



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Developmental

Teaching by demonstrating

When giving children a difficult or unfamiliar instruction, it's easier for them to follow if you demonstrate.

Words often aren't enough for children to take on a new action. They need to be shown as well as told. As you're demonstrating, talk about what you're doing.

If the activity is complicated, they'll need to be shown slowly, in small steps and given a chance to practice until they can do it.

Ask if they'd like to see you do it again.

This is good for specific learning activities (dressing) as well as for things you ask your children to do around the house (setting the table). □



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Parenting

Let's read a story

Numerous research studies have indicated that children whose parents regularly read to them during the preschool years will later tend to do better in school.

That's why parents are continually encouraged to read aloud to their children. A child's parents are generally her first educators and her most important resource for developing a love of reading.

Let's consider for a moment some of the things your child can learn while you read a story aloud:

Vocabulary. As you read, your child is acquiring new words. Let her see the pictures in the book. Point to an object as you read its name. See if she can point to some objects that you name.

Information. Your child is also acquiring new knowledge and expanding the horizons of her mind. Reading helps to open a whole new world for her.

Comprehension. From books a child acquires new understanding of her world. She perceives new relationships between words and can relate new knowledge to what she

already knows.

Listening and attention skills. Reading helps to sharpen your child's listening skills and improve her attention span.

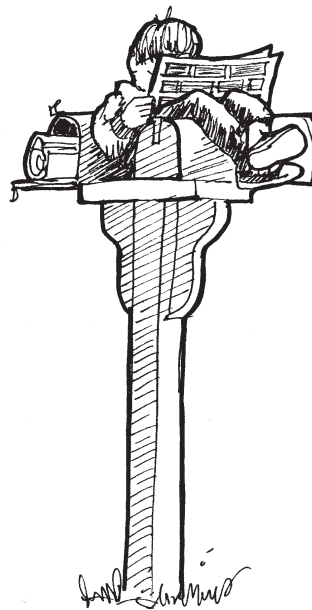
Mental awareness. As a result of your reading, she will also likely become more aware of and take greater interest in her everyday world.

Sequencing. From your reading she can learn about sequencing in time. ("Once upon a time ...") and space ("In the first place sat ...") which is an important skill for later school learning.

Emotions. As she identifies with the characters in the story, she can sometimes gain a better understanding of her own emotions.

Love of books. As you read to your child, you are imparting to her an important value in your life, namely, your own love of books.

Personal love. Above all, by setting aside uninterrupted quiet time for reading, you are letting your child know how important she is to you. You are thereby conveying your own personal love for her. □



Book Review: The Little Red Hen

By Paul Galdone, Clarion Books, 2006 (Children ages 2-5 years)

Most parents are familiar with the story of the **Little Red Hen**, who ignored the laziness of her animal friends, and continued to do all the work necessary to grow, harvest, and then prepare the wheat for the bread she finally baked.

Your children deserve the introduction of this story, complete with the wonderful illustrations of Paul Galdone.

Every child enjoys the predictability of the “Not I” responses of the animals who find too many other things to do rather than help. But they are sometimes surprised when the **Little Red Hen** turns the tables at the end of the story, pointing out that she alone did the work, so she alone will eat the bread.

A common complaint of preschool teachers is that children today have never been expected to help, and are quite unused to the idea that everyone in a community (or family) should have a contribution to make.

When teachers persist with the explanations that the classroom belongs to them all and they each have a role in keeping it tidy and attractive, children quickly come to enjoy the responsibilities and work together towards common goals.

Why is it that many of today’s children are not being asked to help with chores in their homes?

Is it because today’s parents are just too busy with keeping up with their own lives that they don’t have the extra minutes it would take to show a child how to sweep the floor?

Perhaps they feel they would just have to take the time to do the job again, properly?

Is it because parents feel childhood should be carefree, with plenty of time later for the work in life?

Whatever the reason, we do children a grave disservice if we don’t offer them early opportunities to be involved in the tasks of daily living. This might include (but is not limited to) picking up toys, putting away the silverware from the dishwasher, setting the table, help sorting the recyclables.

Very young children thrive on being able to imitate the behaviors of their parents, and this is really the best time to start participation in family jobs.

Healthy self-esteem grows as children discover their own competence in carrying out the expected tasks. Willing attitudes develop as children get positive feedback for their efforts.

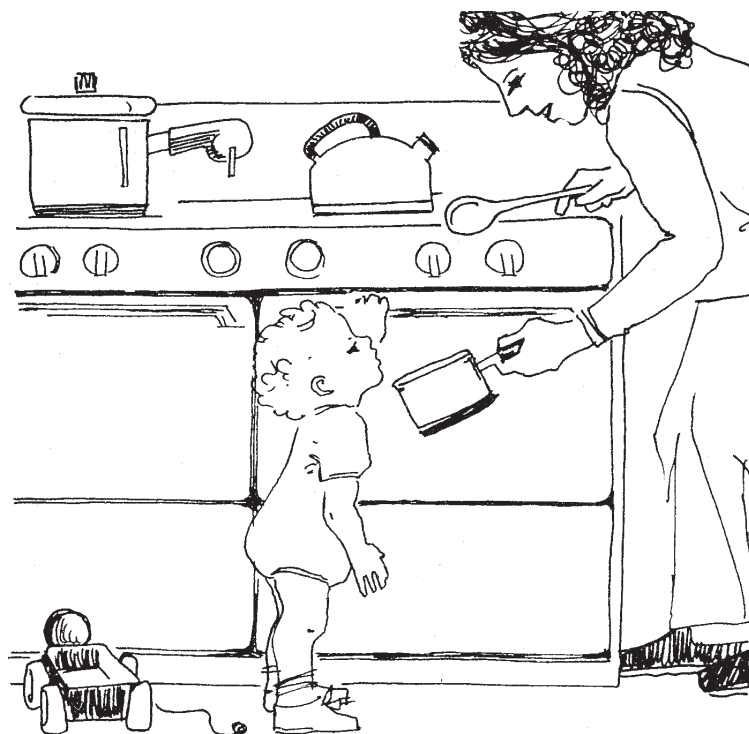
Beginning children’s participation in family responsibilities too late—say in the school years—makes more likely the “Not I” mindset that leads to nagging and family unpleasantness.

