

Grade 1 September Part 1

First week of school

For every first grader, the first week of school presents a major challenge. The long-awaited first day of school has finally arrived. The anticipation is now over. The BIG DAY is here.

Most young children approach the first week of school with feelings of excitement and fear. At one moment, they want to shout for joy, so proud of growing up so fast. The next moment they are ready to cry, fearful of what the future may have in store for them.

For parents too there can be mixed feelings: proud to have a child in the first grade, yet sad at the same time that the pre-first-grade years are now over.

Most children approach first grade with joyous abandon, but at times they display contradictory behaviors:

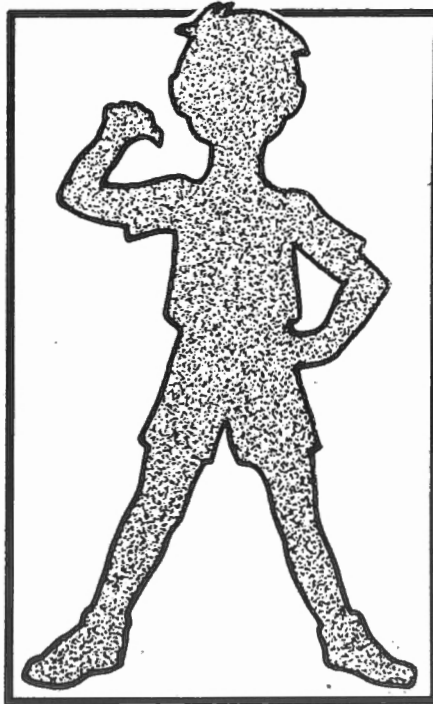
- They're brash and combative one minute; hesitant, dawdling, and indecisive the next.
- They're affectionate now; antagonistic later.
- They're over-demanding and explosive this morning; delightful, co-operative, and polite this afternoon.

What is happening?

Nothing more or less than being a typical growing child.

First grade is a year of transition physically and mentally.

- Milk (baby) teeth are shedding. First permanent molars are coming in.
- Body chemistry changes make your child more prone to infectious diseases.



- Infections of the inner ear as well as nose and throat difficulties are frequent.

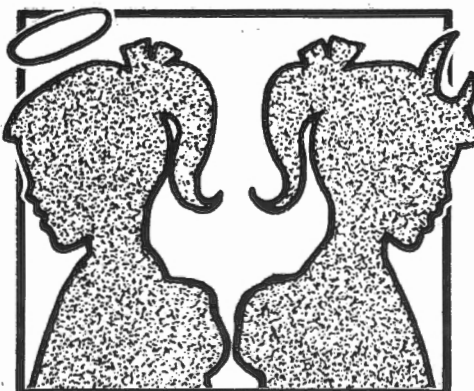
- Developmental changes that you'll be reading more about in future issues of *Growing Up* are affecting vision, nerves, and muscles.

Because of the profound growth and changes in the nervous system, your child is not only just one year older; he* is a different child altogether.

Besides the changes going on inside him, your child is experiencing radical changes in the world outside himself, too. He goes to school with both pleasure and fear. Last year, his awareness and capabilities were in better balance. Now he is exposed to a much wider world than he can easily handle with his limited experience.

Helping your youngster achieve a balance requires tender and wise management. Praise is a magic tonic. Praise helps him choose which of many directions he will take.

These weekly issues of *Growing Up* will contain information about first graders that can help you understand and encourage your child in a successful transition from home to school.



*In *Growing Up*, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used in alternating issues.

Grade 1 September Part 2

The first week of school: A NEW WORLD

Starting school is tremendously exciting! Your first grader wants to go to "real school" and do "real work."

The transition from home to school is not easy or simple. Going to—and coming home from—school means adjusting to new situations at school and at home.

Your child is going to need all the patience and understanding you can muster to help him adjust.

Why can't he hold still?

He wiggles.

