



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Social Skills

## Teaching honesty

“Honesty is not inborn,” notes educator and author David Carroll.

“Unlike perseverance, say, or courage, which some youngsters display at amazingly early ages, the wish to treat other people fairly and squarely has to be taught,” he says.

Parents and other significant adults need to consistently shape their children’s understanding of the three aspects of honesty.

First, there is the honesty of possessions—not taking what belongs to another person.

Second, there is honesty of words—learning to speak truthfully.

Third, there is the honesty of behavior—not cheating or victimizing others.

Thomas Jefferson so valued honesty that he declared: “Honesty is the first chapter of the book of wisdom.” □

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## Language

### Basic baby language

What do we mean by basic baby language? At an early age, around nine months old, we mean the sense a baby makes from what he sees and hears around him.

For example, we know he can follow some simple commands (“No.”)

He can respond to gestures of pat-a-cake, bye-bye and similar, familiar words. We know he understands them even though he doesn’t say them.

Language can also include the sounds that a baby makes as well as what he does with his hands, eyes, and other parts of his body.

How does a baby acquire language? Actually he has been developing language for most of his young life. He has been listening to the variety of sounds around him.

He has been paying attention to the speech of the most important people in his life—those who take care of his physical and emotional needs.

You, in turn, have been tailoring your speech to his development and to particular situations. For example, when you kiss or hug him, you also tell him in a special tone of voice, “I love you.”

When you play dialogue games, you attract his attention and make him attentive to your voice.

With your encouragement, he has gotten the idea of using his own

hands and body to move, to get what he wants, to manipulate and explore objects—to learn about his world.

And you have been interpreting his experiences by telling him in words what he is doing.

What is important to understand is that even though your baby is not yet saying words, all of his experiences are contributing to his acquisition of language. □

## Behavior

### “Show me how”

Many new tasks are above a child’s ability level until you show him how to carry out the chore.

For example, you could tell your child to feed the dog, assuming he’s seen you feed Champ dozens of times.

Or you could walk him through the task, pointing to the dog food bag, then showing him how to measure the food, and how to fill and carry the water bowl.

Most tasks can be broken down into simple steps. Children do not always learn by being told or by watching—they also learn by being instructed and given examples. □

## Rules that can work for you

Discipline is more than punishment for misbehavior. It is the means by which we teach our children good conduct now and for the future. Every mistake a child makes can become an opportunity for new learning.

Here are four rules that can guide you:

- **Accentuate the positive.** Let your child know you appreciate her doing things that are important to you.

For example, thank her for helping you keep the house neat by picking up her toys and clothes. If she forgets, gently remind her that it makes your work harder when you have to do all the work yourself. And ask for her help.

Compliment her when she takes responsibility for herself in any way, even if her efforts are awkward.

Point out the times she does things the way you have told her. For example, thank her when she asks for something instead of whining.

- **Minimize the negative.** Pay more attention to the things your youngster does well than to her mistakes.

Without thinking, we often take for granted those behaviors of others that please us. Then we exaggerate out of proportion the things they do wrong.

This approach can backfire with a child because children tend to repeat those behaviors that get the most attention.

For example, the more you ask her to stop an annoying habit such as playing with her food, the more she may do it.

Try ignoring it instead. Then, when you notice her eating neatly,

compliment her. It won't take long before you begin to see a change.

- **Explain your expectations.** Let your child know what you expect of her. Try to keep your expectations fair, reasonable, and sensible.

Explain them to her. If she knows what you expect of her, it will be easier for her to please you and avoid your disapproval. You will prevent unnecessary misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

For example, explain that you expect her to be in bed by a time that is acceptable to you. Let her know that she can lie in bed quietly for a short time before going to sleep.

Offer to read or tell her a story. Or just talk with her during that time if she wishes.

But explain that you will not want to spend the time with her if you have to remind her several times every night that it is time to go to bed.

Let her know what you expect as well as what she can expect when she does not fulfill her part of the bargain.

- **Be consistent.** Decide what is important to you. Then try to be consistent in your expectations and responses.

For example, suppose you set up a rule that you do not want your child playing on the living room sofa with her shoes on.

Don't let her do it one day when you are feeling good and yell at her the next because she's getting on your nerves.

Try to remind her, gently but firmly, that you do not want her to do it. Ask her to leave the living room until she can do as you ask. Thank her when she remembers to take off her shoes.

It's not always easy to behave toward our children as we would want.

Try to accept yourself as you are, and do the best you can. No one can be kind, considerate, fair, patient, and respectful all the time.

Be as understanding of yourself as we have asked you to be of your child. Just by trying you will succeed. And your child will learn from your example. □

## Parenting

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### Praise shows you care

One way to foster better parenting skills is to praise more than you criticize.

Praise a job well done. But don't dole out "false" praise.

If, for example, your son is struggling to become an average tee-ball player, don't praise him by saying, "You're such a great ball player" just to make him feel good.

Instead say, "Your batting has really improved" or "You did a good job." Be specific and fair in your praise. Kids are pretty good at knowing where they stand and appreciate an honest appraisal.

