



Growing Together[®]

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Parenting

Help children learn independence

Even though the world may be full of real and imagined dangers, parents need to look for ways to help prepare and train children for the task of growing up and becoming independent.

- Boost self-confidence. Even toddlers can make decisions. Let a small child choose between two shirts she'll wear that day.
- Praise efforts and accomplishments, no matter how small.
- Talk regularly to her and really listen. Be interested no matter what she says.
- Teach traffic safety by taking walks—let her tell you when and where it is safe to cross.
- It is not enough to tell your child never to talk to strangers. If she can't talk to strangers, how can she grow up able to deal with all the normal and good contacts that come each day? Tell her instead that you must always know where she is and that she must never go anywhere with a stranger.
- Teach her her full name, address, telephone number, and a relative's full name. □

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Developmental

Wait until they're ready

As children grow, parents are delighted in their accomplishments. We encourage their growth and look forward to each new stage. But often as we begin to expect more from them, we may begin to push.

Most of us will probably first become aware of this pushing at toilet learning time.

Experts advise waiting until a child is about two and a half to start the training, but sometimes parents decide the time has come sooner, whether the child is ready or not.

If the child is not ready, however, what should be a positive learning experience can turn into a power struggle and a very stressful time for the child as well as the parents.

It's important to remember that not all children advance at the same rate. In order for children to successfully accomplish new tasks, they must be both emotionally and physically mature enough to handle them.

In the long run, waiting means less stress for everyone and success for the child in a shorter amount of time—whether the task is toilet learning or learning to ride a bicycle. □

Social Skills

Learning to get along with others

Children get their first lessons in how to relate to other people from your example. She learns how to get along with others from the way you and she relate to each other.

She also learns from seeing how you get along with other people.

You'll see some of the effects of your "teaching by example" in your child's life now. Other patterns, although laid down now, may not appear in your child's relationships until she's older.

For example, suppose your child hears you and your mate regularly argue and blame each other over how to discipline her. She will learn ways to act with each of you to try to please you and avoid your anger or disappointment with her.

She will pick up from the two of you different ways to act with others who are more or less powerful than she is, which she will use when she's in conflict situations. And she will learn from observing you, ways of treating her own mate and children.

Even though children don't always appear to be watching, they learn from the examples of the adults around them. □

Learning is watching, tasting, throwing

Once a baby is sitting up by himself and looking around, usually by six or seven months, he becomes a “watcher.” This is something new and different for him. He now has a different view of the world, which he enjoys.

He’s probably pulling himself up in his bed and playing with his toes, rolling around on the floor and reaching for his toys, making new noises, and trying to “talk” to you.

He is now using his hands, mouth, and tongue to touch and explore things. If you give him a plastic cup, he will probably look at it, feel it, mouth it, and end up banging it against something. This is how he learns about the size, texture, taste, and weight of the objects within his reach.

You can encourage his natural curiosity by exposing him to a variety of carefully selected objects. Allow him to reach for and feel such natural things as snow, leaves, rocks (only with supervision). Talk to him about what he’s doing and about the shape, feel, and textures of the objects.

At mealtime, give him a small unbreakable juice glass and a spoon. Continue to feed him as before, but let him try to feed himself.

At this age, a baby has learned to grasp quite well, although precise thumb-forefinger pick up has not yet fully developed. He is also beginning to learn how to “let go.”

At first, he lets go simply by relaxing the hand completely when his attention is distracted from the object he’s holding.

Voluntary release—letting go

when he wants to—is a more difficult skill and is learned in several stages: casting (throwing), exaggerated letting go after putting the object down, and controlled letting go.

As Baby begins to develop voluntary release, he finds it necessary to straighten his whole arm in order to straighten his fingers and open his hand. In other words, he throws the object in order to release his grasp on it. This usually begins at about seven months.

At first Baby throws just to let go of whatever he is holding. He needs this practice. Soon he begins watching to see where the object goes and listening to the sound it makes when it strikes something. Eventually he begins to throw objects just to see what happens.

These are all learning behaviors. They may be hard on Baby’s caregivers for a time, but throwing is an important part of learning. Baby is not just doing it to be “bad” or to get attention. He is learning how to let go of objects when he wants to and is learning a lot about cause and effect and about gravity, which makes every object go down and out of reach.

What can you do to let your child learn these essential lessons without being completely at his beck and call to retrieve things thrown on the floor? Some objects or toys can be fastened to the high chair with a short cord or piece of elastic.

Now Baby has a new experience to learn about. Some things he throws fall to the floor—but others don’t! (He will learn he can pull back the ones on cord or elastic can be pulled back up.) □

Time is an important concept for children

Time is something children must learn about. This doesn’t necessarily mean how to “tell time” or even what time it is, but that time is always flowing, that there are rhythms and patterns in time and that there is a “before,” a “now,” and an “after.”