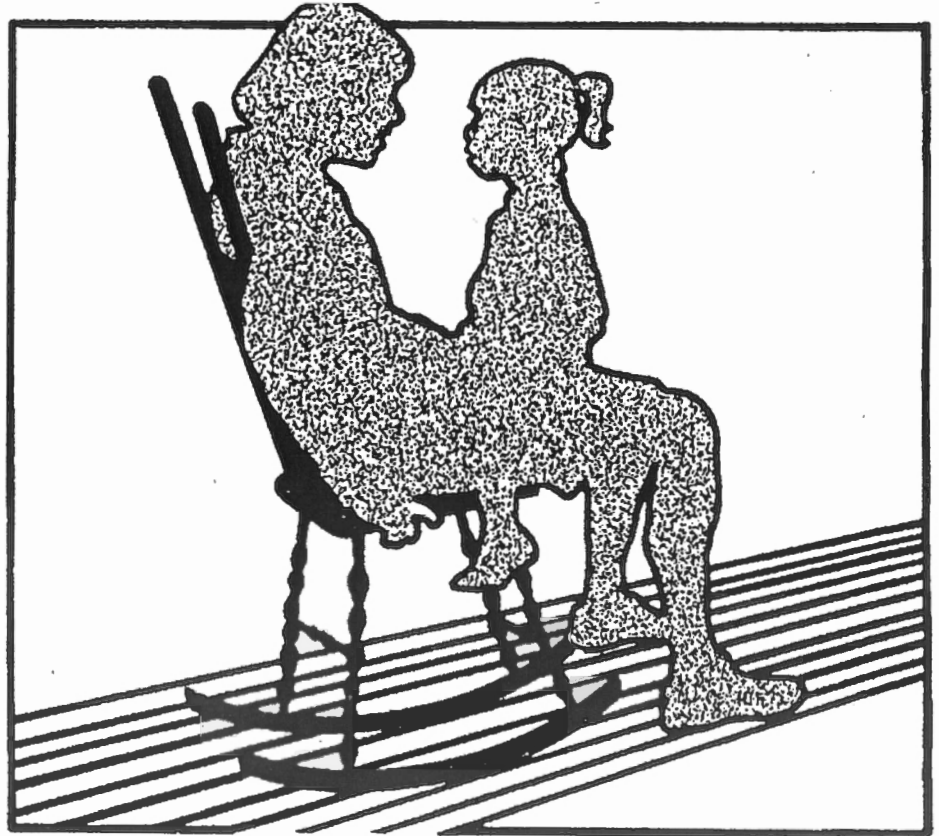
He swings his legs.

He bites his nails, makes faces, chews on pencils, hair, collars.

Why can't he be still?

Blame it on the intensity of his school experience. The squirming lets off steam.

Punishment won't help; understanding and ignoring these nervous habits is the best treatment for now.

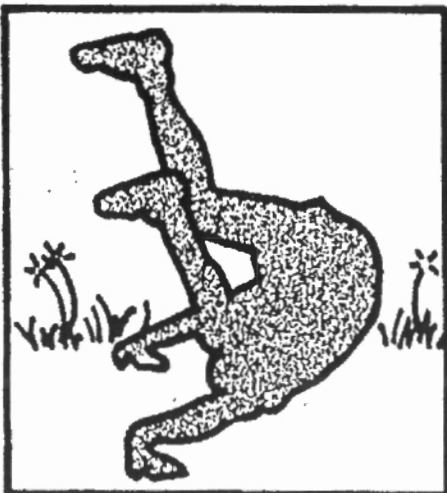


Make time for talking

Your youngster likes to have you read to him before bedtime. Even though a child's homework is for him to read to you, bedtime reading is fun, relaxed, and helps expand his world. He especially likes to talk about his day after the lights are off. This is a good time for him to tell about his achievements, concerns, or fears.

Accidents will happen

Ability to use the toilet at school is not always mastered until about the age of eight. Your child may have a few accidents at school. Shaming or spanking is not the way to handle this. A better way is to allow time each day for the first bowel movement before leaving for school.

