



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

Count 'em up

On a rainy day — or any other day when there's nothing to do — put together a list of questions that can be answered with a number.

For instance:

- How many windows are there in our home?
- How many shoes are there in your closet?
- How many beans (buttons, coins, pebbles) are in this jar?
- How many tiles are on the bathroom floor?
- How many socks are in your drawer?
- How many people drink milk at your house?
- How far is it — in feet — from the front door to the refrigerator door?

Provide a tape measure — or other appropriate tool — when needed. □

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Science & Nature

How much does it weigh?

To conduct some experiments about how much things weigh, put your kitchen or bathroom scale on a table along with several interesting objects to weigh:

A shoe, toy car, doll, apple, cup, a box of toothpicks and anything else that looks interesting.



1. First, have each person guess how much an object weighs. Then, put it on the scale and see what its true weight really is.

2. Next, compare the weights of different objects. Which is heavier: the doll or the shoe? The toy car or the apple?

Weigh the objects again to show the difference.

3. If you're using a bathroom scale, put it on the floor and weigh each person who's participating and line them up by weight from the lightest to the heaviest.

4. Which weighs more: big objects or little objects?



Try to think up some “stumpers” such as a jar of peanut butter vs. a package of potato chips. Or a package of marshmallows vs. a can of soup.

Talk about how this seemingly backward ratio comes about.

5. Solve this problem: How can you measure the weight of your pet if it won't stand still on the scale?

It's not higher math, but it is a good problem for older kids to solve.



Here's another one: If you have more than one pet, which one weighs the most?

6. Liquids have weight, too. Everybody guess how much a gallon of water weighs—then weigh one gallon. □

Becoming aware of numbers and sizes

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

Find two shoe boxes, coffee cans or other containers that have large openings and thus are easy to fill and empty. Then gather up a large number of toys and durable objects in a wide range of sizes.

Both you and Youngster take a container and pile the objects between you.

Then take turns selecting an object and putting it in your own container. The object of the game is to fill one's container with as many objects as possible.

When the containers are filled, compare the number of objects in each. 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 him experience in hearing counting.

The purpose of this game is to show Youngster that there is a relationship between the size of the objects and the number that can be placed in the container—the smaller the object, the more that can be put in the container.

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

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

Talking at Two

You're having coffee with a neighbor when your youngster rushes in to tell you something that is very important to him.

Since he's not yet a fluent speaker and the urgency of the situation interferes with intelligibility, you don't know what he's trying to convey to you.

Here's what NOT to do:

- Don't belittle the child with criticism. "Who can understand you when you talk that way?"
- Don't threaten him. "If you don't talk better, no one will ever understand you."
- Don't bribe him. "If you can say it nicely, you can have a cookie."
- Don't command him. "Say it like this so we know what you mean."
- Don't overprotect him. "Go out and play and we'll talk about it later."

What TO do:

- Echo back to him what he has said insofar as you can and replace the unintelligible part with one of the "wh" words.

Youngster: "Sam broke too me ever." You: "Sam broke what?"

- Assure him that you truly understand his feelings (even if you do not understand his speech). This is very reassuring to a child. None of us ever outgrows an appreciation for emotional support.

For a child, a hug or squeeze accompanied by simple feedback is calming: "I know you are upset right now. I understand how you feel. Let's have some orange juice and talk about it."

Treating a child as a sensitive individual with his own sense of personal dignity which can be hurt or gratified will result in cooperative behavior. □

Social Skills

How to help a child get along with others

Children are more successful in their relationships when they feel comfortable than when they are self-conscious.

Parents can help by being supportive and encouraging rather than critical or discouraging. Here are some do's and don'ts:

DON'T suggest he has trouble getting along with others. ("Nobody really likes you, you know.")

DO give him positive feedback for getting along with others. ("I really like it when I see you helping Joey put on his shoes and jacket.")

DON'T force him into uncomfortable situations.

DON'T insist he "make up" with someone he's still angry at.

DO allow him to work out his own relationships with a minimum of interference.

DO respect his wishes about how and with whom he wants to spend time.

DON'T compare him with other children.

