

# Early Childhood Parents<sup>®</sup>

Katy Independent School District

make the difference!

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## Help your preschooler build a stronger body this summer

**S**ometimes it is easy to overlook the importance of motor skills in school success. But a strong and healthy body is the first step in helping your child learn. Strong muscles, bones and joints are the “drivers” of your preschooler’s motor skills.

In most areas, summer time offers longer days and nicer weather. Use them to your family’s advantage and get moving toward that stronger body.

Here are more reasons to move:

- **Less sickness**, better posture and more endurance equals school success.
- **Exercise decreases stress**. With exercise, your preschooler is happier and calmer and can cope better with school and life.

- **Exercise helps keep** the excess pounds away. A child who keeps a healthy weight is more like to be an adult who keeps a healthy weight.
- **Better sleep at night** means a rested child who is ready to learn. Here are ways to keep your child moving this summer, while building his motor skills:
  - **Run, walk and hike.**
  - **Swim.**
  - **Ride a bike or scooter.**
  - **Play a sport**, like shooting hoops outside.
  - **Play a game** with a friend, like hopscotch or a jump-rope contest.

**Source:** The White House and The U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Education and Health and Human Services, “Move everyday!” Let’s Move! [www.letsmove.gov/kids-step-1.php](http://www.letsmove.gov/kids-step-1.php).

## Take pride in teaching self-discipline



Do you believe self-discipline is important? Research shows most parents say

*yes*—yet many don’t feel confident about teaching it. Instilling self-discipline is tough, but necessary, starting when kids are young. For example, you can:

- **Put family time first.** Instead of signing your child up for endless activities, make time at home a priority. Plan calm, daily routines that help her develop basic skills, such as getting dressed, brushing teeth and putting on shoes.
- **Focus less on “things.”** Being patient is part of self-discipline. It’s good to say *no* to items you can’t afford or don’t need—even if “everyone else” has them.
- **Give your child choices.** Let her make age-appropriate decisions. “Would you like to wear a red or blue shirt today?” She’ll gain confidence and skills while learning from minor mistakes.

**Source:** S. Whitehead, “How to Teach Kids Self-Discipline,” [Parenthood.com](http://Parenthood.com), [www.parenthood.com/article-topics/how\\_to\\_teach\\_kids\\_selfdiscipline.html/full-view](http://www.parenthood.com/article-topics/how_to_teach_kids_selfdiscipline.html/full-view).

## Know how to discuss sad events, difficult topics with your child



Not so many years ago, it wasn't too difficult for parents to "shield" a child from information the child may not have been ready for. Today, though, we have a 24-hour news cycle. We have the Internet available on an ever-growing number of devices. Shielding a child is getting close to impossible.

So as a parent, you should know how to talk to a child about situations she may see and hear about. Here are some tips:

- **Get your child's version** of events. A young child may hear about a disaster happening far away. But she may think it happened close to her home. So just providing your child with the truth may be enough to calm her concerns.
- **Give age-appropriate information.** Your child does not need every

detail. "Yes, the man on the news said a lot of people have been hurt. It is very sad that things like this happen sometimes. All the adults who love you are always working to keep you safe."

- **Allow your child a chance** to help if this is appropriate. "Yes, these are tough times and some people don't have enough to eat. We have some extra canned goods in our pantry. Would you like to go with me to the food bank to drop them off?"

**Source:** "Talking with Kids About News, Strategies for Talking and Listening," PBS Parents, [www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/news/talking.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/news/talking.html).

**"Children need models rather than critics."**

—Joseph Joubert

## Show your preschooler love, acceptance and respect



Your child wants what we all want—acceptance, respect and caring from those around us. At this age (and for many years to come), the person your child needs this most from is you. Here are some ways to show it:

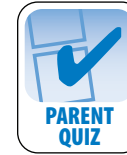
- **Value your child's opinion.** "I didn't make dinner plans yet. What would you like?" "What's the best TV show for kids?" "What's the coolest place we've ever gone together?" Get his input on these kinds of questions and more.
- **Value your child's interests.** You don't always have to join in. Often, saying something like "I

noticed you really like to build with blocks" is enough.

