

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2020



## KID BITS

### Steps toward independence

Identify parts of your child's morning routine that she could take over, like brushing her hair and pouring her cereal. Help her until she gets the hang of each task. She'll become more independent, and mornings will go more smoothly for everyone.

### Above or below?

Build your youngster's spatial awareness—his understanding of where objects are in space—with this fun activity. Sit back-to-back, and take turns describing what to draw using position words like *above*, *under*, *beside*, and *between*. (“Draw a boy sitting *under* a tree.”) Now turn around and compare your pictures.

## DID YOU KNOW?

You're better able to care for your children if you take good care of yourself—especially during trying times. Try to carve out alone time to relax, maybe to do crossword puzzles or knit. Also, consider limiting how much news you watch or read. And get a better night's sleep by turning off screens at least one hour before bed.

### Worth quoting

“A problem is a chance for you to do your best.” *Duke Ellington*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Which hand is best for coloring?

**A:** Neither. It's better to color with crayons.



Holy Cross Lutheran School

Mrs. Jen Myers, Preschool Director

## Settling in for a new year

Parents and children may feel uncertain about how this school year will go because of COVID-19. Here's advice for helping your youngster learn and adjust to changes.

**Q:** *How can I keep my child learning on days when he isn't in school?*

**A:** Your youngster learns the most from what comes naturally to him—playing! Set out educational toys like magnetic letters, building blocks, and jigsaw puzzles. If you work from home, invite him to be your coworker. Let him make badges for the two of you to wear, and give him “jobs” (sort office supplies, decorate your work area).

**Q:** *My son struggles with social distancing. What's the best way to explain it?*

**A:** “Social distancing” is a tough phrase for little ones, since learning to socialize is an important part of their development. So try using different language. (“We need extra personal space because



there are extra germs going around.”) Or encourage him to picture himself in an imaginary bubble. Gently say “Bubble” to remind him to keep his distance.

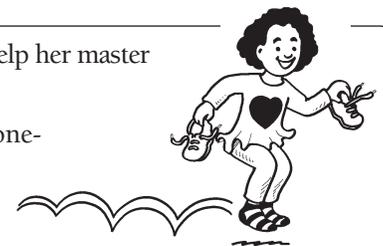
**Q:** *My child misses his grandparents. What should I do?*

**A:** This is a good opportunity to help your child learn about compassion and empathy. Explain that staying away from Grandma and Grandpa is a kind thing to do right now, because older people may get very sick from COVID-19. Encourage him to call his grandparents often, and, if possible, plan online chats so he can “see” them.♥

## School success checklist

Is your little one ready for the school year? Help her master the skills on this checklist to start the year right.

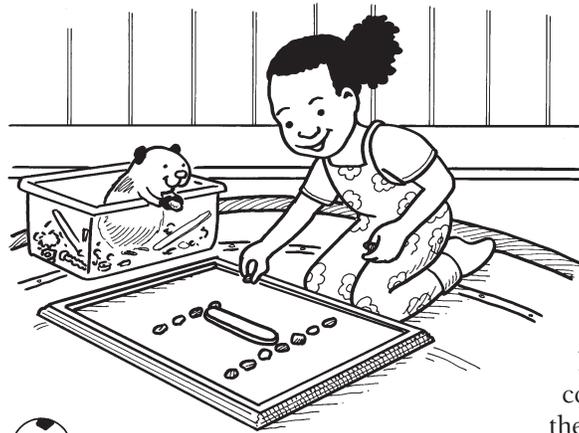
- I can follow directions:** Give your youngster one- and two-step instructions. “Hop to your bedroom, and put your shoes away.” When she masters following two steps, add a third.
- I'm a good listener:** Ask your youngster to close her eyes while you make three sounds (clap your hands, tap a spoon against a glass, crumple a piece of paper). Can she name the sounds in order?
- I take turns:** Encourage your child to spot examples of turn taking, perhaps when your family passes food around at dinner or plays a board game.♥



# Play and learn with loose parts

Nuts and bolts, bottle caps, marbles, and other “loose parts” you have around the house can inspire your child to think creatively and flexibly. Fill a box with loose parts, and try these ideas.

**Frame a picture.** Place a frame (glass removed) on the table, and let your youngster arrange loose parts inside it to create pictures. She



might make a random design, or maybe she'll form letters, numbers, or shapes. For example, she could use pebbles and craft sticks to make the first letter of her name inside the frame. Now she can clear the frame and make a new picture.