Why not start instead with the smallest ones, who will happily toddle along behind busy parents?

Many parents find that establishing habits of work may be enhanced when children have visual reminders of their jobs, such as a chart that pictures the expected task, and spaces for stickers when the job is completed.

Such a system also makes the child clearly in charge of completing the task, an important part of developing responsibility.

The Little Red Hen has a timeless message, and perhaps responsibility for jobs is an idea whose time has come in your household. □



Fighting not allowed

Young children rarely fight in the first few years of life.

But some children, as they get older, will react to frustration by fighting, hitting, teasing, calling names, or using bad language. This is the way they show or express their feelings.

Children who are always fighting and bullying are in trouble. They are usually feared and disliked by other children and adults.

They find themselves more and more left out, which makes them angrier and even more ready to fight.

Whether children continue to fight depends very much on how their parents handle the situation. It is important to set firm limits and indicate disapproval of that kind of behavior without getting violent about it.

Children need to know what the rules for behavior are — and to know what exactly what happens if those rules are broken.

Parents (and other adults children come in contact with) need to watch their own behavior as well. If children hear shouting and see fighting at home, they will tend to do the same thing in their play and other activities.

For parents who have always been shouters, name callers and hitters, changing may be difficult. Some parents don't even recognize that they behave in this way until they see their children imitating them.

No matter how difficult it seems, the effort to change this pattern is worthwhile. It can help spare children a lifetime of frustration and difficulty. □

Read some Medal winners!

There are so many things parents and children can do with a book:

Take a book to lunch!

Read a bedtime story!

Read a book out loud!

Act out a story!

There are probably more ideas just waiting to be considered.

Now is a good time to get reacquainted with your library if you haven't been there for a while. Look at the books (and CDs) available and take home some—for you and your children.

Find out what your local library has to offer. You might be surprised!

For example, awards are given out each year for books in various categories. Two of the awards for children's books are the *Caldecott Medal* and the *Newbery Medal*.

The *Caldecott Medal* is awarded each year to the most distinguished American picture book for children. Selected by the American Library Association, this award is named after Randolph Caldecott, a pioneer in children's book illustration.

The *Newbery Medal* has been awarded annually by the American Library Association since 1922 to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

The children's librarian can help you find some of these excellent books for your children to read. □

Promoting math readiness

To help preschoolers get ready for math, give them practice by using number, size and quantity words.

Make a point of using these words yourself, and ask your child questions so that she has to use them in her answers.

For example, at mealtime, ask your child if she wants a **lot** or a **little**, **less than** this or **more than** this, and so on.

Cut an apple in half and say, "Here's **one half** for you and **one half** for me."

Ask her how many pieces she wants, if she wants a **big** piece or a **little** piece.

Show your child a picture of herself and others. Ask her, "Who is the **tallest**?" "Who is the **shortest**?"

Let her help cook. Show her how to measure out **two tablespoons**, mix in **one-half cup**, and so on.

Give her the measuring cups and spoons and a pan of dried beans to experiment with to see how many teaspoons in a tablespoon, and how many half cups in a cup, and so on. □

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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

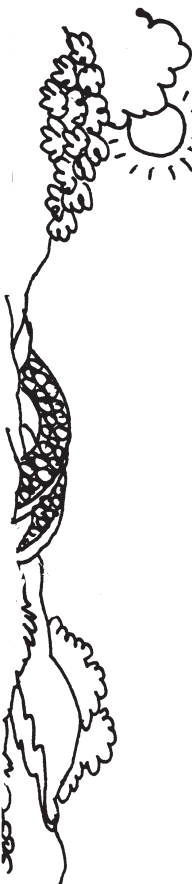
Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



*"Never yet was a springtime,
when the buds forgot to bloom."*

Margaret Elizabeth Sangster

1 What can you do together as a family this weekend?

2 Look at the stars at night.



3 Sweep the sidewalk.

4 Do some exercises with someone else. Can you lie on the floor and do bicycles in the air?

5 Cinco de Mayo
What event does this holiday honor?

6 Play a board game.

7 Play with a beach ball outside.



8 Do have a rain gauge? This is an excellent way to learn about our weather and the concepts of "more" and "less."

9 Mother's Day



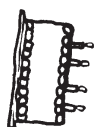
10 Name 4 things that are red.

11 What is your second favorite thing to eat?



12 Play with a put-together, pull-apart toy.

13 Find the shape of a circle in your house.



14 Have you ever eaten peanut butter on toast? Give it a try.

15 Armed Forces Day

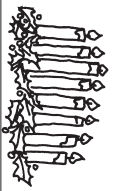


16 Practice whistling.

17 What does it mean to tell the truth?

18 Can you touch your nose with your elbow?

19 Shavuot.



20 When the next sunny day comes along, take a walk.

21 Talk about the safest way to cross the street. Remember to always look both ways first.



22 Plan a family day at the park.

23 Take a walk and look for flowers.

30 Take a walk and look for birds.

24 How high can you jump?

31



Memorial Day

25 Count the doors in your house.



26 Make a paper airplane. Will it fly outside?

27 What is your favorite beverage to drink?

28 Talk about how to use 911 (or other emergency number in your area).

29 Go camping!