- **Value your child's help.** Feeling competent is usually a sure route to self esteem. Have your child help you with a small chore—folding, stirring, putting away—at least twice a day.
- **Value your child's company.** Take your child places with you when it is appropriate for him to join you. Tell him you are glad he is along. Later, tell him what a nice time you had with him.

**Source:** K. DeBord, Ph.D., "Self-Esteem in Children," North Carolina Cooperative Extension, North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University, [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/pdfs/fcsw\\_506.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/pdfs/fcsw_506.pdf).

## Are you building your preschooler's respect for rules?



Children have to follow rules at home, at preschool, and almost everywhere else. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're helping your child develop this skill:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you consider** your child's age and maturity before choosing a few key rules to emphasize?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you state rules simply** and positively (by explaining what to do, not what not to do)? For example, "Keep your hands and feet to yourself," instead of, "Don't hit."
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you enforce rules consistently?** Kids cooperate more (and argue less) when they know parents won't bend important rules.
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you explain the reasons** for rules so your child is more motivated to follow them?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you rely much more** on praise for good behavior than on consequences for mistakes?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* answer means you're helping your child learn to obey rules. For each *no* answer, try those ideas.

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# Read-alouds help you educate, bond with your preschooler



Research shows reading with your child is among the best ways to prepare him for school success.

The upcoming summer season is an ideal time to establish a daily reading habit. This will start your child off on the right track when he begins school again next fall.

To make reading aloud a great experience for you and your child:

- **Take a moment** with your child to check out the book. What is this book about? Can we get some ideas from the picture on the cover? Who is the author? Who is the illustrator?
- **Read a few pages** and then pause to ask your child a question or two. A great question to ask is: “What do you think will happen next in this story?” This encourages your child to make a prediction. Predicting is an

important skill for reading comprehension (understanding what we read).

- **Make an effort to hold** your child’s interest and attention. One way to do this is to use a different “voice” for the different characters. This is another good way to involve your child in the book. Ask him, “What do you think this character sounds like? Can you make your voice do the character’s voice?”
- **Is your child heading** to first grade in the fall? If so, he may be able to read some of the words in the book. Or even if he is still in preschool, he may know a few sight words. Encourage him to point to a word if he knows it. Then give him the opportunity to read it.

**Source:** “Make the Most of Reading Aloud,” International Reading Association, [www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/tips-howtos/make-most-reading-aloud-30565.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/tips-howtos/make-most-reading-aloud-30565.html).

# Make character education a priority for your entire family



Good character isn’t easy to define. But doing so reveals what you want to teach your child. Ask yourself, “What does our

family value most?” Then find ways to encourage these traits. Simple, effective approaches include:

- **Be a role model.** Kids learn from what parents say and do. Start by explaining a value. “It’s important to be *polite*—to have good manners. So we say nice words like *please* and *thank you*.” Then follow through. “Can you please put on your coat? Thank you!”
- **Set expectations.** Remember that kids need plenty of instruction, practice and praise. “You said

please! What beautiful manners.” Use gentle reminders when necessary. “Sammy gave you a turn. What should you say to her?”

- **Look for examples.** There are many children’s books about honesty, generosity, perseverance and other characteristics. Point out real-life examples, too. “Uncle Tim gave you a new book. That was *generous*!” “Brent told his mom he took a cookie without asking. That was *honest*.” “Your class sent you a get-well card. How *kind*!”

**Source:** Denise D. Witmer, *The Everything Parent’s Guide to Raising a Successful Child*, ISBN: 1-59337-043-1, Adams Media.

**Q:** I can’t believe my daughter is about to finish kindergarten. I understand the expectations for first grade are much higher. Can you give me some insight on what we should expect in first grade?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** You are right—the expectations are higher in first grade. However, your child learned a lot about school this year. This should give her a solid foundation for the school year that begins this fall.

In first grade, there will be a strong emphasis on academics. Although kindergarten is academic in nature, first grade will have a lot more structure. This is because it is so important that children achieve certain benchmarks by the end of first grade.

