



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

## Big or little?

Here's a game you can play anywhere, anytime — riding in the car, waiting in line, or at the doctor's office.

It goes like this: Think of two common objects and ask your child which is bigger?

A grape or an apple?

A cat or a car?

A house or a bicycle?

A watermelon or a tomato?

A chicken or an egg?

A shoe or a toe?

A book or a barn?

A fork or a football?

When this gets old or you can't think of any more objects, switch the game by asking which is littler?

Finally, give your child a turn or two, and be patient at some of the more bizarre combinations he comes up with.

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## Academics

### Getting ready for math

How high can your child count? To five? To ten? Higher?

Children can learn to count at early ages, but this has nothing at all to do with their understanding of numbers.

It's like your reading words in a language you don't know. You know the symbol but you don't know what it means.



In fact, children under the age of seven have limited understanding of math concepts. This is because their minds aren't ready yet to process information in an abstract form—and this is what math is!

Children think in terms of what they actually experience with their senses—what they see, hear, feel, taste and smell.

What's the best way to help your youngster get ready for mathematics? It's through simple, real-life experiences.

The best way to help youngsters practice counting correctly is to have them use objects they can touch, and

have them put their finger on each object as they say the number.

For example, give your child practice counting real objects—shoes, chairs, buttons on a shirt, apples in a box.

Unlike a "recital" of numbers, counting real things teaches children about numbers.

You can count anything, anywhere, any time. While you're waiting in the grocery line, you and your child can count:

- The number of people waiting in front of or behind you;
- The number of cans you're buying and
- The number of people with babies, and so on.

Looking at a magazine or picture book, you can count dogs, rabbits, children, cars or toys.

Beyond a certain number, children simply recite the numbers they know without specific reference to the number they see.

Typically, most four-year-olds can count at least three things correctly, most five-year-olds at least five.

This means they can match up the numbers with the objects. And that's the way to get ready for math. □

## Whining

If you are like most parents, there is one child behavior that pushes every button you possess. That behavior is whining.

There is nothing quite so guaranteed to get your hackles up as the sound of your beloved children whining to you about their needs or wants.

I know of no research on the topic, but my best guess is that while whining has not yet led to any parent's complete nervous breakdown, it has probably come close.

Nor have I seen a study on whether or not children come hard-wired to make those dreadful sounds, but the phenomenon seems pretty universal.

Now, having established the widespread relevance of the topic of whining, let's consider why kids whine.

The simple answer is: because it works. Therefore, it follows that the way to stop kids from whining is to make sure that it doesn't work.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Three-year-old Zoe has discovered that when she says that she wants to watch TV, Dad's usual response is to say: "No, go play with your toys."

But when she moans and adds a whiney quality to her request, screwing up her face and so on, Dad quickly says, "Okay, go watch TV for a while."

Dad is happy to get a little peace, and doesn't really notice the connection between Zoe's ways of asking with the whine added in and his response.

But, you can bet that Zoe quickly learns which method is effective.

In fact, Dad's response has reinforced the whining, and Zoe is much less likely to speak in her

normal voice the next time she wants something.

If you don't believe that this is simple cause-and-effect at work, pay a little closer attention to the next whiney episode in your home, and watch the dynamic at work.

Okay, when you accept that part of the problem is of your own making, it's time to figure out what to do about it, assuming you don't want to live with whining all the way through college and beyond.



First, realize that if your child is old enough to speak her requests, she is old enough to understand that she can control the way she speaks.

She is also ready to understand your explanations. So, you have a conversation with your child that goes something like this:

"I want to help you remember to talk with other people in the ways that other people will enjoy. That does not include whining and crying when you ask for something, or when you tell people things. So, if you want me and other people to pay attention to

you when you talk, you will need to stop the whining.

"To help you remember this, I'm not going to pay attention to you when you whine. But I will definitely pay attention and listen to you when you speak in your regular voice.

"So when you see me not listening, think about whether you need to talk in a different voice.

"I'm not going to remind you about this all the time, so see if you can figure out why I'm not paying attention and fix the problem."

That's pretty clear. Now comes the hard part. When you hear the next whine—and you will; remember this is a strongly reinforced habit—immediately leave the room and busy yourself with something else.

