

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



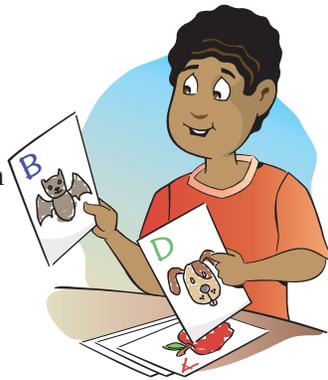
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Parent Information & Resource Center
416 Black Avenue, Lexington, S.C. 29072

Let your child take newly-learned skills for a test-drive at home

Kindergarten—a child's first step into formal schooling—is an exciting year. Parents often can't wait to hear about each day's events and kids are usually eager to share the details. Build on this enthusiasm by practicing your child's new skills with him. Here are some things to do together:

- **Make alphabet flash cards.** Write each letter on two cards—one in lower case and one in upper case. Name letters and sounds.
- **Sound it out.** Say a word. Have your child identify the first letter and its sound.
- **Read daily.** Afterwards, see if your child can retell the story in his own words.
- **Play a rhyme game.** Pick a simple word and see if your child can think of a rhyming one. Then let him give you a word to rhyme.
- **Count.** Practice counting to 100 and writing numbers from 1-30.
- **Write.** Keep a journal with your child. You write as your child describes his activities. Demonstrate important skills, such as starting with a capital letter and ending with a punctuation mark.
- **Discuss concepts.** Point out colors and shapes. Use a calendar to teach about days, weeks, months and seasons. And use descriptive words, such as *over*, *under*, *left* and *right*.



Source: "Ideas for Reinforcing Kindergarten Skills at Home," Wayne County (North Carolina) Schools, www.waynecountyschools.org/Page/6338.



Take advantage of your local library

National Library Week begins April 13. This year's theme is "Lives change @ your library." You and your child will belong @ your library if you:

- **Make a weekly visit.** Nothing prepares your child better for school success than reading. Old favorites are great. And mixing in some different books teaches your child new vocabulary and ideas.
- **Enjoy children's activities.** A lifelong relationship with the library often begins with story hour. When you can, take your child to library events aimed at her age group. Many libraries plan programs for children as young as two or three.
- **Go online.** It is difficult to work or learn today without the Internet. Your librarian can give you tips to help your child navigate it safely, and suggest websites for young children. Don't forget to visit the library's website!

Source: ALA, "Celebrate National Library Week," www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks/natllibraryweek.

Make school a place your child wants to be

If your child loves and is attached to school, he'll want to attend. Encourage that bond by:

- **Asking what he likes best** about school. It's okay if the answer is recess.
- **Fostering school friendships.** Set up playdates, or include friends in family fun.

Source: J. Roehlkepartain and N. Leffert, *What Young Children Need to Succeed: Working Together to Build Assets from Birth to Age 11*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Music builds learning skills

There's more to music than enjoyment—research links music to improved learning. Use songs and instruments to:

- **Strengthen learning skills.** Music builds listening skills. And playing an instrument also builds visual, spatial and fine motor skills.
- **Prepare for reading and math.** Music's rhythmic beat sets kids up to hear the rhythms of phonics, while repeated refrains help with predicting, and the pattern recognition of math.



Source: G. Stein, "The Benefits of Using Music with Young Children," *Songs For Teaching*, <http://tinyurl.com/lqqs6g7>.

Pay compliments that count

Compliments teach children what they are doing right. The best kind enable them to reproduce their effort. This is especially true for schoolwork. Compliments should be:

- **Genuine.** Say it only if you really mean it. And be specific. "Terrific! You practiced, and now you can say your ABCs" is better than "Great job."
- **Focused on effort.** Compliment hard work, even if the goal is still far off. Perseverance and improvement are accomplishments, too!





What do I say when my child puts herself down?

Q: I've seen a change in my daughter's personality since she started kindergarten. In preschool, she was happy-go-lucky. But this year she seems to be turning into a bit of a perfectionist. She even has meltdowns—she says her writing is "sloppy," her somersaults are the "worst in the class." I'm worried about her self-esteem and her ability to keep learning. What is going on?

A: For better or worse, when children get to school, they start comparing themselves to one another. Until now, your daughter likely never thought about her performance. But now everywhere she looks, someone else is "better." And like many children her age, she wonders if she is falling short. Here are ways to keep perfectionism from undoing her progress in school:

- **Emphasize effort.** Research shows that it is effort, rather than raw ability, that leads to success. When you praise your child, say things like, "Look how hard you worked on that!"
- **Celebrate mistakes.** Sound backward? It's not. Making mistakes is how we learn. Say, "Sometimes things don't work out the first time. What would you do differently?"
- **Don't judge.** Superlatives like "best" and "worst" add fuel to the fire. If *you* never compare, *she* may stop it too.
- **Just have fun.** Every day, do something with your child that is just pleasurable for the two of you. Read, sing a song or go for a walk.



Parent Quiz

Are you helping your child sleep well?

Kids need plenty of sleep to do their best in school. Sleep can aid memory and help cement new concepts in a child's mind. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if your child is getting the proper rest:

1. **Do you establish** relaxing bedtime routines, such as bathing, brushing teeth and reading a peaceful story?
2. **Do you enforce** a consistent, reasonable bedtime—even on the weekends?
3. **Do you make sure** your child gets the right amount of sleep? (The National Sleep Foundation says preschoolers should average 11–13 hours per night.)
4. **Do you end screen time** (even on handheld devices)

long before bedtime to prevent difficulty falling asleep?

How well are you doing?

Each yes answer means you're promoting good sleep habits. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"It's not only children who grow. Parents do, too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours."
—Joyce Maynard

Stick to letters—with tape!

Forming letters out of different materials makes learning them fun. If you and your child have already used clay, pasta, glitter glue and more, try this new tack with tape:

1. **Collect supplies.** You'll need paper, paint, a paintbrush and removable tape.
2. **Help your child spell his name** using pieces of the tape on the paper. Curvy letters may look boxy or pointy, but that's okay.
3. **Let your child paint a design** all around the tape (even on it is okay). The more he wants to paint, the better.
4. **Remove the tape** and watch his name stand out!



Source: *Art Fun!* F&W Publications.

Courtesy is for everyone

For school to be a calm, safe learning environment, everyone must treat one another with respect. Expect the same from your family at home. Try these house rules:

- **Please and thank you** are required words for children and adults alike.
- **No mean words are allowed.**
- **Take turns talking.**

Get ready for kindergarten by improving social skills

Many teachers say social skills are more critical than academics when preparing for kindergarten. To help your child, encourage:

- **Self confidence.** Ask your child's opinion, and give her opportunities to solve problems before you step in.
- **Teamwork.** Plan activities that involve working together, such as baking cookies or putting on a play. Read stories in which characters join forces to succeed.

Source: J.L. Cook and G. Cook, "Kindergarten Readiness," Education.com, <http://tinyurl.com/ledxnyg>.

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