



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Parenting

Have confidence!

Having confidence in yourself as a parent is easier said than done. It is natural for parents to worry if they are doing all they should for their child. After all, this is the most important job in your life, and no one has prepared you for it.

The advice of “experts” may do more to create confusion and doubt than to help. And parents may not agree with what they learned about being a parent from the way they were treated as a child.

Nevertheless, parents do have within them the necessary resources to help their children grow to be happy, healthy, responsible adults.

Try to remember how it felt to be a child and try to treat your child as you would have liked to have been treated. Be as kind, understanding, patient, and supportive as you can.

You’ll make mistakes—that’s part of being human. But the more relaxed you are about yourself, the more you’ll be able to learn from your mistakes and be the most successful parent you can be. □

April 2022

Vol. 38 No. 4

Music

Learning and music

Music is more than just fun: it is education.

As a youngster sings along, dances, or “plays” an instrument, here are the sorts of things she learns:

1. New vocabulary. Many songs, particularly folk songs and nursery tunes, repeat words or refrains over and over again.

For example, think of the words for “The Wheels on the Bus ...” This type of repetition strengthens associations between new words and their meanings.

2. Time sense. When swinging the arms, moving the body, or tapping an “instrument” to music, the child is exposed to time relations between musical notes.

As she reacts to the music, she becomes aware of order—this comes first, this comes next, and this comes last.

This kind of order is important in both understanding and using speech. It is also extremely important later in learning to read.

This is demonstrated by what happens to a sentence when just one word is put into a different order: “**Now**, I want to go” / “I want to go, **now**.”

3. Counting. While children first learn to count by rote, they will learn



to count from such rhymes as “One, two, buckle my shoe.”

4. Self-control. It is necessary to really listen and attend to what a song says in order to carry out the actions.

When it says “clap,” “jump,” or “stop,” she must translate what she had heard into a physical movement and clap, jump, or stop.

We urge you to make music a family affair. Before the days of television, families created their own entertainment, and singing together was very popular.

Develop your own songbook from current rhythms, folk-rock, and old timers. And don’t forget to teach your children the songs you love from your own childhood. □

The Magic List

You always *knew* there must be some secret list that all those perfect parents had access to, the list that would remove any difficulties you have with your children forever—right?

Actually, there is such a list, published in a wonderful little book, titled *Parents, Please Don't Sit on Your Kids*, by Clare Cherry. (Unfortunately, the book is out of print now, but see if your public library has a copy.)

In it, Cherry offers the magic list as reminders of alternatives to typical punitive discipline responses that many parents resort to out of frustration.

Here, with a couple of explanatory words, is the magic list. You can copy just the bold print and make your own list to post inside a kitchen cabinet for those challenging moments.

Anticipate trouble. Consider the ages and personalities of your children to guess their likely responses to situations and people. You can control the physical environment to minimize stress.

Give gentle reminders. Demanding children or nagging them into oblivion doesn't work.

Instead, reminders may be just one word, such as "helping" or "waiting", or even a nonverbal nod of the head ("yes, that's okay"), or shake of the head ("no, not now").

Distract the child's attention from what she's doing to a positive model. Compliment one child on a positive behavior, and see how quickly a sibling will want that positive attention as well. (Use this one sparingly and carefully, to avoid creating sibling issues.)

Inject humor. A note of humor (not sarcasm) can interrupt a deteriorating situation. Remember, this is laughing with children, not at them.

Offer choices. When possible, offer children choices that are acceptable to you.

Freedom to make choices makes it more likely that children will cooperate, as well as learn to make good decisions.

Give praise or compliments. Sincere praise, not over-used, reinforces those behaviors that you enjoy in your child.

Offer encouragement. Related to praise, this is another way of giving your children respect for what they are attempting to accomplish at their own level, not in comparison with others, and helping them learn to overcome obstacles.

Clarify messages. Leave no room for misunderstanding, and make sure you have children's attention before using language that they can understand.

Overlook small annoyances. Otherwise known as, don't sweat the small stuff. If you find yourself getting annoyed frequently, ask yourself whether this situation is indeed worthy of a battle.

Deliberately ignore provocations. This method can gradually eliminate an undesirable pattern of behavior.

By giving no kind of reinforcement to annoying behavior, eventually those behaviors will disappear, particularly when you are careful to give children specific attention during times of acceptable behavior.

Reconsider the situation. Nothing is set in concrete. Reconsidering decisions can foster sensible handling of potentially difficult situations or conflicts.

Point out natural, or logical, consequences. Help young children see the connections between their actions and the results of their behavior.

When these behaviors and results are presented as a means of explanation, not as a moral judgment or punishment, consequences help children see the sense in acting in a certain way.

Provide renewal time. Notice that this is not the punitive isolation of "time out," but an opportunity to calm down, renew themselves, and regain composure.

Give hugs and caring. Frequent demonstrations of caring provide an atmosphere in which children just want to behave well.

Arrange discussion among the children. This is a big topic we'll need to go back to soon, but for now understand the idea that children need help in communicating with other children to solve their problems.

Provide discussion with an adult. In avoiding power struggles, clear communication is important.