**Find the similarities.** Hand your child a loose part (say, a pom-pom). How many other objects in her box match it in some way? Ask her to tell you what they have in common. She may notice a marble is the same shape (round), a block is the same color (red), and a sponge has a similar texture (squishy). Then, put the item back in the box, and let her choose something for you to match up.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Make life more predictable

With all the disruptions to our lives this spring and summer, my son Diego became clingy and whiny. My aunt, who raised five children, pointed out that a predictable routine could help him feel more secure.

So together, Diego and I made a picture schedule that showed what we would do each day. We listed items like “Eat breakfast after getting dressed for school,” “Play outside before dinner,” and “Read a bedtime story.”

Diego drew a picture beside each one—a bowl of cereal for eating breakfast, a soccer ball for playing outside, and a book for story time.

We hung the schedule on our bathroom mirror, so Diego sees it first thing in the morning and knows what to expect that day. Life may still be stressful, but having a routine has made things feel a little more normal.♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Get up, get moving

Young children need up to three hours of active play each day to build healthy bodies and minds. Use these activities to get your little one moving.

#### Gallop like a horse

Let your child pretend to be a horse. He can roll a die and gallop forward that number of times. Then, he should roll again. How many gallops does it take for him to get from one end of the room to the other? How about through your whole house?



#### Dance with a balloon

Turn on music, and have your youngster bat a blown-up balloon straight up into the air. Now everyone dances like crazy until the balloon touches the ground. When it lands, dancers freeze in place for a count of five. Launch the balloon, and dance again.♥

## Q & A Introducing ... me!

**Q:** How can I work with the teacher to help my daughter do her best this year?

**A:** Start by writing an email or a note to the teacher. Ask your daughter what she would like you to include—perhaps information about your family or about her favorite things. *Examples:* “Ellie has a baby brother” and “Her favorite color is green.”

Then, add information to help the teacher understand

your daughter’s needs. *Examples:* “She goes to her dad’s house every other weekend.” “Ellie might not always speak up when something is hard for her.”

Be sure to touch base with the teacher throughout the year. From time to time, send an email or a note—both when things are going great and when you have a question or concern. The teacher will be happy to hear that your child enjoyed a book she read to the class, and the regular communication will make it easier to work as a team if a problem arises.♥

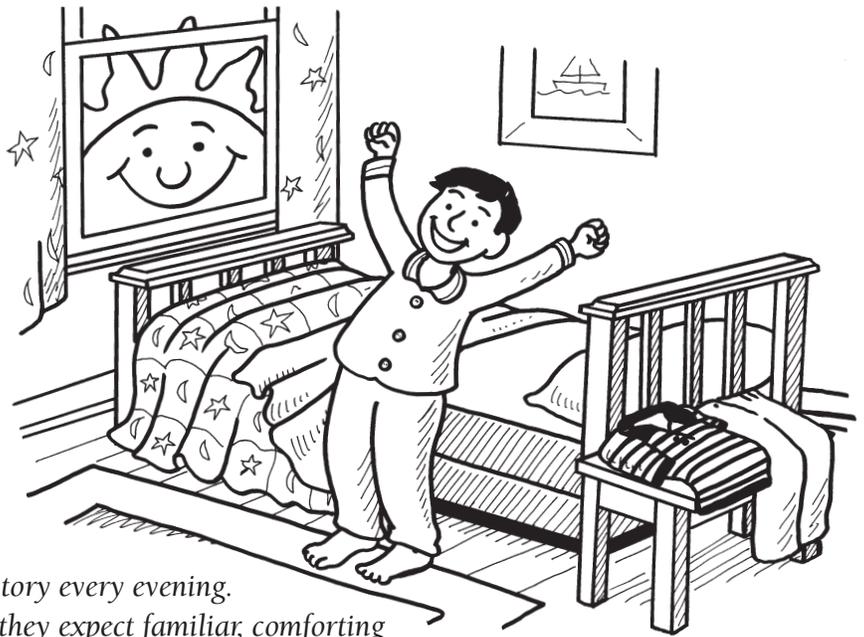


### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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# Routines for a Great Day!



Adam looks forward to big hugs from his parents each morning. Stephanie's favorite part of the afternoon is when her mom picks her up from day care and asks about her projects. And Miguel knows he can count on a cozy bedtime story every evening.

