



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 kids can answer with a number. For instance:

- How many windows are there in our house?
- How many shoes are there in your closet?
- How many beans (buttons, coins, pebbles) are in this jar? (Not for kids under two.)
- How many tiles are there on the bathroom (or kitchen) floor?
- How many socks are in your drawer?
- How many pillows are there in your house?
- How many steps does it take to get to the front door from the refrigerator door?

Make up your own questions and adjust the difficulty to fit your audience. Provide help or suggestions when needed. □

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Music

The sound of music

Children love music and every child is born with some musical abilities which need to be nourished and encouraged through the preschool years.

Focusing on music in your child's life is not just an investment for future happiness. It pays immediate dividends in the following ways:

• Play activities.

Children show a natural responsiveness to music—singing, dancing, or listening to nursery rhymes—during their play. A great benefit of music is that it enhances the learning that takes place in play by providing repetition and heightened interest in the activities.

• Movement songs.

It is important for later school learning that young children develop good perceptual-motor coordination, for example, connecting what they hear with what they do. Movement songs help develop coordination, for example, by improving timing, accuracy, and smoothness of muscle movements.

• Emotional expression.

Children like to create their own music, sometimes in the form

of songs with words that don't mean anything. These songs help them to express how they feel inside or their need for independence.

Their own original songs also help them to express their identity and unique personality.

• Relaxation and stress reduction.

For centuries parents have used lullabies to sing a child to sleep. Soothing music can also be used at other times to calm a child who experiences stress or who appears tense. For example, a child who becomes restless and irritable on a long journey may quietly drift into sleep with the sound of soft music.

• Educational dividends.

Apart from the benefits already listed, music has many other educational dividends.

For example, through music many mental disciplines such as attention, concentration, and memory are learned.

Favorable exposure to musical experiences during the early childhood years will also help develop a deeper appreciation of good music in later life. □

Dealing with bad language

Parents are usually shocked the first time they find out that their youngster's vocabulary may include a variety of swear words or obscenities.

It is important to be aware that making a big fuss over these words will most likely only increase the child's fascination with them.

The most successful treatment is to tell your child quickly, firmly and calmly that you don't approve of those words. In this way, you communicate your values to your child.

If your child lives in an environment where he constantly hears these words being used by others, it is important for you to explain to your child that your values are different from those of other people.

Use this opportunity to express your own values to your child by stating firmly, for example, that "in our family, we don't use words like that." □

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.

Activity levels—kids on the go

Parents are often amazed by their three-year-old's high level of energy. He dashes across the room just to pick up a piece of paper. He wriggles and giggles while you ready him a story.

Just as soon as you take a piece of ribbon from him—because his fidgeting with it bothers you—he finds a piece of tattered string to replace the confiscated ribbon!

Studies have been made of children's activity levels—defined as the amount and frequency of their physical movements. These studies indicate that there are definite patterns related to a child's age.

For example, a child's activity level increases from birth until about three or four years of age. After that, there is generally a decrease each year.

In other words, three-year-olds are usually more active than one-year-olds. But seven-year-olds are likely to have a lower activity level than four-year-olds.

Within any age group, of course, there is likely to be considerable variation. Some of this appears to be genetically based. For example, boys of all ages are generally more active than girls.

Environmental influences also play a part. For example, it has been observed that some very active children become even more restless whenever adults try to unduly restrict their activity level.

What implications for parenting can be drawn from these studies? It should be reassuring for parents of any pre-

school child to know that:

- A fairly high level of activity is normal in children during the preschool years.

- Most preschool children have a short attention span and can't sit still for a prolonged period of time.

- Boys tend to be more active than girls.

- During the preschool years, there are wide variations in what is considered a normal level of activity.

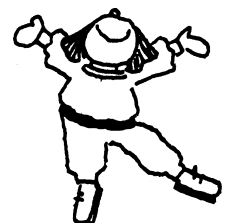
- Trying to force a restless child to sit still will generally not be effective in settling him down.

