

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2018

Early Childhood Programs

KID BITS

Plan ahead for summer

Hot summer days may seem far away, but it's not too early to think about summer child care, since many day camps fill up fast. Ask in the school office or call your parks and recreation department to learn what's available. Also, find out whether your family qualifies for a reduced fee.

Accepting others

Talking about differences in ways your little one can understand will help her learn acceptance. Together, think of how people you know are different and the same. Maybe her best friend has freckles and your child doesn't—but they both have brown hair. She'll begin to see that these things don't matter.

Take numbers apart

Secretly choose a number between 1 and 10, and use two hands to show your youngster that many fingers. For 7, you might hold up 5 fingers and 2 fingers. Then, he can show 7 in another way (4 fingers and 3 fingers). Keep going until you run out of combinations, then play again with a new number.

Worth quoting

"No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn." *Hal Borland*

Just for fun

Q: What has hands but cannot clap?

A: A clock.



Fun on the farm

Moo! Oink! Baa! Whether your little one reads about farms, visits a real one, or plays farm at home, she can learn about animals, discover new vocabulary, and use her imagination. Here's how.

Barnyard stories

Read picture books about farms, and help your youngster make a list of farm words. She could illustrate her list to remember what each word means. She'll learn vocabulary like *calf*, *silo*, *pasture*, and *harvest*. *Tip:* Ask your youngster's teacher or a librarian for book suggestions.

Family field trip

Call your county extension office or go online to find a farm that's open to the public. During your visit, ask your child to identify animals or point out places or activities she recognizes from a book. ("Look, there's *grain* for the *hens*!") Also, workers might tell her which crops grow



on the farm or explain how they use the equipment.

Pretend play

Let your youngster use her imagination to make a miniature farm. She could cover a baking sheet with green paper to create a pasture for toy cows. A shallow bowl of water with blue food coloring might become a "pond" for rubber ducks. Encourage her to act out daily life on a farm by feeding chickens, brushing horses, and putting pigs to bed in the barn.♥

Kid-friendly snacks

With a little help, your child can whip up nutritious snacks. Enjoy working in the kitchen together with these ideas.

● **Yogurt sundae.** Suggest that your little chef mix whole-grain cereal, fresh fruit, and plain yogurt in a bowl, then top with a strawberry.

● **Bread-less sandwich.** Cut a cored apple into thin round slices. Have your youngster put a piece of cheddar cheese or spread nut butter between two slices.

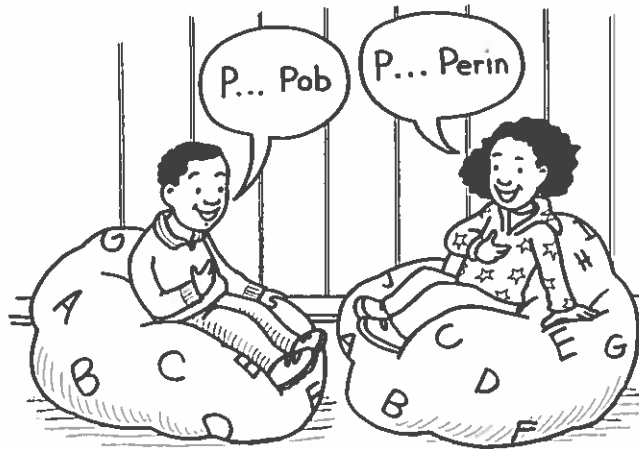
● **Guacamole in a bag.** Cut an avocado in half, remove the pit, and let your child spoon the flesh into a plastic zipper bag. He can add 1 tbsp. diced tomato and 1 tsp. lime juice. Seal tightly. Now he can gently knead the bag until it looks like guac!♥



Name games

Develop your youngster's *phonemic awareness*—his ability to notice sounds and syllables in words—by playing with names. Try these activities.

Sound switch. Your child will laugh while he practices beginning sounds. Ask him to pick any letter in the alphabet (say, P) and pretend it's the new first letter in his name (*Michael* becomes *Pichael*). Encourage him to do the same for other names in your



family (*Pimothy* for *Timothy*, *Pom* for *Mom*). *Tip:* If someone's name starts with a vowel, he can just add the new letter (*Perin* for *Erin*).

Syllable clap. Help your youngster hear separate syllables in names—this will help him sound out parts of words when he reads. First, take turns “clap-

ping” your names, one clap per syllable. *Sebastian* would clap three times (*Se-bas-tian*), and *Nancy* would clap twice (*Nan-cy*). Now, clap words with the same number of syllables as your name (*car-ni-val* for *Sebastian*, *spring-time* for *Nancy*).♥

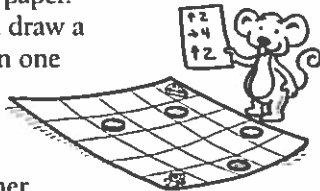
ACTIVITY CORNER



A budding programmer

A *coder* writes instructions that tell computers what to do. Your child can get an early start on programming by leading a “mouse” to “cheese”—no computer required.

1. Help your youngster draw a 5 x 5 grid on a piece of paper. Now, she can draw a cute mouse in one corner and a chunk of cheese in the opposite corner.



2. Have her place pennies in a few squares—these are obstacles for the mouse to avoid.

3. Together, write code to help the mouse find his lunch! She might use arrows to tell him which direction to move and numbers to show him how many boxes to cross. *Example:* →3, ↑2, ←1, ↑2, →3.

4. Let her use the code to trace her finger from the mouse to the cheese. Then, rearrange the obstacles, and write new code.♥

Q & A Head off bullying

Q: My best friend's son is a year younger than mine. Lately when we get together, my child teases hers. What can I do?

A: You can use this situation to talk to your son about teasing and bullying. Encourage him to think about how he might feel if someone—especially an older child—teased him. Explain that because this boy is younger, he may feel afraid or unable to defend himself. He might also look up to your child and even copy his behavior by teasing others.

Before your friend's next visit, help your son brainstorm kind things to say. He might compliment the boy on his shoes or T-shirt, or he could ask him what he likes about school. Then, consider having them play in the same room with you in case he needs a reminder about how to be kind.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Learning to stay focused

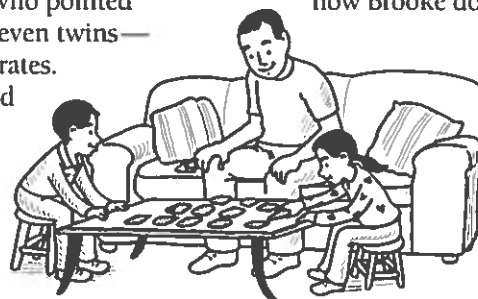
I noticed that one of my twins, Brooke, seemed to have a shorter attention span than her brother did. Her focus would wander when our family played board games, for example. I mentioned this to her teacher, who pointed out that children—even twins—develop at different rates.

She recommended ways to stretch Brooke's attention span. For instance, she suggested that we play Memory with fewer cards

and gradually work up to a full-length game. Or we could set a timer for 10 minutes when we play Crazy 8s, and the winner is the player with the fewest cards when time's up.

We've tried these strategies, and now Brooke doesn't lose interest before a game ends.

The other day, she didn't want to stop playing cards when the timer went off—and we played for almost 30 minutes!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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