These youngsters' days go smoothly because they expect familiar, comforting rituals. A daily routine can help your child behave well, develop good character, and stay connected with you. Try these tips for successful mornings, afternoons, and evenings.

## Morning

### A warm wake-up

Let your little one know you're happy to see her when she wakes up. You might come up with a special way to say, "Good morning." It can be simple ("Get out of bed, sleepy-head") or silly ("Rise and shine, porcupine!"). Your youngster will look forward to hearing your greeting first thing, and that can set the tone for a peaceful day. *Idea:* Learn greetings in other languages, and surprise each other with different ones. The next time your family visits the library, you could look up "Good morning" in bilingual dictionaries. Or ask friends who speak other languages to teach you greetings.



### Morning announcements

Children often behave better if they know what's ahead. Try putting your youngster in charge of announcing the day's events at breakfast. When he comes into the kitchen, he can look at the calendar to see if it's a special day (cousin's birthday, a holiday) or if anyone has a dentist appointment or sports practice. This is also a

good time for you to go over any schedule changes ("Remember, Katie's mom is picking you up from school today").

### Snappy dressing

Checking the weather the night before will save time in the morning. Plus, your child will feel grown-up when he learns to choose the right clothes all by himself. Let him look at the forecast in the newspaper or on a computer or phone. Talk about whether he will need short or long sleeves, pants or shorts, a sweater or a light jacket. *Tip:* Be sure he always puts his clothes in the same spot (say, on his nightstand or on a chair) so he can find them easily in the morning.

## After school

### Catching up

To find out what your youngster did in school or day care, ask her to show you what's in her bag. Talk about each item. ("Can you tell me about this map you drew?" or "How did you choose those colors for your painting?") Expressing interest in what she's learning will show her that school is important and help her take pride in her work. If she doesn't have much to say, start talking about your own day ("Today I took a fun new dance class at the gym"). She might decide she wants to share, too!



*continued*



**Running errands**

Chances are that part of your child’s routine will be to accompany you on errands. Make things more pleasant with on-the-go activities. While you wait in line at the bank, let him count coins or practice writing numbers on a blank deposit slip. At the gas station, ask him to identify the letters (“s-t-a-r-t”) or words (“on”) on the pump.

**Physical activity**

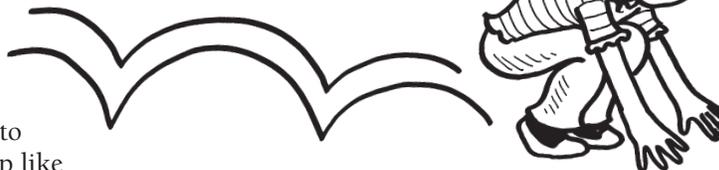
Make exercise a regular part of your youngster’s day by encouraging her to play outside after school or day care. Provide active toys like a jump rope, a hula hoop, roller skates, and a variety of balls. *Idea:* You might see if several neighborhood parents can take turns supervising children riding bikes or playing tag outside.

**Terrific transitions**

It’s not always easy for little ones to stop one activity and start another. These clever ideas can make switching gears easier.

● **Keep good-byes pleasant.** Does your child sometimes have a hard time making the transition from home to school or day care? Try arriving in the classroom or building a few minutes early, and name something she can look forward to. (“It’s nice out today—you’ll be able to play on the playground again!”)

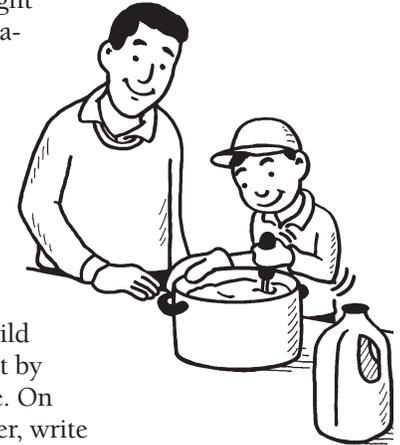
● **Be creative.** Let your youngster decide how to move from one place to another. You might say, “It’s time to go. Would you like to walk like an elephant or hop like a frog on our way to the car?”



**Evening**

**Dinnertime**

Regular family meals help parents and children stay close. You can enjoy time with your youngster by letting him help you cook. He might make fruit salad, mash potatoes, or arrange rolls on a cookie sheet. While you eat, be sure to compliment him on foods he helped prepare.



