

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

October 2002

KID BITS



Scrub-a-dub writing

Here's a tip for fun writing practice. Spray some shaving cream on your hand and spread it on a mirror, the bathtub wall, or another washable surface. Your child can use his finger to practice writing his name or the alphabet in the shaving cream.

Notes to the teacher

Consider sending your youngster's teacher a magnetic notepad during the first weeks of school. Add a short note asking her to let you know how your little one is doing. The teacher will appreciate the gift—and your interest in your child's education.

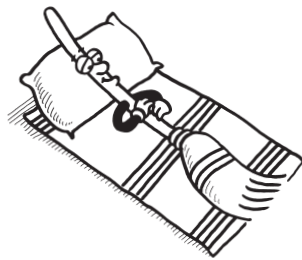
A work in progress

It's important to remind your children now and then that they are still learning, just as you are. Let them know that they will succeed sometimes and fail other times—and they will learn from both!

Worth quoting

"The first duty of love is to listen."
Paul Tillich

Just for fun



Q: Why was the broom late?

A: It over-swept.

Sparking creative thinking

When asked to name three things that are tall, Travis said, "Smoke from a rocket, things I can't see because they go up so high, and my Lego tower!"

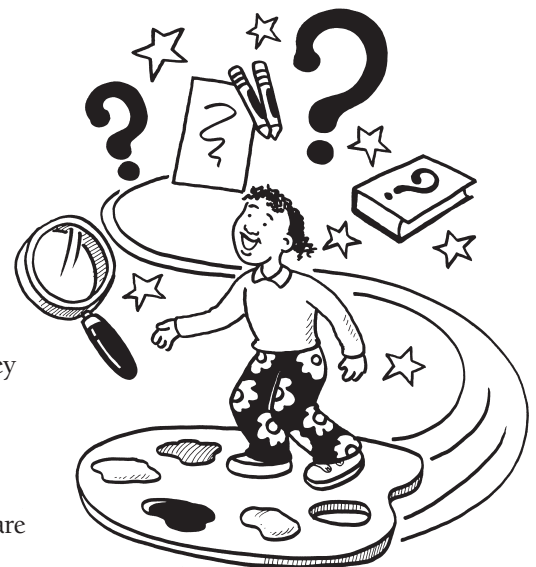
Children have an amazing ability to think creatively. When they're encouraged to use this creativity, their problem-solving skills improve. Here are some ways you can promote creative thinking in your youngster.

Ask questions

When your child asks you a question, answer with a question of your own. For instance, if he asks, "What can I do with this yarn?" say, "Good question. Do you have any ideas?" If his answer is "I don't know," help him think of possibilities. "I guess it's too short to use as a jump rope! Can you think of some other way we could play with it?"

Encourage exploration

Allow your child to experiment. Perhaps she would like to mix red and



yellow paint and see what color she ends up with. As you explore together, ask questions. "What color do you think you'd get if you mixed blue and yellow?" *Tip:* Don't worry if your child makes a mess. Let her concentrate on being creative.

Offer praise

Tell your youngster that his ideas are unique and special. *Example:* "That's a great idea! You come up with the neatest drawings." Your encouragement is sure to boost your child's creativity by leaps and bounds! ♥

"But, Mommmmm!"

Does your child whine? Whining is typical in young children as they learn to put their feelings into words. Try these ideas to encourage a whine-free household:

- Distract your child from her whining. Say, "I understand you would like to go outside, but it's time for a bath now. Would you like to use your new bath bubbles?"
- Ask your youngster to repeat himself in a "regular" voice. *Example:* "I can tell that you want something, but I cannot hear as well when you whine. Slow down and tell me what you need." ♥



We're all different, we're all the same

The world is full of people. Some are tall, some are short; some are old, some are young; some need wheelchairs, some do not. Your youngster may feel awkward, embarrassed, or curious around someone who is physically challenged. She can feel more comfortable by getting to know people with disabilities. Consider these suggestions:

- ★ Volunteer together at a children's hospital or other health-care facility. You could take along books to read aloud or board games to play. Or, simply sit and talk with the children and their families.

- ★ Ask the teacher to introduce your youngster to a physically challenged classmate. Encourage him to talk with the child about things they probably have in common, like favorite TV shows or places they like to visit.



- ★ Read books about children with disabilities. Examples: *Let's Talk About It: Extraordinary Friends* by Fred Rogers; *Someone Special, Just Like You* by Tricia Brown.

When children learn about people who are different from themselves, they will begin to understand and accept them. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Hands-on math

Young children use all their senses to learn, including touch. The experiences below will help your child get "in touch" with math:



- ▲ Give your youngster a pile of cereal in different shapes and sizes. Ask her to sort them into groups. She could choose shapes (circles, squares, triangles), colors, or even flavors!

- ▲ Use a variety of objects for counting practice. Try blocks, spoons, or paper plates—almost anything can be counted.

- ▲ Cut different lengths of yarn or ribbon to teach comparison skills. Ask your child which piece is longest. Which one is shortest? Widest? Skinniest?

- ▲ Have your youngster use his hands to measure. Ask him to find objects that are the same length as his index finger, his thumb, and his whole hand. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Playing—with food!

One night while I was preparing dinner, my son was really getting underfoot. As I was pouring salt into the shaker, it spilled—all over him, the table, and the floor.

As we cleaned up the floor (and his hair), he asked if he could help me cook. I let him sit at the kitchen table with some plastic bowls and spoons. He "cooked" with the salt, pouring it into the bowls. He used his fingers to draw pictures in the salt that spilled on the table. Then, we talked about what he drew, and we pretended to cook together. When we sat down to dinner, my son said, "Dad, when I grow up, I'm going to play this game with my kids!"

The moral of the story: Don't cry over spilt milk—or spilled salt! Fun opportunities for play often arrive when we least expect them. ♥



Q & A

Imaginary friends

Q: My youngest daughter has an imaginary friend. Should I be concerned, or is this normal?

A: Young children often have make-believe playmates. Your child probably just has a great imagination! Imaginary friends help children feel that they have some power in their world. These friends often show up during times of change, such as the arrival of a new baby or a move to a new home.

As your daughter gets older, she'll probably replace her friend with the real ones she makes at school. You don't have to become part of her imaginary relationship unless she invites you—but pay attention. Chances are, you'll



learn a lot about what your child is thinking and feeling by listening to their "conversations." ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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