

## Internal mapping helps children learn to write

Kindergartner has been working hard this year to build an "internal map" of the locations of the "important places" in his world.

At the same time he has been experiencing an awareness of time and order of events.

For example, a kindergartner's directions to the library might be, "We go down this street until there's a big yellow house, then we turn into the street on my side. And just past the Dairy Queen, we turn into the street on Mom's side—and there's the library!"

He has an internal map in his memory bank of places and things on the way to the library. And, very important, while this map was being developed, he was also constructing his sense of time.

All events, whether it's going to the library or copying a word, occur in space and over time. Making the incorrect turns will not take you to the library. Writing the letters of a word out of order will not yield the right word.

When Kindergartner is five-plus, he has little insight into geographical relationships, but he does recognize specific landmarks. It is during his fifth and sixth

year that he puts the finishing touches on geographical relationships and time/space organization.

These relationships will clarify the differences between the letters b, d, p, q, and g; u and n; m and w. Now is the time to provide some experiences to strengthen this aspect of development.

## The navigation game

While you are running errands in your car to familiar places, play this game with Kindergartner.

Say, "We are going to the library first. You are the Navigator on this plane. Tell me where to turn to get on the street where the library is." Don't mention of "left and right"—this will only confuse him. Mention only other landmarks such as, "Look, our grocery store is on this street."

He will like being the navigator and will attend closely to minor landmarks to aid his memory. It may be a month or six weeks before he can navigate accurately and readily, but all this time he has been laying down a "map" in his internal computer.

## Did you arrive?

When Kindergartner can navigate and you arrive at the library, grocery or dry cleaners without error, introduce these games to check the accuracy of his internal "space/time map."

1. Say, "Navigator, take us back to the home airport."
2. Say, "I want to go to the library, but I want to go a different way. I want to go by the dry-cleaners on the way."

Both Kindergartner and you will now enjoy errand-running, and you will be providing a priceless learning experience.

## Getting dressed

An important goal this year is learning to be on time for the school bus. Sixes and Fives should be able to dress themselves.

Fives want to—and can except for tying shoelaces. Stand-by to assist.

Sixes may not want to, will dawdle, and protest—but they can, and can even tie their shoelaces. Be consistent in your insistence that they dress themselves.

*"A child educated only at school is an uneducated child."  
—George Santayana*