



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Science & Nature

## Science lesson: The wind

From which direction does the wind come? What can we learn about wind? Some simple experiments are revealing.

Provide tissue or other paper, a ping-pong ball or another lightweight object for children to blow on.

They will discover that they are unable to blow anything toward themselves: things tend to move away from a wind!

Another challenge: How can one determine the wind's direction? Wet a finger and hold it in the air. The wind is coming from the direction of the side of the finger which dries faster and feels colder.

What else does the wind do? Look for things it holds up — a kite, an airplane, birds. It can blow things away — paper, clothing, leaves.

Distance, height and speed can be explored by tying old greeting cards to a string on the clothesline or a fence. □

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Parenting

## Being a calm, positive parent

Often, as much as children are loved and wanted, it's easy to develop a negative attitude about them. Influenced by the media, friends, neighbors and fatigue, parents sometimes come to view children as an overwhelming burden.

It's true that when a baby enters family life, there are many new duties and demands involved in keeping him or her contented and healthy. Naturally, parents are anxious and worried about doing everything correctly.

New moms especially often pick up the message that it's their duty to devote every minute to their children, constantly entertaining them and catering to their every whim.

For those parents who work outside the home, the burden seems even more overwhelming. Yet an attitude of devotion and self-sacrifice can work against children and parents and against having a happy and peaceful household.

Choosing to be a parent who has a calm and positive attitude is not difficult.

- Don't view your child as an enemy. Sometimes parents unknowingly take on their parenting role as if it involved a constant battle of wills.

Let your child know by your touch, voice, and words that you love and cherish her. But let her come to know that you, too, are a person with your

own needs.

Holding on to who you are while being concerned for your child will prevent unnecessary demands on her part and irritation and frustration on yours.

It also gives youngsters a sense of security and sets the stage for the firm and fair rules of discipline older children need.

- Adopt an easy-going approach and don't worry about being a perfect parent. It's not necessary to follow every rule of childcare to the letter. What feels natural to you is usually what's best.

When little ones are cared for in a calm and unhurried way and allowed to develop at their own pace, you can almost be guaranteed they will blossom and thrive.

- Look forward to each day with joy. Few things establish bonding more firmly than getting into the spirit of whatever you are doing with your child.

Act as if bath time or mealtime were the most important things in the world to you at the moment. Since daily routines have to be performed anyway, why not make them fun for all of you?

For most of us, being a parent involves on-the-job training and this can be scary. Yet it helps a lot when our attitude toward our children and ourselves, is caring and nurturing. □

## Learning by listening

With all the educational jaunts our children go on, we never think of the field trip we can take without budgeting from our favorite armchair—to the world of sounds that lie in wait everywhere for careful ears to catch.

Take the sounds of words, for instance. It's one thing to understand what someone is saying; but it's a tricky business to catch sounds as they fly by, to hear syllables, to grab onto a rhythm.

Luckily, training a child's ear is as delicious a game as making silly faces, or hopping on one foot. Do it in the house first. Just sit down with your child and close your eyes, both of you. Shhhhh! What do you hear?

Your child may not be at all clever at first. If you say, "I hear a bird," he'll hear birds for the next ten minutes. That's okay. He's learning to pluck bird songs from the buzzing confusion of noise around him.

Mention easy noises like trucks roaring by; but begin to wonder aloud: Was it a truck, or was it a motorcycle or was it a car?

There are noises no one hears because we hear them so much—breathing, airplanes far away, tiny voices on the street, the humming of that refrigerator, and the lawn mower down the block.

If it's dull for your child to sit so still, take a "listening" walk around your home.

Blindfolds are fun for some children but scary for others, so try one, but give up easily if he doesn't like it and just let him close his eyes.

Now, switch on some machines—mixer, electric razor, vacuum, hair dryer, or television set.

Get the water boiling in the kettle, turn on water, flush the toilet, click a light switch, close a door, rattle a knob, open a drawer, drop a spoon.

When ordinary things get too easy, be cleverer. Scratch your fingers on the rug. Put something in a small box and shake it around—a pencil, a ball, beans, and a stuffed toy. Bite off and crunch a pickle or a stalk of celery.

Have you noticed that no game takes more than a minute or so? That makes catching sounds easy outdoors too, where there's too much distraction for long games.

Closing one's eyes is just too hard outside where there's so much to see, but here's another way to play.

Who's the first to hear a dog bark, a baby cry, a woman laugh? Again, don't forget to hear the noises we forget to hear—footsteps, clothes rustling as you walk, wind, keys or coins jingling in someone's pocket.

From wind to whispers is a small step. Whisper a sound in your child's ear—ssss, ffff, th, th, ch, ch, ch, shhhh, hhh—and ask him to make the same sound he heard.

One day his sharp ears will easily catch the b's in bubble, the z's in fuzzy, and the p's in pop. And ears that can catch—can catch on. □

## 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/](http://www.GrowingChild.com/)

**FreeGrandmaSays**

and enter your e-mail address.

## Serve something fancy to eat

We all like to try something new, and kids are no exception. Here are some ideas for snack time that will entice bored appetites.

Start with a different kind of bread than the one you usually serve—whole wheat, rye, pumpernickel, wheat berry, or multigrain. Thinly sliced sandwich bread works well when flattened with a rolling pin.