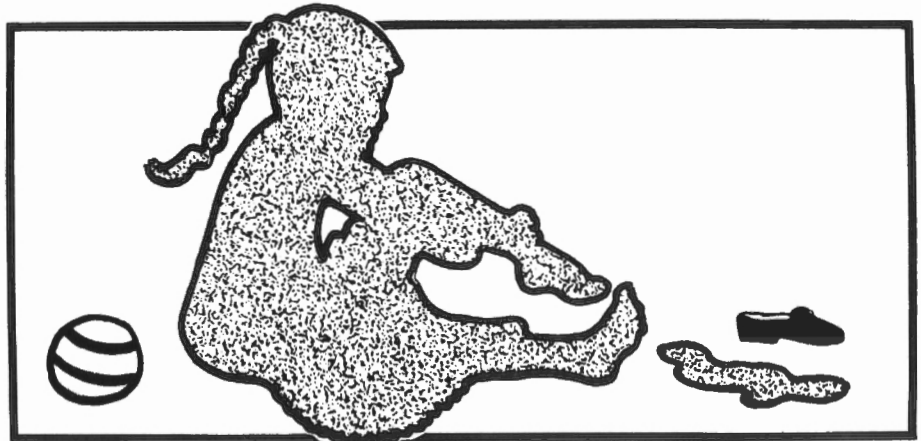


"What one knows is, in youth, of little moment; they know enough who know how to learn."
—Henry Brooks Adams—

Grade 1 September Part 3

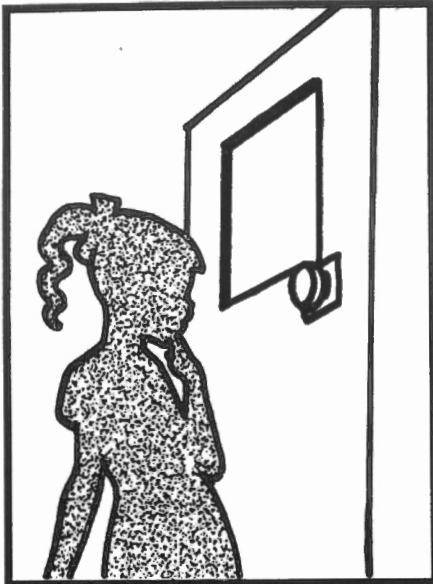
Unexplained fears

Don't be surprised if your child refuses to go to school after a week or two. She doesn't necessarily dislike school. Some experience unpleasant to her, such as being asked to count before the class or to pass out the milk, may be the cause. Send her on to school. Plan a special treat for afterward.



Morning dawdling

First graders usually need 11 hours of sleep to avoid fatigue and strain. When she wakes, she usually goes to the bathroom and then begins to play. This playing causes problems. She must dress, have breakfast and be ready for the bus or carpool if all is to go well. It helps if her clothes are already laid out—singly, not touching, so she can see every piece she will use. She will gradually begin to shift her playing habit to a dressing habit and will be able to get herself dressed before breakfast.

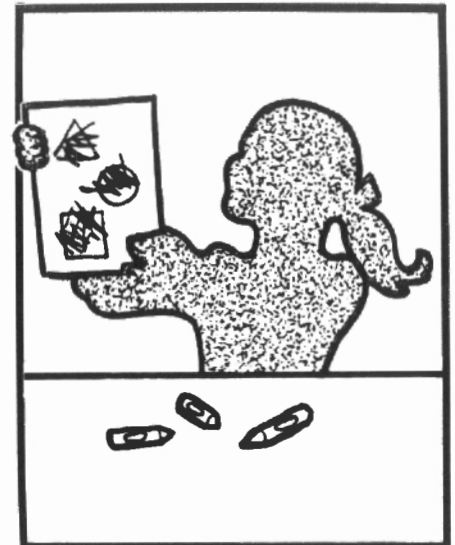


Why won't she talk?

A first grader doesn't talk much about her school experiences at home. If she does, she often tells of "bad" things other children have done or boasts beyond reality of her own accomplishments. The daring classmate who misbehaves most is sure to be reported on in great detail. This "tattling" and enlarging on the truth will stop when she is more at home at school.

