



# Growing Together<sup>®</sup>

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Toys

## Favorite playthings have benefits

In the preschool years, children learn much from repetition. They will return again and again to a favorite toy, book, or puzzle or a favorite set of materials, such as blocks.

Each time children play with these familiar objects, they learn something new about them. That information was always there to be learned, but the child who returns to the familiar toy is not the same child who played with it a month ago.

Now he brings to his play everything that he has experienced and learned since the last time he handled the toy or material.

Because of this added experience, he is now ready to learn more from his present play than he could have learned a month ago. The toy, puzzle, book or set of blocks is the same—but as the child brings more to the activity, he learns more from it. □

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Infants & Toddlers

## Dance with your baby?

Why not? A baby learns from the movement she experiences as she is being lifted, held, carried and cared for as well as from the movements of her own body.



An infant's nervous system is not yet completely developed and she startles easily. A loud noise, a sudden movement or loss of support can be frightening to her. However, gentle rhythmic motion is soothing. This is why babies respond to being rocked or walked when they are uncomfortable or wakeful.

But dancing? Yes, dancing! Remember, babies learn from being moved as well as from moving. A very young baby cannot yet learn from rapid or jerky

movements, but she can learn from smooth, rhythmic changes of position.

So, if you enjoy moving to music, your baby will likely enjoy it, too. Find some music that is soft and rhythmic.

Hold your baby gently but firmly so that she feels secure. Then sway from side to side, move forward and backward, turn and twist in time to the music.

Your movements will stimulate the sense organs deep within the baby's ears. The sensations she experiences will help her develop the position sense and balance she will need when she tries to sit, stand, and walk later on.

If you hum along with the music, your baby will get additional stimulation from the vibration of your chest.

If you enjoy moving to music, your pleasure will communicate itself to your baby as you hold her.

Sweet music and gentle movements while holding your baby securely are the ingredients for some happy moments for both of you! □

## Praising children

Children flourish and thrive when they receive praise from the important adults in their lives. Praise is an essential component of a child's daily life. Through it a child receives positive, ego building messages that say: "You are unique." "You are important to me." "You can do it!"

Here are some effective ways to offer the gift of praise.

- **Increase your praise level.**

Criticism is often long and detailed but praise is short. It's easier to find fault than it is to see and express the many positives in a child. Every family should try to increase the level of praise in their home.

- **Be specific.** Rather than using vague and general terms, shape your vocabulary to be explicit and precise about what you want to commend.

Instead of saying, "I love your painting," try saying, "You have a fantastic eye for color." Rather than saying, "You are such a good helper," say "Thank you for putting all of our clothes in the right drawers."

- **Stay honest.** Indiscriminate praise over every act and event will make the child question your sincerity as a parent. Children know when adults are insincere.

- **Identify progress.** Like adults, children want to know that they are developing and improving their skills. Imagine how the young girl felt after she completed a series of cartwheels and heard her mother say; "Wow! You did four cartwheels in a row. That's something you couldn't have done a year ago!"

- **Don't compare.** Stay away

from statements like these: "You are the best reader in your class." "You run faster than the other team players."

While such statements may not be false, they put someone else down. Comparisons can work against a child by promoting unnecessary competition and the fear of failure.

Also, no parent should ever compare his or her child negatively with another child. ("Why can't you be good like your friend Billy?") Each little comparison may seem unimportant in itself but added together they can cause a child to believe that he will never be able to measure up.

- **Avoid negative compliments.** Unwittingly, some parents undermine their own efforts at praise by offering negative statements. For example: "It's great to see you being good for a change." "I can't believe you've finally cleaned up your room."

Children believe what they're told about themselves. If you suggest negative qualities, the child may begin to think of himself that way.

- **Commend effort, not results.** Children will be greatly motivated when they are praised simply for the attempt at doing something new.

If a child is unable to dress himself completely, you can point out how nicely he has pulled on one stocking. Then he may go ahead and try to put on his shoes. You should commend the effort, whether he is successful or not.

In addition to words of praise, try reinforcing your comments with

a physical act. A warm embrace, a loving kiss and a high five will serve to strengthen words of approval and admiration. □

## Behavior

### Listening helps settle arguments

Bicker, bicker, bicker! Sometimes it seems that brothers and sisters are always fighting. You can't stop it all, but you can help your children learn to settle their disputes in constructive ways.

- Try to get the whole story of what caused the problem before jumping in and blaming anyone.

For example, say: "You must have been really mad at the baby to hit him," and then let the older child explain. Let her know that angry feelings are acceptable but that you can't let her hurt the baby.

- In an argument between two children who can both talk, give each a chance to tell his or her own point of view.

