, *more*, *less*, *half* and *whole*?
- 5. Do you do simple math** with your child? ("You have two cookies, and I have one cookie. Together that makes three cookies!")

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* answer means you're teaching about math in engaging ways. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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## Your preschooler will earn respect by being trustworthy



Being trustworthy is part of both sides of respect. Acting in a trustworthy manner toward others shows that your child is respectful. At the same time, when your child is trustworthy, others will respect him as well.

Your young child may not know what “trustworthy” means. But he is old enough to understand the ideas behind it. Here are some to emphasize as he works to become trustworthy. Your child should:

- **Tell the truth** and say what *really* happened. Young children often tell “white lies.” They want to avoid getting into trouble. Your child will grow out of this sooner if you make a point of praising him instead of punishing him when he tells the truth.

- **Return what isn’t his.** If a friend shares his toy, your child should give the toy back. If your child finds something, he should give it to a parent or teacher. They may be able to return it to its owner.
- **Keep promises.** If your child says he will pick up the books in the playroom, he should do it. Keeping promises can be a difficult lesson for preschoolers. You can help by making only those promises to your child that you know you can keep. If he sees that you do not go back on your word, he will learn not to go back on his.

**Source:** Josephson Institute, “Exercising Character—Trustworthiness: 4- to-6-Year-Olds,” Character Counts, [http://charactercounts.org/pdf/Exercising-Character/Exer-Char\\_04-06-trustworthiness.pdf](http://charactercounts.org/pdf/Exercising-Character/Exer-Char_04-06-trustworthiness.pdf).

## Physical activity may not erase effects of too much screen time



Reasons to limit your child’s screen time keep piling up. A study published late last year in the medical journal

*Pediatrics* says children who spend more than two hours a day on screen time are more likely to have psychological problems than those who don’t. Screen time includes both TV and computer time.

The study said children with more than two hours of screen time per day were more likely to say they had trouble making friends, or were unhappy. That was true even if they also spent time playing actively outdoors. Here are some tips:

- **Start now to limit screen time.** Two hours is a maximum. Less is

probably better. Also remember screen time is the *total* time your child spends with a TV, computer or video games—not two hours of each.

- **Help your preschooler learn** to spend quiet time with things other than a screen. Encourage your child to look at books, work puzzles, play with toys and listen to music.
- **Continue to encourage** active play. It may not protect your child from too much screen time. But it has lots of benefits for your child’s health.

**Source:** B. Hendrick, “Kids’ Screen Time Linked to Psychological Problems,” WebMD, <http://children.webmd.com/news/20101011/kids-screen-time-linked-to-psychological-problems>.

**Q:** My daughter will be starting kindergarten next fall. We received a survey from the elementary school. One of the questions was, “Please describe your child’s temperament.” I am not sure how to do this, or why this is important. Any suggestions?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** Temperament is a term used to talk about the personality traits your child usually shows. The school is likely interested in your child’s temperament because it will help them place her with a teacher who will be a good “fit.”

There are several traits that most people consider when talking about temperament. Some of these, which you may want to mention in your answer, are:

- **Your child’s activity level,** most of the time. Is she happiest being on the go, sitting quietly or somewhere in the middle?
- **The way your child reacts** when she is first presented with a new person, thing or experience.
- **The way your child reacts** to change. Does she “go-with-the-flow” or does she hate change?
- **The level of your child’s reactions.** Does she whoop with joy when she’s happy or just smile?
- **Your child’s distraction level.** Most kids are easily distracted if they are doing something they find boring and something more enjoyable comes along. But is your child distracted by things such as the scraping of a chair or the buzzing of an insect?
- **Your child’s sensitivity level.** Some children are highly sensitive to what they see, hear, smell or feel. Others are less so.

Good luck!

—Maria Koklanaris,  
The Parent Institute

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Stay positive when talking to the teacher



If your child is struggling in kindergarten, you're probably eager to talk with the teacher. Before you do, gather your thoughts and prepare to make the most of your time together. It's important to:

- **Take a team approach.** Keep in mind that you and your child's teacher want the same thing: success for your child. Meet privately to discuss concerns and focus on solutions. Start on an upbeat note. "David loves the reading corner!"
- **Emphasize cooperation.** Make sure the teacher knows you want to help. Instead of saying, "It's your job to make sure David learns to read," say, "I'd like to discuss how to improve David's reading skills." You'll have a better conversation—and more success.
- **Spend time listening.** Remember that the teacher spends *all* day with your child. Set aside your emotions and listen to her perspective. You may be relieved by what you hear. At the very least, it will provide helpful information.
- **End with a plan.** Meetings need to be followed by action. So decide what's next. Agree on at least one thing each of you will do. Also address how and when you'll communicate. "I'll email you in two weeks to discuss our progress."

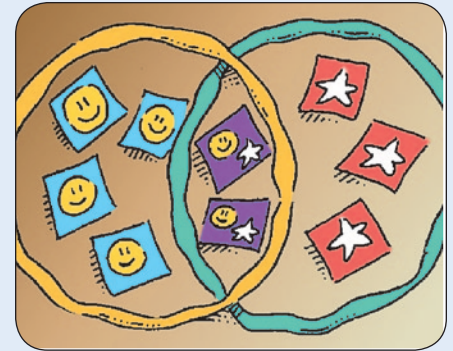
**Source:** J. Williams, "How to Talk to Your Kindergarten Teacher," Education.com, [www.education.com/magazine/article/Talk\\_Kindergarten\\_Teacher/](http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Talk_Kindergarten_Teacher/).

## Help your kindergartner sort, classify with a Venn diagram

A Venn diagram, a drawing of two overlapping circles, organizes information. The circle on the left has one set of information; the circle on the right has another. The middle, where the circles overlap, includes information both sides have in common.

Your kindergartner is not too young to use this tool if you:

- **Make it fun.** Overlap two hula hoops or make overlapping circles out of string or play dough.
- **Illustrate the concept.** Cut pieces of paper into squares. On one set of squares, draw a smiley face. Place those in one of the circles. On the other set of squares, draw a star. Place them in the other circle. Now cut more squares but draw both a star and a smiley face on them. Put them in the place where the circles



overlap. Explain to your child that they are there because they contain some of both sides. Try again by coloring some squares blue, some squares yellow and some squares both blue and yellow. Help your child place them in the correct circles.

**Source:** "Introducing the Venn Diagram in the Kindergarten Classroom," National Council of Teachers of English, [www.readwritethink.org/resources/resource-print.html?id=378&tab=1](http://www.readwritethink.org/resources/resource-print.html?id=378&tab=1).

## Attendance is still a priority, even at the end of the year



Research shows that kids who miss too much kindergarten may struggle more later in school. Of course kids must miss school when they're sick. But your child will be absent or tardy less if you:

- **Organize school supplies** ahead of time. Mornings are too rushed to sign permission slips, fill out forms and review schoolwork. Do these tasks (and others, such as checking homework and packing lunches) in the evening.

- **Emphasize bedtime** and morning routines. Stick to a regular, reasonable sleep schedule to make mornings easier. Doing things in the same order each day (waking up, brushing teeth, getting dressed, etc.) builds kids' self-discipline.
- **Make reliable child care** and transportation plans. If your child has trouble getting to school because of child care or transportation challenges, contact the school. Community resources may be available to help.