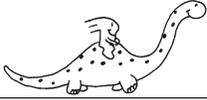


Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2021

KID BITS



Comfy school clothes

Your children will be able to concentrate better in school if they're wearing comfortable clothes. For example, it's a good idea to dress in layers that are easy to take off if they get hot. If they're still learning to fasten buttons or snaps, elastic-waist pants may be best. *Tip:* Have them wear sneakers so they can run and play safely at recess.

Plan ahead for patience

When you head out with your youngster to run errands, let her carry a notebook and crayons. Then if you have to wait, encourage her to draw pictures of things she'd like to do when she gets home (ride her bike, play with action figures). She'll learn to keep herself occupied when she needs to be patient.

Wash up!

How can you motivate your child to wash his hands for the 20 seconds needed to kill germs? Have him sing the alphabet song while he scrubs. Or boost his creativity and independence by suggesting that he come up with his own 20-second idea. He might recite a tongue twister or nursery rhyme, or even make up a song to sing.

Worth quoting

"Hugs can do great amounts of good, especially for children."
Diana, Princess of Wales

Just for fun

Q: What are you guaranteed to get for your birthday?

A: A whole year older!



Success in school: A parent's role

Your little one is headed to school, and you have an important part to play in her success. Here are ways to support her as she grows and learns.

Share enthusiasm

The more excited you are about school, the more excited your child will be. Each day, invite her to "teach" you something she learned. She might show you how to make "ants on a log" for a snack or name colors around the house. Whatever the lesson, be an enthusiastic "student." Your positive attitude will be contagious!

Encourage problem solving

Help your youngster think through and solve problems for herself. For instance, she may want to play a noisy game, but the baby is sleeping. Ask, "What could you do instead?" *Examples:* Play a quieter game, wait for the baby to wake up. She'll become more self-reliant and need less help at home and in class.



Be a listener

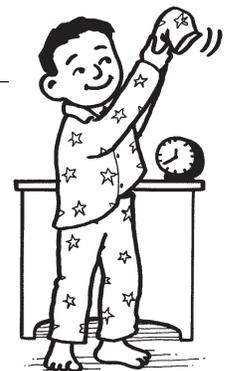
Your child gets her first lessons in listening by talking with you. During conversations, show that she has your full attention. ("Let's put away my phone so I can listen to you.") Acknowledge what she says, and ask questions to show interest. ("I love mac and cheese, too. Which vegetable goes best with it?") She'll see firsthand what a good listener does.♥

Bedtime routines that work

A peaceful bedtime routine can help your youngster fall asleep faster and get the 10–13 hours of sleep he needs to be ready to learn. Consider these tips.

● **Allow plenty of time.** Rushing through your child's routine may wind him up and make it harder for him to settle down. *Idea:* To avoid protests and delays, give him a 5- or 10-minute heads-up before starting the routine.

● **Set rituals.** Doing bedtime tasks in the same order creates a predictable routine that signals sleepy time. *Example:* Take a bath, put on pajamas, brush teeth, tuck in stuffed animals, listen to a bedtime story. *Idea:* Together, create a bedtime poster where you list the steps and he illustrates them.♥



Social skills for little ones

Learning to get along with other children is an important part of school success at this age. Help your youngster develop social skills he'll use all his life with these strategies.

Practice introductions. To get your child comfortable meeting new people, practice at home. He can start by introducing himself: "Hi, my name is Marcus." Then, he could add a compliment ("I like your dinosaur shirt") or share something he likes to do ("T-ball is my favorite sport. What's yours?").



Idea: Encourage him to pretend his toys are introducing themselves. ("Hello, I'm Hops-a-Lot the bunny. I like jumping games.")

Make a friendship book. Have your little one create a "how-to" guide to friendship. Together, think of important things that friends do, like take turns and share toys. Help him write each idea on a separate sheet of paper, and let him illustrate it. For instance, he might draw himself sharing his favorite toy with a friend. Or he could illustrate friends taking turns while playing a board game. Staple the pages together, and invite him to "read" his guide to you.♥

Q & A Happier goodbyes

Q: My son is clingy and cries when I leave him at school. What can I do?

A: While there's no overnight cure for separation anxiety, it's normal at this age and does get better with time. In the meantime, here's a way to help your child cope.

Start by giving him some control over the situation. Together, make a list of different ways he can say goodbye, and let him choose one each day. For example, does he



want fist bumps, snuggly hugs, or three kisses? Then, follow through with his choice, and try to keep your goodbyes short.