**Chore basket**

When everyone pitches in, your home is a nicer place to live. Keep your child interested in doing her part by turning chores into a game. On index cards or slips of paper, write jobs she can do by herself (dust, use a handheld vacuum, fold towels and washcloths). Let her illustrate each one. Every day, look through the cards and put the chores that need to be done in a basket. Then, she can close her eyes and pull one out.

**Story hour**

Make reading the focus of bedtime. You’ll help your youngster learn to love reading—and he’ll be eager to get ready for bed. Try saying, “Fifteen minutes until story time!” (instead of “It’s bedtime”). Tell him you’ll meet in his room after he puts on his pajamas and picks out a book. Then, shut out all distractions (close the bedroom door, put away your phone), and enjoy a story together.

● **Use a timer.** Show your child how to set a timer by himself, and explain what the numbers mean. (“The first number is a three—that’s three minutes. When it gets to zero, we’re going to T-ball.”) Then, place it near him so he knows how much time is left to play.

● **Sing songs.** Music can make anything more fun. Your youngster might pick up her toys to a special cleanup song. Or the two of you could invent words to “The Wheels on the Car” (to the tune of “The Wheels on the Bus”) while you drive from one place to another.

**Early Years**

**Note:** Fill in the month and dates, and post this calendar on your refrigerator. Then, encourage your child to do an activity a day.

# Early Years Daily Calendar

MONTH						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			<p>Here's a fun way to start the day: Read a story at the breakfast table. Ask everyone what they liked best about it.</p>	<p>Draw three shapes, such as a square, triangle, and hexagon. Tell someone what the shapes have in common (straight sides) and what they don't (number of sides).</p>	<p>Ask a parent to hide a stuffed animal and give you step-by-step instructions for locating it. Be an "echo" by repeating each step aloud as you follow it.</p>	<p>Find a science hobby. You might collect and identify rocks or take up stargazing. You could even start a club and invite friends or cousins to join.</p> 
<p>Draw a picture menu for tonight's dinner. Label the pictures by copying food words (<i>pasta, carrots</i>) from recipes or packages.</p>	<p>Splish, splash! Use washable markers to write and draw in the bathtub. Practice writing letters, numbers, or words, then wash the ink right off.</p>	<p>Choose a toy you own that you think a sibling would enjoy playing with. Show kindness by sharing it with him or her.</p> 	<p>Be an engineer! Find a small plastic toy that won't float in water. Make a life vest for it out of craft supplies or materials from the recycling bin, and test it in the sink.</p>	<p>Sort and stack spare change into towers of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Which tower is the tallest? Count the coins in it.</p> 	<p>Set a goal, such as learning to ride a bike. Draw a picture of yourself reaching your goal, and hang it in your room to remind you to keep trying.</p>	<p>Take a walk around the neighborhood with your family. At each corner, say whether you're turning left or right.</p>
<p>Put on a puppet show based on your favorite book. Paint scenery on cardboard, and draw characters' faces on brown paper lunch bags.</p> 	<p>Take turns naming three objects, two that have something in common and one that's different. Which one doesn't belong? <i>Example:</i> Ravioli and teddy bears are stuffed, but a cup isn't.</p>	<p>Use teamwork to draw a picture. Take turns adding one part (say, a roof on a house). What will the finished picture look like?</p> 	<p>Cut out the numbers 1-20 from old newspapers or magazines. With your eyes closed, mix them up. Now put them in order!</p>	<p>Go outside to observe animals. Draw pictures of them, and make up cute names for them based on their behavior (Hops-a-Lot for a rabbit, Zippy for a squirrel).</p>	<p>Read library books with characters from other cultures. What do you have in common with the characters?</p> 	<p>Have family members take turns saying a word that describes today (<i>rainy, busy</i>). Say as many words as possible without repeating one.</p>
<p>Get creative with empty paper towel and toilet paper tubes. A spiral cut makes a snake. Glue two side by side for binoculars. What else can you make?</p>	<p>Tell family members something about yourself that you're proud of. ("I'm a good friend.") Ask them what they're proud of about themselves, too.</p>	<p>Brainstorm a list of silly sentences. <i>Example:</i> "A skunk followed me home today." Choose your favorite, and have a parent help you write a story that begins with the sentence.</p> 			<p>Use tape to create a large square, rectangle, or triangle on the floor. Arrange toy blocks to fill the shape.</p>	<p>With a friend or sibling, take turns acting out feelings for the other person to guess. <i>Example:</i> Smile and do a little dance to show "happy."</p> 
<p>Be generous with your time. Make "coupons" that family members can redeem. You might give a sibling a coupon that says, "I will do one of your chores."</p> 	<p>Hold a silent conversation with someone. Get your point across by drawing or acting out what you want to say.</p>	<p>Ask parents about family traditions they enjoyed when they were your age. Then, vote on a new tradition to start together, like Saturday bike rides or Waffle Wednesdays.</p>				