Praise developmental milestones and academics, but don't forget to praise attitudes as well. You reinforce good behavior when you tell your daughter, "That was very nice of you to share with Molly."

The behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated—so make sure you're praising the positive behaviors you want to see more of. □

## All that energy!

You have probably been amazed—and at times maddened—by your preschooler's high level of energy. She dashes across the room just to pick up a piece of paper.

She wriggles and giggles while you read her a story.

Just as soon as you take a piece of ribbon away from her—because her fidgeting with it bothers you—she finds a piece of tattered string to replace the ribbon!

Studies of children's activity levels—the amount and frequency of their physical movements—indicate definite age-related patterns.

A child's activity level increases from birth until about three or four years of age. After that age, there is generally a notable decrease in activity each year.

In other words, three-year-olds are usually more active than one-year-olds. But seven-year-olds are likely to have a lower activity than four-year-olds.

Within any age group, of course, there is likely to be considerable variation. Some of this variation appears to be genetically based. For example, boys of all ages are generally more active than girls.

Environmental influences also play a part. For example, it has been observed that some very active children become even more restless whenever adults try to restrict their activity level.

What implications for parenting can be drawn from these studies? It should be reassuring for parents of any preschool child to know that:

- A fairly high level of activity is normal in children during the preschool years.

- Most preschool children have a short attention span and can't sit still for a prolonged period of time.

- Boys tend to be more active than girls.

- During the preschool years, there are wide variations in what is considered a normal level of activity.

- Trying to force a restless child to sit still will generally not be effective in settling him down.

- Making minor adjustments in the environment—such as shortening the length of a story being read—will generally produce better results.

- Being sensitive to your child's unique characteristics and making reasonable accommodations to fit her own level of activity will generally be in her best interest.

- If you feel that your child's energy is too much for you, remember there is light at the end of the tunnel: most children's level of activity decreases throughout the childhood years.

- In the meantime, being patient with your child's activity level is most important during the preschool years, even though at times it may be a great frustration to you. □

### FREE!

"Grandma Says" is a twice-monthly email that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children's book reviews.

Issues are free of advertisements; email addresses are shared with no one.

Get the next issue by signing up at:

<https://growingchild.com/grandma-says>

Written by a very wise grandmother;  
From the publishers of **Growing Child**  
and **Growing Together**

## Practicing ABCs

Here is an easy, fun way to practice making letters and words.

Start with a big roasting pan. Pour a thick layer of salt into the pan and shake it from side to side until the salt is spread evenly. Now you're ready to write.

Children get the "feel" of letters better when their fingertips shape them than when a stubborn pencil point does. They can make letters as big as they like without wasting paper.

And if they are unhappy with the way something looks, they don't have the frustration of scribbling all over it or the tedious job of trying to erase.

All they have to do is give the pan a shake. The mistake disappears and there is a clean "page" on which to start over.

If your child is too young for writing, he can make all kinds of designs with fingers or cookie cutters.

For those kids who love tiny bulldozers and dump trucks, the salt's fine, dry texture works better than sand for moving, dumping, and piling up.

Look at the salt as a new kind of creative surface . . . and think up a new challenge for the kids at your house. □

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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

[www.growingchild.com](http://www.growingchild.com)

# August, 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Count all the 4's on this page.</p> <p>National Milkshake Day (You know what to do.)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Go outside and count clouds.</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>Count three things: Three books Three people Three doors</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Show Baby how to lie on her stomach and pretend she is swimming.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>National Underwear Day. (Nobody knows why or what to do about it.)</p> <p>?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>What things could you use to "make" a smile? Examples: A line of gumdrops or a piece of clay in a curve. Put on your thinking cap.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Build something large or small with empty boxes and masking tape.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Go for walk today and look for a hill to climb.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>What can you do today that will help someone to be happy?</p>	<p>10</p> <p>See if you can find someone who will teach you how to dance a polka!</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Give somebody a helping hand today. Offer to be of service.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Sing an old song: "Home on the Range"</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Read the story of the tortoise and the hare. Is there a lesson there?</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Look in the newspaper for something fun to do this weekend.</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Count some flowers or dandelions in the yard or a park.</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>What words rhyme with your name?</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Visit an outdoor market. What do you see?</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>How many toes are there in your house? Are you sure? Count again.</p> <p>P.S. Don't forget to count Spot's and Fluffy's toes.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Go to the library and bring home a book about birds, trees, or motorcycles.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Listen to classical music. Play a pretend instrument. What is yours? Or, pretend you're the CONDUCTOR of the orchestra.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Go outside after dark and count the stars you see. What's your total?</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Make some green Jello.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Do you know how to skip? Let's see it.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Dig out an old, favorite toy to play with.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>What do all of these body parts have in common? ears, eyes, feet, legs, hands, toes, fingers, elbows, knees.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Draw a picture using only dots. (Practice makes perfect.)</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Everybody say their middle name.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Visit a state park.</p> 
<p>29</p> <p>Play in a wading pool*</p> <p>*Adult supervision required..</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Practice bouncing a ball.</p> 	<p>31</p> <p>Eat some watermelon.</p>	