Then, just as consistently and obviously, drop what you are doing and pay attention when your child speaks to you in a normal tone.

Concentrate on this; your responses will be critical in changing this behavior.

You have put your child in charge of part of changing the action, but you have an equal responsibility to maintain and monitor your responses.

Will this change happen overnight? Definitely not, and you'd best be prepared for more whining than usual while your child tests out the changed situation.

But if you hold firm over time, your child will discover that whining is not productive and drop that behavior from her repertoire.

No kid wants to keep doing something that just doesn't work. □

## 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 and children are built and strengthened.

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 you could talk about your day when you pick up your youngster so he, in turn, will feel comfortable talking about his day.

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; perhaps remember a particularly good time you had together.

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. □

## Shame and blame

A child will behave according to what she thinks she is. Therefore, if she is addressed in terms like, “You always ...” and “You never ...” and “You are such a ...” she will surely develop an image of herself as a “so and so” and continue engaging in “such and such.”

When correcting a child it is much better to make a distinction in your mind between who she is and what she is doing. And it is necessary to behold children as innocent.

We can assume that if they really knew better, really understood the value of another way to do something, they would do it.

Parents are called upon for various responses to error. Sometimes a firm and vigorous stand is called for, such as when there is immediate danger of physical injury.

Sometimes a warning is called for the pointing out of a possible consequence.

Sometimes parents simply have to stand by and let their children discover consequences for themselves.

Sometimes reproof and explanation are appropriate. But the goodness of the child is never the issue; even behavior is not the issue; learning is.

In every instance, something will be learned. If we view our children as naughty, disturbed, or guilty of misdeeds, they will learn to think of themselves as foolish, faulty, or shameful.

If we view them as innocent, or at least merely ignorant, they will gain understanding from their experiences, and they will continue to regard us as wise partners.

Write a no-fault clause into your family policy and apply it to yourself and your children.

With no-fault assurance, even if you have to discipline your toddler, you will be able to do so with compassion and a sense of humor rather than fear or anger.

You will be able to issue warnings without insult, and correct without humiliation. □

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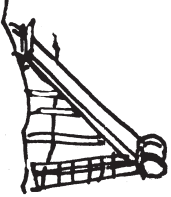







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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns “he” and “she” are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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# August, 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1 Find four items that will float in the bathtub.</p>	<p>2 Have a race rolling marshmallows with your nose.</p>	<p>3 Sing a song together while riding in the car.</p> 	<p>4 "If I were a bird, here's what I would do:"</p> <hr/>	<p>5 See if you can crawl backwards. (Think about it first. It's kind of tricky.)</p>	<p>6 Does your toaster make noises? How about the refrigerator?</p>
<p>7 Eat dinner outside in the evening.</p>	<p>8 Count the doors in your house.</p> 	<p>9 Count your ears.</p>	<p>10 Fruit yogurt for a snack.</p>	<p>11 What is your favorite color?</p> 	<p>12 Collect some rocks. Then organize them from small to large in size.</p>	<p>13 Go swimming some place with a parent, some other adults and some kids.</p>
<p>14 Draw a picture of a zebra.</p>	<p>15 Take a make-believe ride in a magic carpet. What can you see?</p>	<p>16 What state do you live in? What is the official state bird?</p>	<p>17 Name three people who are not in your family.</p> 	<p>18 Name 5 people you know who wear glasses.</p>	<p>19 What words rhyme with "orange?"</p>	<p>20 Play "Follow the Leader"</p> 
<p>21 Put a puzzle together with some other folks.</p>	<p>22 Did you say "I love you" to someone today?</p>	<p>23 Pretend play: A camping trip in the mountains.</p> 	<p>24 Play "Echo." Make sounds and encourage your child to imitate the sound.</p>	<p>25 Look in the local newspaper for something special to do this weekend.</p>	<p>26 In what month is your birthday? How old will you be?</p>	<p>27 Read a book about going fishing.</p>
<p>28 What color is your tooth-brush? How many teeth do you brush?</p>	<p>29 Play with a shape sorter.</p> 	<p>30 Can you sing the song: "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"?</p>	<p>31 What month starts tomorrow?</p>	