Also, remember that your son's teacher is a great resource for handling separation anxiety. Ask her to share tips that have worked for other families in the past.♥

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www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5567

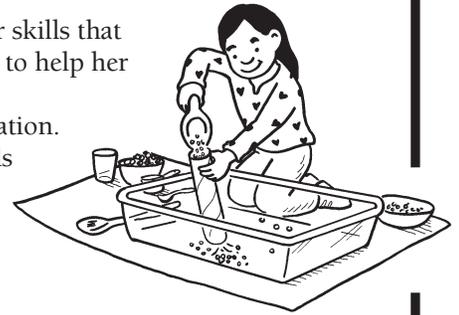
ACTIVITY CORNER

Scoop up some fine motor fun

Scooping and pouring build the fine motor skills that your child needs for handwriting. Here's how to help her set up and use a "scooping station."

Get a shallow box or bin for a mess-free station. Have your youngster fill it with scooping tools (cups, spoons), small objects to scoop (beads, sprinkles), and containers to fill (bowls, pitcher). Then, suggest these five playful ideas:

1. Spoon sprinkles into a muffin tin to make colorful "muffins."
2. Prop up an empty cardboard tube against one side of the box. Scoop up popcorn kernels, and send them down the "tunnel slide."
3. Count how many scoops of dry beans will fit inside a pitcher.
4. Load up a toy truck with pebbles, and "deliver" them to different containers.
5. Scoop various objects into a bowl, and stir them together to make "soup."♥



PARENT TO PARENT

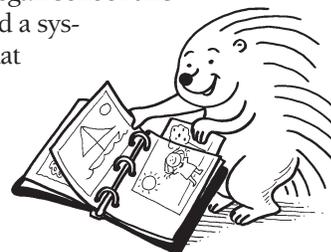
School-day memories

When my older daughter started school, I would display her schoolwork on the fridge, then store it in a bin where it was quickly forgotten. By the time my younger daughter began school this year, I had developed a system for both girls that gives them a record of their progress.

First, I gave each child a binder to decorate. As papers

come home, they decide which ones are "keepers" and put those in the binder. If a project is too big to fit, I let them take a photo of it, and they file the picture in the binder.

Once a month or so, we'll look back through their binders to see how much they're learning. Jamie was excited that she's writing her ABCs, and Sarah was proud that she's doing addition. Both girls can't wait to see how much they'll learn this year!♥



Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2021



BEST BITES

Favorite lunches

Read the school lunch menu with your child, and have her circle foods she'd like to eat this week. Each day after school, let her rate her choices on a scale of 1–5 “apples.” She can draw apples on the menu to remember her favorites. *Tip:* Encourage her to give 1- and 2-apple items another chance. Sometimes it takes a few tries to like a new food.

Active after school

Suggest that your youngster make a list of six active things to do. *Examples:*

1. Hit tennis balls.
2. Run with the dog.
3. Play tag.



After school each day, he can roll a die and do that numbered item from his list. He'll get his heart pumping, and burning off energy will make it easier for him to focus on homework later.

DID YOU KNOW?

When your child chooses whole fruit over juice, she gets more fiber and nutrients—and less sugar. For example, 1 cup of orange juice has almost no fiber and 24 grams of sugar, while an orange contains about 3 grams of fiber and 14 grams of sugar. Suggest that she try at least one new fruit each month, fresh, frozen, or canned in its own juice.

Just for fun

Q: What ingredient works best when it's broken?

A: An egg.



Eat your ABCs

Your child can explore a variety of healthy foods—and his ABCs—at the same time. Eat your way through the alphabet together with these activities.

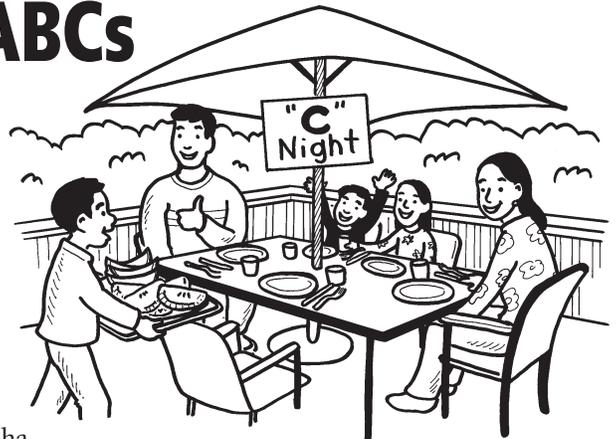
Go on an alphabet hunt

“A is for avocado!”

Help your youngster find new foods to try by turning grocery shopping into an alphabet adventure. In a small notebook, he can list healthy foods for every letter (nectarine for n, quinoa for q). *Hint:* Explain that fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products are healthier than things like cookies and chips.

Plan alphabet-themed dinners

“It's ‘C’ Night!” Let your child pick a letter of the alphabet to plan a meal around. He might decide on whole-wheat calzones made with store-bought dough and filled with chicken, cauliflower, and low-fat cheese, and add a side



of cantaloupe. *Idea:* Encourage him to use the first letter of his name. Eli may be inspired to try eggplant parmesan!