To add interest, cut the sandwiches into triangles, quarters, or finger-length strips; or use decorative cookie cutters for special celebrations.

Coat one side of the bread with a light spread, such as reduced-fat margarine or low-fat cream cheese. This will prevent the sandwich from becoming soggy.

Use a variety of fillings—some sweet, some savory. Peanut butter, thinly sliced cucumbers, banana slices, ham and or mustard—try some new ideas but include children's favorites.

If you want your small sandwiches to look fancy, it's best to cut the crusts off just before serving.

Stack two or three sandwiches and cut the crusts off all at once. (Use the leftover crusts to make bread stuffing or croutons.)

If you want to make sandwiches ahead of time, you can keep them moist by covering them with waxed paper and then laying a damp kitchen towel over the waxed paper, and refrigerate.

Bread is a good source of complex carbohydrates and other nutrients. By using low-fat and reduced-fat fillings, these little treats become nutritional—as well as tasty—snacks. □

## Childhood learning doesn't always mean book learning

It's true that some children, with parental guidance, are able to read and write at very early ages.

But this doesn't mean that they are able to make proper evaluations of the things they do because what they do, many times, is just a conditioned response.

Only when a child has developed the capacity to think, to direct her natural curiosity to find answers to meaningful questions, has true learning for that child been accomplished.

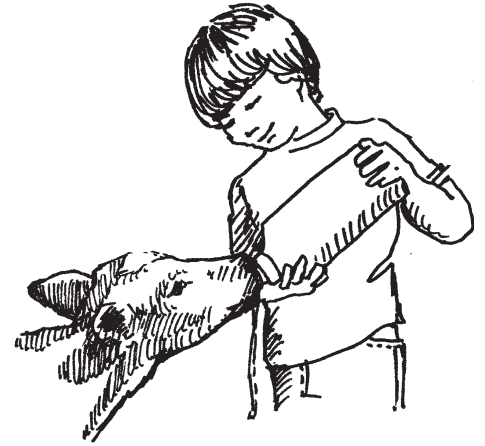
Instead of being directed in all their activities, children learn a great deal as they play. They search for answers to their own questions, and they find answers in their make-believe games. Children come to a deeper understanding of themselves and

others by pretending to be musicians, doctors, storekeepers, truck drivers, artists, and athletes.

When a child shares or takes turns with others, recognizes another's frustrations, acts out her own anxieties and conflicts—she is doing the plain, hard work of growing up through the natural processes of childhood.

When we rush children into clever performance of skills, when we organize their daily lives so that there is not a moment for inner contemplation, we decrease the possibilities for genuine thought and individual growth.

Most of us have happy recollections of our childhood days. When life hurts, when the way grows weary, when we are vexed and baffled by unattainable but deep desires, or saddened by losses, so many times we find



solace in remembering something out of our yesterdays.

The truth of this is demonstrated by the hold that songs and poems we learned as children have upon us.

These songs and poems appeal to us because their major note touches one of the deeper and elemental things in human nature: childhood.

Let's let children be children for the few short years of childhood.

Let's let them accumulate precious memories that will serve them well in adult life. □

## Developmental

### Constructive feedback

Whether your child has done a good job at something or has failed, try to focus on what it is he's done rather on him. For example, if he remembers to wipe his feet before coming in, thank him for doing so rather than simply telling him he's a "good boy."

That kind of praise—telling him he's a "good boy"—takes the responsibility away from him and sets you up as judge and jury. It doesn't help build his self-confidence because it makes him too dependent on your judgment.

The other side of the example is that if he were to forget to wipe his feet before coming into the house, tell him you're upset when he does that because then you have to clean it up.

Don't tell him he's a thoughtless, sloppy person. Such generalized blame and criticism only causes generalized feelings of guilt and destroys self-confidence. It doesn't teach better behavior.

If you learn to say what you mean and mean what you say, you'll help your child learn from his mistakes and feel good about himself rather than feeling he's a bad person for making mistakes. □

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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)

# September 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4</p> <p>Get a new bathtub toy.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Labor Day. Have a picnic!</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Where do bees live?</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Trade seats for dinner.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>What's your favorite television show?</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Find a sandbox to play in.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Make yourself a hat.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Grandparents' Day.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>What color is a banana? Name four more things that are that color.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Talk about when and how to call 911 (or the emergency number where you live.)</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Put the baby in a stroller and go for a walk.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Orange and banana slices for a snack.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>What do these animals have in common: a dog, a cat, and a parrot. How are they different?</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Eat lunch outside.</p>
<p>18</p> <p>Where are your knees? Draw funny faces on them with make-up.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>What shape is an orange? What color is an orange?</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Put a towel on your back and pretend you're a turtle.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Name five things that are white.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Go to the library and bring home a book about cowboys.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Put up a tent. Take a nap or eat a picnic lunch inside.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Go out for breakfast.</p>
<p>25</p> <p>Play peek-a-boo with a towel.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Visit a retirement community and stop and say hello to someone new.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Pat baby's hands together and repeat "Patty Cake."</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Rosh Hashanah.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Look out the window and name the colors you see.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Learn a new word today.</p>	<p>acrobat blue crawl dent extra funny giggle</p>