



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Health & Safety

Beware of product samples

We all like to receive those free product samples, but their distribution through the mail can present a potentially dangerous situation for households with children.

The problem is that small children may get to the mail before their parents—or youngsters may “rescue” discarded samples from the trash.

A package containing five or six cold capsules, a small bottle of tile cleaner or a sample package of razor blades could have tragic consequences if opened by a small child.

If mail comes into your home in a way that toddlers can get at it—through a slot in the door, for example—or if the mail is left where children can reach it, be aware of the potential danger and take appropriate precautions.



Child's Day

Preschool · Kindergarten · Child Development Center

2525 Wallingwood Drive # 100 • Austin, Texas 78746
Phone: (512) 327-3274 • FAX (512) 327-3281

September, 2002

Music

The sound of music

Children love music and every child is born with some musical abilities which need to be nourished and encouraged throughout the preschool years.

Focusing on music in your child's life is not just an investment for future happiness. It pays immediate dividends in the following ways:

- **Play activities.** Children show a natural responsiveness to music—singing, dancing, or listening to nursery rhymes—during their play. A great benefit of music is that it enhances the learning that takes place in play by providing repetition and heightened interest in the activities.

- **Movement songs.** It is important for later school learning that young children develop good perceptual-motor coordination, for example, connecting what they hear with what they do. Movement songs help develop coordination, for example, by improving timing, accuracy, and smoothness of muscle movements.

- **Emotional expression.** Children like to create their own music, sometimes in the form of songs with words that don't mean anything. These songs help them

to express how they feel inside or their need for independence. Their own original songs also help them to express their identity and unique personality.

- **Relaxation and stress reduction.** For centuries parents have used lullabies to sing a child to sleep. Soothing music can also be used at other times to calm a child who experiences stress or who appears tense. For example, a child who becomes restless and irritable on a long journey may quietly drift into sleep with the sound of soft music.

- **Educational dividends.** Apart from the benefits already listed, music has many other educational dividends. For example, through music many mental disciplines such as attention, concentration, and memory are learned.

Favorable exposure to musical experiences during the early childhood years will also help develop a deeper appreciation of good music in later life. □

A sense of order

Here are some ideas to help teach a child a sense of order in her life.

1. Provide for the order of toys and possessions. Make easy-to-reach boxes and shelves available for playthings to be sorted and separated.

2. Provide for the order of space, particularly if you have more than one child and limited area. Decide what goes where—doll corner here, paint and materials there, etc. You will find fewer conflicts when the territory is divided in advance.

3. Provide for the order of time. This will help your youngster learn to anticipate events, to plan them and learn how to postpone what she is currently involved in and do it later.

How do you teach this by providing order of time?

Plan meals at the same time each day; try to have the family eat together. See that bedtime is consistent, as is the sequence leading up to it. A bedtime story helps children anticipate a happy experience.

Well-established habits like

this will make a child's day predictable and secure.

Many families cannot arrange their affairs in such a way that everything is always in its proper place or that everything always happens on schedule. This is a description of the ideal.

A good general rule is to try to get things in their proper place and try to work out a schedule where events in your family's day occur with dependable regularity. This will help your child later as he or she comes to grips with school learning tasks. □

Academics

Learning to compare quantity

An important part of understanding numbers is learning to see differences in amount.

Five-year-olds can distinguish between one and many or between a small amount and a large amount. With time and practice, they learn to put things in order from the least amount to the most. This is the conceptual basis of counting.

Here's a simple game you can play using macaroni pieces, checkers, buttons, or similar small objects. Safety note: Be sure to keep these objects away from children under two years old.

First divide the objects into two piles, one with just a few pieces, the other with noticeably more. Ask him which pile has more, which has less.

Add some pieces from the large pile to the small one and ask again.



Try spreading out the pieces in the small pile into a line while keeping the large pile bunched together in a smaller space. Now ask him which has more.

His answer may surprise you. His thinking at five years old is based on how things look to him. He may answer that the one that's spread out has more since that's how it appears.

Have him count each group; give him help if he needs it. Ask again which group has more.

It will take maturation and practice with this and other kinds of experiences with different quantities of materials arranged in different ways for five-year-olds to learn that an amount stays the same even when it looks different.

Try to find ways in your day-to-day life to give children practice with the words and the idea of more and less. □

I see something...

There are times—waiting in the doctor's office, sitting on a bus—which can be boring.

Here's a game to play anywhere, whenever time drags. It teaches your child how to get information by asking good questions.

Say: "I see something." It has to be something you can both see. Then give a clue: "It's on the table," is an easy clue.

"It's red and square," may be a pretty tough clue.

"It's bright when it's on and dark when it's off," is a kind of riddle. "It's made of leather," is harder.

If one clue isn't enough, add another: "It's red and square and soft." "It's red and square and soft and I'm leaning against it."

Children just starting this game have no good strategy for getting the answer. They look around and guess wildly. "Is it my shoe?" "Is it the box?"

So get your child to pick something ("I see..."). Listen to her first clue. Then ask questions of her that will help reveal your strategies: "Is it up high or down low?" That tells a person where to look.

"What color is it?" "Is it smaller than my shoe?" These questions help narrow the choices.

With a little practice, you can develop your own rules for a game that will entertain you both and help pass the time. □

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 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 him. But let him 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 his or her part and irritation and frustration on yours.

It also gives tots 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 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 both 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. □

MusiKids

music classes
are available at
Child's Day

Ask us about a
free trial session!