“Write” with snacks

Your youngster will look forward to healthy snacks that he can use to form letters. He could arrange jicama or carrot sticks to spell words or write a short message for you (“I love you”). *Idea:* Look for letter-shaped cookie cutters at a dollar store, and let him use them to cut sandwiches, waffles, and pancakes into words. ♥

My cooking show

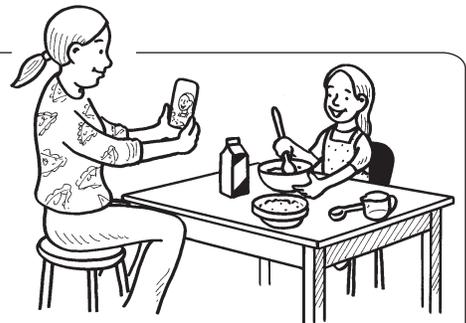
With her very own cooking show, your youngster can teach “viewers” about healthy eating while she practices speaking and presentation skills, too!

1. Ask your child to choose a simple, healthy dish to make, such as tuna salad or fruit skewers.

2. Help her prep ingredients. For instance, you may need to chop celery or open a can of tuna for her.

3. Videotape your youngster while she cooks. She can explain the steps (“I'm stirring nonfat Greek yogurt and celery into the tuna”) and sprinkle in nutrition tips (“I'm going to eat this yummy tuna salad on rice crackers”).

4. Let her share her show with friends—and then make a new “episode.” ♥



Better fast-food choices

Fast food can be a not-so-healthy fact of busy lives. Share these tips with your youngster for making better choices and pumping up the nutrition in a fast-food meal.

Design a healthy combo. Celebrities have fast-food combos named after them—why not let your child create a healthy order named after her? For example, “The Charlotte” might include a grilled chicken sandwich



on a whole-wheat bun with mustard and extra lettuce, tomato, and pickles, along with a side of fruit salad. She'll look forward to ordering her special meal each time you're in the drive-thru.

Share portions. Does your youngster beg for french fries or a milkshake when you get fast food? Consider letting her pick one “extra” for everyone to share—you'll teach her to eat foods like that in moderation. (“We'll take a small vanilla shake with two extra cups, please.”) Or if she wants sour cream on her taco, you could request one order on the side so each family member gets a small amount. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER Take a learning walk

Walking is one of the easiest things you can do to help your child—and your whole family—stay fit. Add learning to your strolls, too, with these themes.

• **Nature.** Count how many types of mammals, birds, or insects you spot. Or see how many flowers of different colors you can find.



• **Storytelling.** Together, make up a story about something interesting you see, such as an antique car, a new hobby shop, or an airplane flying overhead.

• **Shapes.** Let your youngster look for street signs of different shapes. Or he could map out a route in a geometric shape (square, hexagon), using a map or GPS to figure out the path. ♡



Q&A Bring PE home!

Q: My daughter loves PE at school. How can I use her enthusiasm to encourage her to be more active at home?

A: Your child's PE class is a great source of ideas for games and activities she can do outside of school, too.

First, ask her to tell you all about PE. What did she play today? Did she learn a new game or skill, such as scooter ball or tumbling? Let her demonstrate her moves for you—she can delight you with a forward roll or a cartwheel.

Then, suggest that your daughter share some favorite PE activities with your whole family. She might organize a game of “long-distance tag” using pool noodles or show you how to juggle scarves. Your interest will show her that physical activity is important, and she'll discover that she can bring PE home. ♡



IN THE KITCHEN Oatmeal with a twist

These tasty whole-grain breakfasts are not your typical bowl of oatmeal. Let your child help you whip them up for a comforting meal he's sure to enjoy.

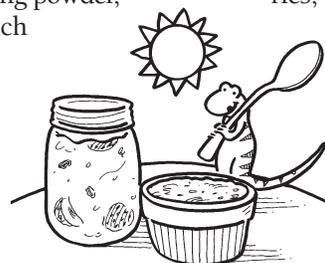
Blended baked oats

In a blender, combine $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rolled oats, 1 medium banana, 1 egg, 1 tbsp. maple syrup, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla, and a pinch of salt. Blend on high into a smooth batter, and pour into an 8-oz. baking dish or ramekin greased with cooking spray. Bake at 350°

for 20–25 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Overnight oats

Mix together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rolled oats, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plain fat-free Greek yogurt, $\frac{2}{3}$ cup fat-free milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla, and 1 tsp. raisins. Stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sliced strawberries, diced peaches, or pineapple tidbits (canned in juice, drained). Pour into a clean jar or similar container with a tight-fitting lid. Cover and refrigerate overnight. The next morning, breakfast is ready! ♡



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Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

ISSN 1935-4630