



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Social Skills

Table Manners

At mealtimes, five- and six-year-olds are spilly, wiggly and napkin-droppers. Why?

- They seem driven to be active just because they are these ages. They must touch, handle and explore everything.

- As a result, they drop their utensils, turn over their milk, feel their mashed potatoes with their fingers.

- Forcing them to sit still, if that is even possible (another form of movement) with their mouths full.

- Sending them away from the table is no solution, either. They would rather eat alone, happily dawdling.

- Taking away their food can cause a belligerent reaction.

They will outgrow these behaviors in time and adopt the model you set with your table manners.

By the way how are your table manners? □

Science & Nature

The wonders of water

Preschool children are curious about the world around them. You can use this natural curiosity to help your child learn about the wonders of water.

Begin with three different bowls of water—one cold, one lukewarm, and one very warm (but not too warm for your hand.)

Have your child put his hand in each bowl so that he can feel the different sensations.

Next have him fill a small plastic bowl with water and put it in the freezer. Ask him if he already know what will happen. Later, let him see and feel the solid ice.

You can also discuss with him some of the uses of water: (1) To drink when I'm thirsty; (2) To wash myself when I'm dirty; (3) To swim in when I'm hot; (4) To cook vegetables; (5) To water the flowers and house plants ... and pets.

Then teach him some other uses, such as to wash clothes, or to provide heat by hot water pipes, or a hot water bottle; to wash dishes.

Your child can also learn that some objects float on water while others do not. Let him engage in this scientific experiment.

Have him bring a variety of objects, which he can put, one by one, in



a large tub of water: a stick, a stone, a feather, a popsicle stick, a nail, a ball.

DO NOT leave him alone with the tub of water.

Before he drops each object into the water, ask him to predict if the object will sink or float.

At first his predictions will not be very accurate. But with practice, his ability to predict will greatly improve.

You can talk about why some objects float while others sink.

By teaching your child about the wonders of water, you are also helping him to be more observant and more aware of other wonders of nature in his immediate environment. □

Entertaining, easy-to-do games

Games are more fun when kids become involved in making the rules—and the equipment needed to play.

Hole-in-One

With tape, attach a piece of string to a ping pong ball at one end and a paper cup at the other. Then see how many times players can catch the ball in the cup.

The string can be adjusted to make the game harder or easier. Different sizes of cups also add difficulty.

Make-your-own Ring Toss

Using large paper plates, cut out the center, leaving the outside piece as a ring for tossing.

Kids can decide what games they want to play and what the rules are. Rings can be tossed at stationary objects (liter bottle) or a moving object (their own or someone else's hand or foot.)

The rings can be designed and personalized before the games using crayons or markers. Or rings can be assigned different numerical values for scoring

Inside/Outside Treasure Hunt

Give each player an egg carton that has twelve sections. Their job is to fill each section with a different object that will fit inside the section. Participants can hunt inside or outside.

When everyone is finished, they can compare collections and try to identify each object.

For safety's sake, children under three should be accompanied by an adult since small items may pose a choking hazard.

There can be lots of variations to this game—participants can hunt in pairs or teams; lists of 12 items

can be provided for a scavenger hunt; a time limit can be imposed.

Silent Meal

On a blackboard or large piece of paper, write down the items to be prepared for the next meal.

Beside each item, indicate what “sign” is to be used for that item.

Diners can come up with ideas for the messages you'll need to communicate in order to eat your meal.

For example, “blink both eyes” means “please pass the potatoes.” “Raise your left hand” means “please pour me a glass of milk.” The list of “signs” might need to be quite long! Use as many or as few “signs” as the kids can manage. Let the kids decide the “penalty” for talking out loud before you begin.

Then settle back and enjoy a “silent” meal. □

Academics

Relating sizes and numbers

Here's a little game for preschoolers to play that involves objects and numbers.

First, find two shoe boxes, coffee cans, or other containers that have large openings and are easy to fill and empty. They should be approximately the same size.

Next, gather up a large number of toys and durable objects in a wide range of sizes. Both you and youngster select a container and pile the objects between you.

The object of the game is to fill one's container with as many objects as

possible. To start, take turns selecting an object and putting it in your own container.

When the containers are filled, compare the number of objects in each one. Pour out the contents and arrange the objects in two straight lines so that your objects line up with youngster's.

Count each object out loud as you point to it, and do the same with youngster's line. This gives her experience in hearing counting.

The purpose of this game is to show your child that there is a relation-

ship between the *size* of the objects and the *number* of objects that can be placed in the container—the smaller the objects, the more that can be put in the container.