Your child will learn to read and write if she doesn’t know how to already. She will learn to add and subtract. She will also learn to spell. She will continue to get instruction on all these concepts in second grade. But she should come out of first grade with a good understanding of each.

First grade also features more work at a desk than it did in kindergarten. First-grade teachers work in opportunities for their active students to move and have hands-on learning. But much of the play and singing that were part of the kindergarten curriculum will not be there in first grade.

In short, first grade is an introduction to the full-time academics your child will experience for the rest of her school career. With your support, she will learn, grow and thrive.

—Maria Koklanaris,  
The Parent Institute

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Make first-grade readiness part of summer fun



The transition from kindergarten to first grade is exciting—and a little intimidating—for kids and parents.

Thankfully, it can also be fun! To help your child get ready, plan summer activities that emphasize first-grade skills, such as:

- **Reading.** Keep the library's calendar of events handy. In addition to attending story times and special programs, visit often to check out books. Read every day with your child and spend time discussing materials.
- **Recognizing letters.** Look for letters everywhere. Help your child name them. What sounds do they make? How many words can you think of that start with each letter? Point out basic words, too, such as *stop* and *go*.
- **Writing.** Summer is the perfect time to keep a journal of experiences, such as swimming, traveling and seeing the ocean. Have your child add drawings and words to each page.
- **Counting.** Children love counting interesting things, such as blocks, steps and toys. Once your child has mastered the basics, move on to counting by fives and tens.
- **Printing names.** Students may be required to write first and last names on school papers. When doing summer projects, encourage your child to add his name with pride!

**Source:** "Kindergarten to First Grade: Summer Preparation Activities," Indian Prairie School District, [http://clow.ipspd.org/schoolbag\\_parents\\_summer\\_kto1.html](http://clow.ipspd.org/schoolbag_parents_summer_kto1.html).

## Four secrets to helping your kindergartner enjoy writing

**M**any kindergartners love to write, and it's a skill they'll use throughout life. If your child hasn't caught the "writing bug" yet, don't worry. Here are a few ways to encourage this activity:

1. **Ask for help.** When you need to write a card, a list or other item, invite your child to participate. "It's Grandma's birthday! Let's make her a card."
2. **Relax about spelling.** Kindergartners often write words they way they sound, often without vowels. *Stop* might be "stp" and *bed* might be "bd." At this age, give compliments, not corrections.
3. **Listen to your child read.** Instead of admitting, "I can't read your writing," ask your child to read it to you. "Oooh!

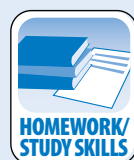


Look at that sentence. Please read it to me!"

4. **Provide interesting utensils.** It's tough for kids to resist writing with cool markers, pencils and paper. Use creative supplies to make words, such as finger paint, chalk, glitter and yarn.

**Source:** "Kindergarten: Writing Milestones," education.com and PBS, [www.education.com/reference/article/Ref\\_Writing\\_Milestones\\_K/](http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Writing_Milestones_K/).

## Homework teaches your child about responsibility



Not all kindergarten teachers give homework. But if your child had kindergarten homework, or will next year, you should understand the reasons behind it. No one is trying to pile extra work on a young child. Instead, homework is designed to:

- **Teach responsibility.** Getting kids into the habit of doing an assignment and turning it in is a lesson in itself.
- **Build self-esteem.** Completing age-appropriate tasks makes kids feel competent and important.

- **Reinforce skills.** If your child is learning about the five senses, the homework may be: "Find something at home that feels smooth. Bring it in to share with the class tomorrow."
- **Foster family involvement** in a child's education. If your child is learning to count, the homework may be, "Ask an adult to help you count the number of doors in your home."

**Source:** O'Hara Elementary School, "Homework Guidelines: Kindergarten," Fox Chapel Area School District, Pittsburgh, Pa., [www.fcasd.edu/j\\_ohara2/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=48&Itemid=3](http://www.fcasd.edu/j_ohara2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=48&Itemid=3).