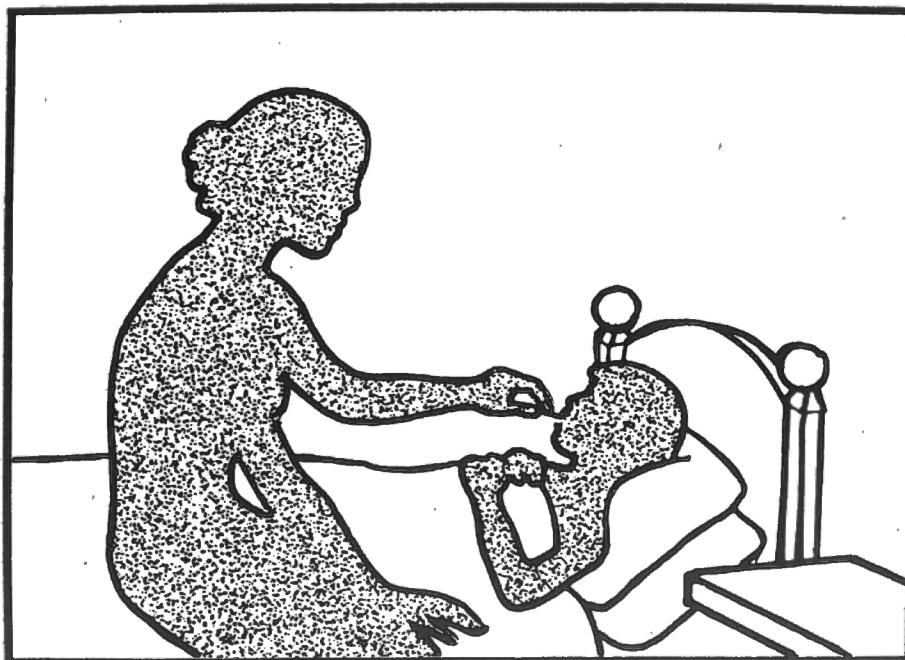
Fast and sloppy

Your youngster may bring home papers she has colored, cut, or pasted that are alarmingly messy. In speedy and joyous abandon, she wants to do everything, and so finishes little. She is also easily distracted and often shifts her eyes to watch another's activity, while her own hand continues to move.



"To me, raising kids is just about the most exciting, maddening, rewarding, exhausting, puzzling, and satisfying occupation there is. There's no foolproof system, because all kids are different. But there's no area in the world where loving common sense and a touch of humor pay such big dividends."

—Art Linkletter—



Why all the illnesses?

After a few weeks of school, absences become common. Children become tired from all the adjustments and are more susceptible to illness.

Colds may come back off and on all year.

Be on the lookout for inflammation or infection of the middle ear.

Children must be able to hear to learn, to listen, and to follow directions.

"No! I won't!"

Even without the stress of adjustment to school, your child can be frustrating at home. The initial response to any demand is usually "No!" or complete disregard of the request. Nagging only increases the stubbornness.

The pleasant touch works best. Allowing the child a little time or several false starts will save face by allowing her to come around on her own.

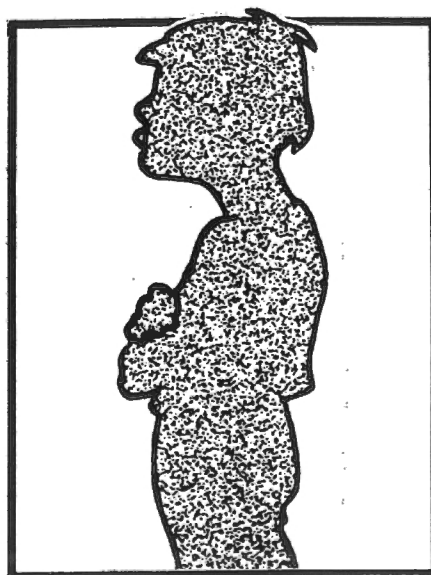
Finishing tasks

A first grader really likes to work in school. She likes to "begin" work, that is, but she doesn't really like to "finish."

This behavior is typical (parents may notice it when she half-way does chores at home).

Parents may also notice this behavior when the child is doing homework, which is a reality and must be finished.

Parents' role is to encourage the child and help ... but not to be too active.



Why does she "steal"?

Taking things at school that belong to others is more common at this age than parents may wish to believe.

However, the child will confess (and really be sorry) if indirectly approached ("Where did you find this?") rather than directly accused ("You stole this eraser!").

She wants to be good and is aware of her "goodness" in herself. Active listening by parents at bedtime will give her the chance for "absolution" and a good feeling about herself again.

*"Be careful of sharp words. You may have to eat them."
—Franklin P. Jones—*