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<p>Make a list of words you know how to spell. Post it on the refrigerator, and add to it as you learn new words.</p>	<p>Good citizens wear seat belts! The next time you get in a car, fasten your seat belt and call out, "Safe rider check!" Is everyone buckled up?</p>	<p>Start a collection of small objects (buttons, erasers, marbles, paper clips) that you could use to do math problems. Keep your "counters" in a clear jar.</p>		<p>Read a book, and create a "souvenir" from it. Draw a treasure map after reading a pirate adventure. Sculpt play dough planets for a book about space.</p>
<p>Read color words on crayons. Then, walk around the house and try to match each crayon with something of the same color. Maybe your orange crayon matches your cat!</p>	<p>Design a rubber band-powered car using toys, boxes, and craft supplies. How far can your car go? Redesign to try to make it go farther.</p>	<p>At dinner, take turns describing a mistake you made today—and what you learned. ("I forgot to put my name on my drawing. Next time I'll write it before I draw.")</p>		<p>Look for things around the house that your family doesn't use. <i>Examples:</i> plate on the wall (phone jack), black machine with a big slot (VCR). Ask a parent what they're for.</p>		<p>Create a "calm down spot" for when you need time to relax. Fill a basket with activities like a coloring book, crayons, and puzzles.</p>
<p>Think of different ways to sort a collection. Maybe you'll sort Legos according to size, color, or shape. Ask someone to guess your sorting "rule."</p>	<p>Turn items in the recycling bin into storage containers. A coffee can makes a good domino holder. And you could store paper in a cereal box.</p> 	<p>Notice when a family member is busy, perhaps working on a computer or doing yard work. Show kindness by bringing them a glass of water or offering to help with their work.</p>	<p>Remember your table manners by decorating a paper place mat with "manners" cartoons. You might draw one of yourself chewing with your mouth closed, for instance.</p>	<p>Touch your throat and hum a song. Now stop humming. What do you notice? Humming makes your vocal cords vibrate. That's because vibrations produce sound.</p>	<p>Learn to do a new chore like making your bed or using a hand-held vacuum cleaner. Have someone take a photo of you doing the chore so you can see what responsibility looks like.</p> 	
<p>Make a new friend by finding something you have in common with a classmate. Maybe you both play soccer or love to write stories, for example.</p>	<p>Hand-clapping games can stretch your memory—and they're fun. Ask your parents to teach you any they know or to help you find some in library books or online. Or make up one of your own!</p>	<p>Technology isn't just video games and smartphones—it's any tool that makes life easier. Brainstorm examples of tools that aren't electronic (scooter, pencil, fork).</p> 		<p>Play Dragon Tag. Players line up touching the shoulders of the person in front of them. The leader (head) has to catch the last person (tail) and becomes the new tail.</p>	<p>Take turns rolling a die and adding that number of blocks to a tower. If it falls, count the blocks, then try to build a taller one next time.</p>	<p>Rhymes are fun! Choose a rhyming book like <i>The Cat in the Hat</i> (Dr. Seuss) or a nursery rhyme like "Hey Diddle Diddle." Now "rap" the words aloud.</p>
<p>Put magnetic letters in ABC order on the refrigerator. Try to think of a word that starts with each letter.</p> 	<p>Build a marble run using blocks, cardboard tubes, and other household items. Test, redesign, and retest until a marble will roll through without getting stuck.</p>	<p>Make up new rules for your favorite game. Maybe you'll go backward in Chutes and Ladders or try to win checkers by losing all of your pieces.</p>	<p>Have each family member gift-wrap a random object, perhaps a spoon. Exchange "gifts," and everyone has to say something honest and positive. ("I love how shiny this is!")</p>			

## Early Years