DO stand up for him, especially with adults. Everyone needs someone they can depend on, no matter what. □

Hitting is not okay

A reader's question reminded me that there are some typical childhood behaviors that need to be revisited every now and then for successive generations of parents.

This parent was concerned about her 14-month-old's habit of slapping her hand at her parents when she was frustrated, occasionally managing to hit them directly on the face.

While certainly annoying to the parents, their biggest concern was that the child would think it is okay to hit people if she were not corrected.

First, let's consider the probable cause of this behavior. Imagine, if you will, the powerful frustration of a little one who is beginning to get big ideas about what to do in this world—but she has only a handful of words with which to express them. Such profound disappointment could only be expressed physically, hence the hitting.

But the parent is absolutely correct: This behavior must be decisively stopped. It is never okay for anyone to hit another person, be that person big or small.

Knowing that frustration is the trigger for the hitting behavior, parents need to stay close at that point, close enough to be able to firmly grab the small, flailing hands, saying clearly: "No hitting. Hitting hurts. I can't let you hit me."

Keep holding the hands until the frustration has passed, or even enveloping the toddler in an all-encompassing bear hug is appropriate.

When adults are so clearly in control of their emotions and the situation, it helps children regain some of their control.

Then the adult is able to redirect

the child's behavior and feelings toward something else, knowing the toddlers have short attention spans and really don't want to stay upset long.

If the toddler is a child who seems to need strong physical outlets, providing a toy to pound on or punch may be helpful. If the toddler benefits from soothing activities, some sensory play, such as water or play dough, may change the mood.



Note the adult responses I did not suggest. A first incorrect reaction would be to ignore the hitting behavior—children should always receive a firm limit on not hurting others, no matter how strong the emotion.

A second mistake would be to hit the child back, "so she can see how it feels." Little ones just don't have the cognitive capacity to make such connections, let alone understand why it is okay for a big person to hit, while trying to teach little ones a lesson **not** to hit.

Another inappropriate response would be to laugh at the admittedly comical sight of a little one hitting out in frustration: such laughter only shames and demeans the child's very real emotions.

As the toddler acquires more language and understanding, parents can say things like, "I see you're upset,

but no hitting. Hitting hurts. Let's see what we can do (...say, etc.)." Slowly we help children learn that emotions can be expressed in ways other than striking out.

This is an important question, the answer to which is inextricably tied to the big ideas about guiding young children, ideas such as firm limits, respect of the child's developmental abilities, and teaching life-long lessons.

Thoughtful responses will move parents toward the goal of healthy, self-controlled children. □

Read it free!

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

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Growing Together

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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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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<p>5</p> <p>Tell your fellow family members what you like about them.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Try a new and different meal sometime this month.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>What would you rather do today: 1. Play a board game inside? 2. Go swimming outside? 3. Have a picnic at the park?</p>	<p>8</p> <p>What is the difference between an apple tree and a cherry tree?</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Name three animals that live where it is very, very, cold right now.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Read a book about a circus.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Practice listening—close your eyes, what do you hear?</p>	
<p>12</p> <p>Birthdays of Abraham Lincoln.</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Memorize your address and telephone number.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Valentine's Day!</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Take a look at a map of the U.S. and name the Great Lakes.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>What are Mom's and Dad's "real" names? Kevin Susan</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Who is the youngest person in your family?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Look at a book about flags of the world.</p> 	
<p>19</p> <p>What fits into what? What bowls, pans, cups do you have that nest inside of each other.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Presidents' Day.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>How many days until your birthday?</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>George Washington's birthday. Ash Wednesday</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Who is your favorite cartoon character? Why?</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Make funny noises with your mouth—can you make someone laugh?</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Visit a relative today or tomorrow.</p>	
<p>26</p> <p>What is your favorite thing to do on Sunday?</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Start some seeds in a window garden.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Count the hangers in your closet. (Hint: Make a plan before you start.) You may need some help.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Draw a picture of someone who lives at your house.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Start thinking about making some valentines.</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Groundhog Day. What is a groundhog?</p>	<p>3</p> <p>What's your favorite ice cream flavor?</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Wait for a rainy day this month and spend the day at the library.</p>