- Making minor adjustments in the environment—such as shortening the length of a story being read—will generally produce better results.

- Being sensitive to a child's unique characteristics and making reasonable accommodations to fit his own level of activity will generally be in his best interest.

- If you feel that your child's energy is too much for you, remember there is light at the end of the tunnel: Most children's level of activity decreases throughout the childhood years.

- In the meantime, being patient with your child's activity level is most important during the preschool years, even though at times it may be a great frustration to you. □



Naming guardian is an important action

What would become of your children if both you and your spouse should die?

It's a question parents need to face now, no matter how uncomfortable it makes you feel, no matter how sure you are that nothing is going to happen to you.

Unless you have left a will stipulating how you want your business affairs and your children taken care of, then strangers will do it for you.

There are a number of areas that will cover:

- **Who gets what** (automobiles, real estate, stocks, insurance).

- **Who is executor** (the person who makes sure the terms of your will are followed).

- **Who is guardian of your children.** If you do not name a guardian, a judge will make the decision.

Here are some points to consider when deciding on guardians for your children:

- **Needs of the child.** Children need patience, time, energy, praise, pride, space, tolerance, discipline, encouragement, acceptance, security, approval, and lots and lots of love. Whoever you name should be willing and able to provide all of these.

- **Age.** If a guardian is 60

today, he or she will be 70 by the time a five-year-old is a teenager.

- **Finances.** Unless you can establish a comfortable trust fund to cover the expense of raising a child, the guardian should be financially secure enough so your child would not be a burden.



- **Religious beliefs.** Whoever you name should have religious beliefs you want your child to be raised with.

- **Habits.** No one is perfect, but the guardian's habits—bad or good—are something your child will have to live with, and will probably copy. □

Health & Safety

Dog bites

When kids and their families are out and about, they often run into dogs, both friendly and unfriendly. To keep these encounters as safe as possible, here are some basic rules:

- If you are getting a pet as a companion for your child, wait until the child is mature enough to handle and care for the animal—usually around five or six years.

- Never leave your infant or young child alone with a dog.

- Teach your child some basic safety precautions for dealing with dogs outside your home, such as not surprising, teasing or scaring a dog or never approaching an unfamiliar dog.

- Instruct your child to stand still if approached or chased by a strange dog. Tell your child not to run, kick or make threatening gestures. Your child should face the dog and back away slowly until he or she is out of reach.

- Contact your physician whenever your child receives an animal bite that breaks the skin, no matter how minor the injury appears. The doctor will need to check whether your child has been adequately immunized against tetanus. □

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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
<h2 style="text-align: center;">HAPPY NEW YEAR!</h2>						
<p>4</p> <p>Rock together in a rocking chair and sing a song.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Do a favor for someone today.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Look at an ABC book.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Learn to sing an old folk song.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>What color are your socks today? Find four more things that are the same color.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Using empty boxes, make a tunnel to crawl through.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Play spoon hockey with wooden spoons and a ping pong ball. Pick a goal.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Can you name four different birds?</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Hold a "little car" race by pushing the cars (carefully!) with your nose only!</p>	<p>13</p> <p>List three things you do before you go to bed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 	<p>14</p> <p>Find a picture of a big animal and a small animal.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>A game: Who can get the most items in a shoe box?</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Sing a song in a silly voice.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Take turns telling about something that made you laugh.</p>
<p>18</p> <p>Have a tea party.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Martin Luther King Day.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Draw circles by tracing a plastic cup. Then draw some faces in the circles.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Count the ceilings in your house.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Pour some dry cereal on a flat surface and make a design.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Start with a piece of yarn. Wind it around the house and let the kids follow it to discover a "treasure" at the end.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Go for a walk. Take along a paper bag and pick up litter.</p>
<p>25</p> <p>Play with a push toy.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Chinese New Year.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Can you whistle a tune?</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Give away four hugs.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Check the batteries in your smoke alarm(s).</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Use your feet to roll a ball around the room.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Find three toys that have wheels:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.