That is the magic list. It's mostly good, common sense with nothing really magic about it.

There is an emphasis on finding ways to keep feelings from flaring out of control, and ways to live together humanely, always good ideas. ■

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 she sees and hears around her.

For example, we know she can follow some simple commands (“No”). She can respond to gestures like pat-a-cake, bye-bye and similar words. We know she understands them, even though she doesn’t say them.

Language can also include the sounds that a baby makes as well as what she does with her hands, eyes,

and other parts of her body.

How does a baby acquire language? Actually she has been developing language for most of her young life. She has been listening to the variety of sounds around her.

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

You, in turn, have been tailoring your speech to her development and to particular situations. For example, when you kiss or hug her, you also

tell her in a special tone of voice, “I love you.”

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

With your encouragement, she has gotten the idea of using her own hands and body to move, to get what she wants, to manipulate and explore objects—to learn about her world. And you have been interpreting her experiences by telling her in words what she is doing.

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

Toys

Keep the toy box up to date and interesting

Many toys—like dolls, trucks, building blocks and stuffed animals—just seem to accumulate over the years. Sometimes children’s playthings aren’t toys at all, but the same simple household items you enjoyed as a child.

To expand child’s play horizons, provide a variety of cardboard boxes big enough to crawl into, hide under, paint, and finally demolish with pleasure.

Old items of clothing for dress-up will provide endless entertainment. So will a box of art supplies or sewing materials like buttons, empty spools, string and glue.

Instead of “new” toys, consider expendable gifts such as bath cosmetics, stickers, markers and modeling clay. They’ll probably be enjoyed and used up in a year, and they are inexpensive.

Is the toy box full? Get rid of toys your child no longer uses. Nothing bores or confuses a child more than an overwhelming collection of toys.

With young children, it’s a good idea to “rotate” toys, putting away a few that haven’t been played with for a while, and bringing them back when you take a few of the current toys out of circulation.

As a child outgrows toys, you can quietly put them away, and if the child never asks for them again, give them away, sell them or save them for another child.

Older children can become involved in the process, helping to sort out those they no longer want, to give to a charitable organization or sell in a garage sale. A used toy sale or kids’ flea market can be fun and shows children the value of recycling their possessions. □

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.

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

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

Growing Together is published by Growing Child, Inc.,
P.O. Box 2505 W. Lafayette, IN 47996
©2022 Growing Child, Inc.
Telephone: (765) 464-0920.
Customer Service: 1-800-927-7289.

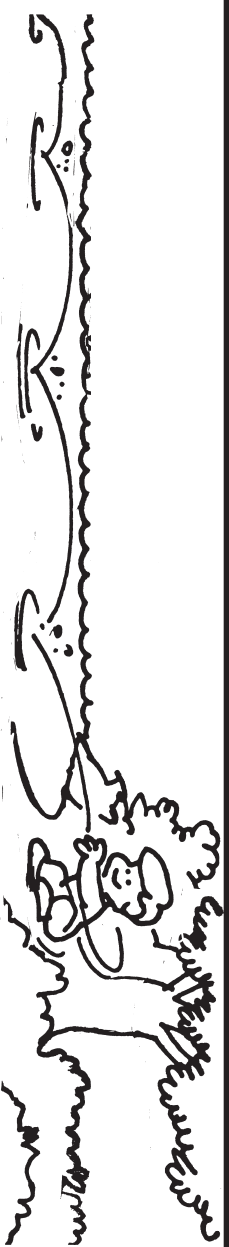



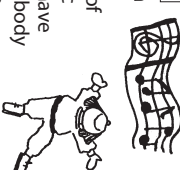



Growing Child also publishes:
Growing Child (birth-six years), and
Growing Up (grades K-12).

Growing Together issues may be reproduced in part or in full by participating organizations.

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

April, 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
<p>3</p> <p>Gather some sticks and organize them by size.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Name three things that begin with the letter "E".</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Run an errand for someone.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>What new children's books are available at your local library?</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Use a soft brush on baby's hair.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Make funny faces with a friend and try to imitate each other.</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Draw on cement with colored chalk. Wash it off with a garden hose.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Full moon. What does that mean?</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Play stare-down. See who looks away or laughs first.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>How tall are you?</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Color this calendar pink and green.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Eat some food —fruit or vegetable — that you've never eaten before.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Tell your teddy bear a story.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Go on a picnic!</p> 
<p>17</p> <p>Take a walk outside. Where is your shadow?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Play a new kind of music and have everybody dance.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Read your favorite book — again.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Make a roadway out of blocks.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>How many doors are there in your house?</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Read "The Little Engine that Could."</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Do you have a local parks and recreation department? What programs do they offer for children and families?</p>
<p>24</p> <p>What color are peas? Play pat-a-cake.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Help water plants.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Practice throwing a crumpled piece of paper into a wastebasket.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Pretend your bed is a ship or a boat.</p> 	<p>28</p> <p>Look around your house for the color orange.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Talk about the things that make you happy.</p> 	<p>30</p> <p>Pretend-play that you're a cloud.</p>