Don't give away the winning method by selecting only the very smallest objects. Try to be just slightly better than she is and see if she finds her way to the correct method as she gains experiences.

As she begins to grasp the principle, you can anchor her understanding by using new containers and new objects. □

Praise and criticism

There are two ways to praise a child for something she has done. You can say, as you watch her finish her latest work: “Oh, what a lovely picture. It looks just like a sunset. You are a good artist!”

Or you can say, “I like the way the colors drip together. You really used a lot of paint this time.”

When you say her painting is a lovely picture, the praise fails to match what the child has actually done. She has been playing around with paint, experimenting with how it works.

You say it’s a sunset. She knows it isn’t, but she keeps that her little

secret. She understands that her picture has to **be something** for you to like, that practicing with paint isn’t worthy of praise. She knows she isn’t an artist—but she’ll go along to win your praise.

The second way to praise states the obvious: She has used a lot of paint, and you appreciate that. You like the way the colors drips together. What gives her pleasure gives you pleasure, too.

Her experimenting with color is an admired skill. She did it well. Praising her this way helps her to judge her work appropriately, to feel that what

she actually does is valued by people who count.

There are two ways to criticize a child for something she has done. You can say, as her glass of milk spills onto the floor, “Look what you’ve done. You are so clumsy.”

Or you can say, “You put your glass to close to the edge of the table. Now help me clean up this milk.”

When you tell a child what she is—a clumsy person—you judge her. She is always clumsy, and will always be.

But when you tell her exactly what she has done, she can avoid spilling her milk like that the next time.

No parent exasperated by mud tracks on the floor, can resist saying “careless.” And most times by the twentieth scribble, we say “beautiful” without thought.

But if parents can avoid for much of the time praise and criticism that judges the child herself, and instead judge the product or the action, a child will become more able to measure her behavior, to pursue what she is good at, to work on what is difficult, to like herself the way she is. □

Parenting

Take advantage of transition time

Most families spend a great deal of time “in transition”—getting from here to there or getting ready to do something else.

Some examples are the time spent in the car, getting ready for school, getting ready for bed, preparing meals, and bathing.

These are transition times. It is during these times that relationships between parents are built.

You have a choice during each transition time. You can treat it like a task and concentrate only on getting it done, or you can make some of these transition times “relationship-building” times.

You might want to schedule five minutes extra for bath time so you can play “boat” with your child.

Or talk about your day when you pick up your youngster from wherever he’s been so he, in turn, will feel comfortable talking about his afternoon.

You might use the time for casual conversation instead of talking about chores to do when you get home.

Sometimes you can have conversations about “wishes” or favorite things to do or places to go. Or favorite things to eat.

You can talk about “things” that might happen in the next few days . . . a snowstorm, a visit to the ice cream shop, talking with grandparents, reading a new book.

Children have a lot to say about what they like and don’t like, and what’s happening in their lives, for example, if we just take the time to ask questions . . . and then listen. □

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Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

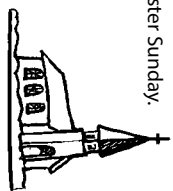


1 Sing "April Showers ..."

2 Good Friday.


3 Make three different things from clay.

4 Easter Sunday.



5 Have you ever eaten a peanut butter and honey sandwich?
Give it a try.


6 Trace hands and feet and send the pages to grandparents with a personal note.



7 Balance on one foot. Then on the other. How far can you hop?

8 Organize jar lids from largest to smallest.

9 Lay small objects on a piece of paper and trace around them.



10 Read a book: "The Very Hungry Caterpillar".

11 Look for the color blue while riding in the car today.

12 Appreciate your family's heritage. Ask a relative to help you draw your family tree.

13 First day of Ramadan.

14 Do you know how to play "slap jack"?

15 Wear a hat today.



16 A tricky shape hunt: Find five triangle shapes in your house.

17 Why don't people fly?



18 Send grandma a picture and a note.

19 Everyone take a nap!



20 Create your own monster book with a story and pictures.

21 Little ones help water plants today. How are the plants different? How are they the same?




22 Look for things in your house that are red.

23 Wash all of baby's toys. Rinse well so the soap is all gone.




24 Play "Follow the Leader!"

25 Did you say "I love you" to someone today?



26 Go for a walk—and look for signs of spring—birds, green grass.

27 Color some things on this page YELLOW!



28 Warm some bagels for a snack. Baby will enjoy teething on them, too.

29 Someone tell a funny story about something that happened to them.

30 Yes, please, grilled cheese for lunch.

