



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Parenting

## School readiness

Here are some suggestions that will lead to good experiences for children before they attend school.

1. Be consistent in your enforcement of rules, but be certain that your rules can be defined, that they are reasonable and enforceable. Rules in the home help children feel more secure and comfortable when they meet rules in the school and community.

2. Permit children to be wrong, make mistakes and even fail sometimes. Children learn by doing, rather than by absorbing the experiences of others. Making mistakes is one basis for future independence, self-direction and intelligent decision-making.

3. Keep promises. Children develop cause-and-effect relationships when they know that they can anticipate the consequences.

4. Resist the temptation to over-organize or over-structure children's free time with lessons, sports or other activities. Children need time to "kick cans," be leisurely and work through problems with play. □

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Social Skills

## Special people in a child's life

Children need people. A large part of their development involves being part of a world full of people. They need to see, listen to, and feel people as a natural part of the world around them.

The feeling that she is an important person, the feeling that someone cares about what happens to her—these are the feelings which give a child a strong self-image and a solid base for emotional development.

Parents and other special people—like grandparents, relatives, neighbors, friends, and caregivers—provide an atmosphere in which the young child learns she is important.

These special people notice the child, talk to her, laugh with her when she is happy and show their concern when she falls and hurts herself.

They say "hello" to her in a special way because she "belongs" to them and they "belong" to her.

In their interactions, they send a message to the child: "You matter. We care. You belong." Long before she can un-

derstand specific words, the child gets this message.

But what can you do if there are no special people around?

One solution is to try for regular visits to your child's special people so that your child has a number of contacts with them. Such visits are extremely important and well worth the time and effort they require.

Another practical solution is to find substitute "special people" among your own circle of friends.

If you have several couples that are very special friends, you might ask some of them to play the role of aunts and uncles. Each time they are in your home, they would be especially aware of ways they could pay special attention to your child.

You might also have a relationship with one or two older couples that could serve as substitute grandparents. You may be pleasantly surprised at how delighted such older people would be to play the role.

And don't forget: You are a special person in the lives of other children, too! □



## Discipline is teaching

Discipline is our way of teaching children about safety and societal norms. Whatever type of discipline parents choose, the key is that some form of it is essential.

When you are faced with a two-year-old who is throwing a temper tantrum, or who is being unkind to a playmate:

1. **Be specific.** Instead of vague instructions like, "Cut it out," use specific ones like: "Don't take Jeremy's toys. It's not nice."



2. **Use body language.** Move next to your child, put a hand on her shoulder, make eye contact.

3. **Toddlers like to say the word "no." So, avoid the word as much as you can** when dealing with the child. Instead save "no" for times when you describe unacceptable behavior.

4. **With older children, set guidelines in advance.** If your child knows the consequences of his misbehavior, he will think twice about acting up.

5. **Be consistent, even when it's hard to follow through.** Children need to know their parents' word is good—for punishments **and** for rewards. □

## Moving to a bigger bed

When is it time to move a child out of a crib and into a bigger bed?

Many children are ready to move from their cribs into a "grown-up" bed between the ages of 20 months to three years. Usually the time is determined by the child's ability to climb out of her crib.

This move can be a big adjustment, especially if a second child will be occupying the crib.

One way to make it easier is to celebrate the move, observing the event as a reward or rite of becoming a "big girl" or "big boy." If there is another child on the way, it is good to make the move at least two months before the baby is due.

The first step of the moving process is to place the child's mattress on the floor against a wall. The wall will help the child feel more secure and will give her a new freedom of being able to get out of bed without help.

After the child is familiar with sleeping in her own bed, it will be time to move to a standard bed with box springs and a frame.

For safety as well as security reasons, it is a good idea to install detachable guardrails. The rails will comfort the child because they resemble the bars of the crib, and will also discourage the child from climbing or falling out of bed.

It is best to purchase a new mattress. After eight to 10 years of use, hand-me-down bedding cannot provide comfort and support

a growing child needs.

The mattress should feel firm, but this does not necessarily mean it should be hard. Shop for one that feels comfortable to the child.

A good way to do this is to select two or three styles that you like and let your child choose between them. If the child feels that she has been a part of the decision-making process, she will be more apt to make the adjustment easily.

Parents may also want to consider a double bed for their child instead of the smaller twin. Children are impressed by the "big" bed and many times are excited about having a bed like their parents.

A double bed will also permit a child more freedom of movement and can be more comfortable for parents during bedtime reading.

Another advantage of having a double bed is that it provides a place for overnight guests. □

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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>1</p> <p>Go to the library and see what new books are waiting for you.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Tap a big piece of paper on preschooler's door to draw on.</p>

<p>3</p> <p>Have a bagel for breakfast.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Play some music and clap to the beat.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>What words rhyme with "hat"?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>What is the opposite of:</p> <p>down slow left stop open</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Look through a magnifying glass at objects inside and outside.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Lie on your tummies and make funny faces at each other.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Sing: "Hickory, Dickory, Dock..."</p>
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<p>10</p> <p>Play: "Which hand is it in?" Take turns.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Eat something red.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Color this calendar.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Show Baby how to touch her finger to her nose.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>This is a great time to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Look for square shapes in your house.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Tear construction paper into various shapes and glue them on to a piece of paper to make a collage.</p>
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<p>17</p> <p>Davy Crockett's birthday, 1786. Can you describe his hat?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Take a make-believe ride on a magic carpet.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Orville Wright's birthday, 1871.</p> <p>What did Orville and his brother Wilbur accomplish?</p>	<p>20</p> <p>How old you are in:</p> <p>Years _____</p> <p>Months _____</p> <p>Days _____</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Who fixed dinner? Tell them, "Thank you!"</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Play outside with a water sprinkler. Adults, please supervise young ones!</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Do you have a local parks and recreation department? What programs do they offer for children and families?</p>
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<p>24</p> <p>In what month is your birthday? Learn to shake hands.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Circle all the 2's on this page.</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">2</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Make ice cubes out of fruit juice. These are yummy on a hot summer day.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Do you have the phone number of the local poison control center posted by your telephone?</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Have a family ballgame outside. Make up your own rules.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Talk about the safest way to cross a street. Practice looking both ways before crossing.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Put together a treat jar—slips of paper with your child's favorite activities.</p>
<p>31</p>						