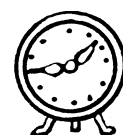
Part of a child’s learning time occurs when he gets up in the morning and goes to bed at night. When he notices that “getting up time” is different from “going to bed time” he is experiencing events as they unfold over time.

Why is learning about time so important? Simply because the typical child with serious learning problems also has serious problems organizing time.

A child learns about time long before entering school, and it is important that his early learnings be solid and secure.

There should be some dependable landmarks in every child’s typical day — certain things should happen in a certain time order so he can learn about time itself. For instance, there should be a time for lunch and another for dinner.

Important things in his life should happen regularly and dependably. By providing this structure for him, you are helping him learn about his very personal time world. □



How to help a child overcome worries and fears

You cannot expect a small child to overcome fear just because you say there is nothing to be afraid of. No matter how confident an explorer your child has become, he may be hesitant and wary when he finds himself in a new and strange situation.

Fear of a swimming pool full of water is a case in point. Nothing is more certain to produce lasting fear of water than a parent's determination that his or her child will overcome fear of getting in the pool—immediately.

Such a fear is not a shameful thing to be forced out into the open and conquered. Water is a known quantity to the child—but it has been known in the limited amounts of the bathtub or puddle.

A pool is a new, large, and to him, seemingly endless amount of water. It is different. He wants to approach it gradually, to explore it on his own terms and in his own good time.

If we are to help a child be brave, we must begin by respecting his worries and fears for what they are—questions. “Will this hurt? What is this? What should I do?”

Talk to him calmly. Don't pressure him. Give him a chance to recover his balance. Then over a period of time, give him frequent opportunities to learn more about the feared object or situation. Work gently but persistently to help him conquer any fear that may hobble his independence. □

Making a treasure map

This is a challenging, intriguing activity for early school-age children that can be adjusted to an easy or hard level.

To start, arrange checkers on a checkerboard so that they cover every square of a portion of the board.

Under one checker place a small square of paper with the letter “T” written on it. This is the hidden “treasure” and it can stand for itself or represent a more tangible reward.



The player starts with her finger on the checker you indicate. Then she moves her finger in steps, either right (R), left (L) or straight ahead (S), according to a set of directions you have written out for her.

Your directions, or “Treasure Map”, might look like this: R S S L S.

Each letter is a symbol for the direction of movement of that step. If the child follows the steps correctly, she will lift the checker on the last step and find the treasure beneath it. If not, she will

discover an empty square.

At first, as few as two or three steps will be hard enough to challenge her. The number of steps can later be increased as her ability permits.

When she gets good at following the map, she will want to make maps for you to follow, although this may take more time.

The benefits of this activity are many. It helps strengthen a child's sense of direction, both internal and external; it helps a child learn to follow directions carefully; and it uses real letters as symbols. □

Something New!

“Grandma Says” is a twice-monthly special message that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children's book reviews. To receive your free issues, go to: www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays and enter your e-mail address.

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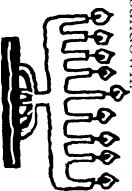








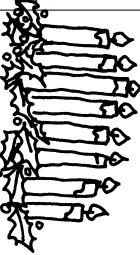
Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

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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.

www.growingchild.com

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>2</p> <p>Take a walk and count all the snow people you see.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Go to the library and check out a DVD.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Hanukkah begins at sundown.</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Play outside with a small beach ball.</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>Put various (safe) objects in a bag. Let your child reach inside, touch them and tell you what an object is.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Pack a 'picnic lunch' and eat it in the living room.</p> 	<p>1</p> <p>Look at family pictures in a photo album.</p> 
<p>9</p> <p>Talk about your family's holiday traditions.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Wear something red today.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Talk about cities and towns where relatives live. What states are they in? Find them on a map.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Feel the differences in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cotton balls • sandpaper • a banana • your skin 	<p>13</p> <p>Visit a shur-in or make a holiday card to send.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>South Pole discovered, 1911.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Give the baby some safe, empty jars to screw lids on and off.</p>
<p>16</p> <p>Sit near a window and enjoy the sunshine.</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Name 3 different things you do every day.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Donate some time, food or funds to a local soup kitchen or food finder.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Which hand is your right hand? Your left hand?</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>Eid-al-Adha</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Think of 3 different things to make from empty paper towel tubes.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Winter begins.</p> 
<p>23</p> <p>Play with a stacking toy.</p> <p>30</p> <p>Read a story by Dr. Seuss.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Christmas Eve.</p> <p>31</p> <p>Best wishes for the New Year!</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Christmas Day.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Kwanzaa—December 26, 2007 to January 1, 2008.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Using the "wrong" hand, try this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combing your hair • Buttoning buttons • Brushing teeth 	<p>28</p> <p>Is there snow on the ground? If so, make a snow dog. If not, draw a picture of a snow dog.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Put a puzzle together.</p> 