You can help by describing the situation rather than judging it: "It looks like you two can't agree on a television program. You both seem pretty upset. Want to tell me about it? Laurie, you go first. Then Joey, I want to hear your side of the story."

This kind of approach will save a lot of hurt feelings and resentment between the kids, and it will help them learn to settle disputes themselves without fighting. □

## The challenges of a two-year-old

Around two years old, a toddler is busy striving for a feeling of being his own person. He is fascinated with expressions of his own will, for example, his frequent use of the word "No!"

Here are some ways to encourage independence and at the same time avoid negative parent-child interactions:

- The two-year-old constantly wants to help you, a sure signal of extra mess. In spite of how you may feel, accept his offer. Assign him simple tasks that he can do with you. If he wants to dust, give him his own dusting mitt.

- This practice is training for the future when he will enjoy bigger responsibilities such as setting the table. Many parents of older children wonder why their children don't pick up after themselves. The lack of early experience in helping around the home is probably part of the answer.

As you and your child work together, talk about what you are doing. Even in an ordinary household situation, you can casually teach valuable concepts, new vocabulary and good grammar.

### 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](http://www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays) and enter your e-mail address.

Take, for example, the task of "picking up and putting away." Don't wait until late afternoon or evening when a child is most fatigued and fretful. You'll both enjoy more success if you shelve or sack toys immediately after he's through playing with them.

Next, give him specific statements. He most likely will be unwilling to respond to the command "put your toys away," but he will joyfully participate in a playful duet: "First we'll pick up the big cars. Let's put them down here. Now we'll find the little cars and we'll put them up here."

As he works, he is stretching both his mind and his body. He must squat and stretch in order to pick up and deposit the cars. He is listening to your use of language from which he will increase his word supply and later devise his own sentences.

- Your youngster dawdles and you think you will never finish a day in 24 hours. When you press him to hurry or to cooperate, he resists more. How can such situations be handled?

Here are several approaches:

(a) Make a habit to talk about the next thing that will happen: "Pretty soon we'll be leaving to go to Granny's. We'll leave in about five minutes."

(b) Allow him some time to say good-bye to whatever he's doing or to whomever is present.

(c) Offer him a choice. "Do you want to walk or do you want me to carry you?"—and, of course, abide by his decision once you have offered him a set of choices

you can live with.

(d) If all else fails, entice him away. "I'm going to show you some magic when we get to the kitchen." Then reward him with the demonstration of something simple.

In addition to avoiding a confrontation, there is some important learning that takes place in these approaches. Each time you alert Youngster to anticipate an event, his ability to understand and organize the concept of time increases. And the vocabulary associated with time will become understandable.

Also, he will appreciate the fact that you respect him and honor his choice. □



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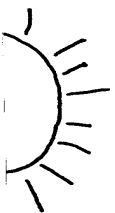

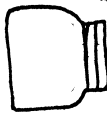








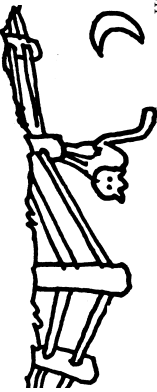
Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

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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](http://www.growingchild.com)

# October, 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 77 Buy some apples.	1 Wiggle your fingers. Wiggle your toes. Can you wiggle your nose? 	2 Make a picture of a face using dry cereal pieces.	3 Put on a blindfold and draw a picture of a cow. Does it look like a cow?	4 Talk about recycling. What is it? Why is it important? 	5 What was funny today?	6 Don't throw away that old sheet! Wash it, hang it up and paint a mural together.
 14 Visit an elderly friend. Make a small gift to take.	8 Columbus Day. 15 Draw a picture of polka dots. Color them different colors.	9 A pig says, "Oink, oink." What other animal noises can you make? 	10 Make a paper airplane and fly it. 	11 Make a cape to wear and pretend you're a superhero.	12 World Egg Day. What shape is an egg?	13 Play a song on a kazoo. 
21 Mother-in-Law Day.	22 Think of words that rhyme with CAT. 	16 Noah Webster's birthday. Born: 1758. What book has his name on it?	17 Play with a toy truck.	18 What is your favorite color? How many objects can you locate that are that color? 	19 Can you make someone smile? 	20 Count the houses on your side of the street.
28 Paint a pumpkin. 	29 Select clothes you don't wear any more and donate them to a worthy cause.	23 Talk to a pet.	24 Have a Backwards Dinner: Start with dessert; then eat meat and veggies; finish with a salad.	25 Color with an orange crayon. Name some objects that are orange.	26 Count the buttons and zippers on your clothes.	27 Singing songs helps pass the time while riding in a carseat.
				31 Halloween 	Adopt-a-Shelter-Dog Month National Book Month National Cookie Month National Pajama Month Spinach Lovers Month	