



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

## Big or little?

Here's a game you can play anywhere, anytime — riding in the car, waiting in line or at the doctor's office.

It goes like this: Think of two common objects and ask your child which is bigger:

A grape or an apple?

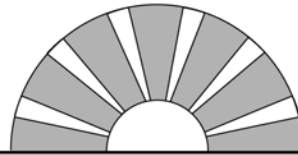
A cat or a cow?

A house or a bicycle?

A watermelon or a tomato?

When this gets old or you can't think of any more objects, switch the game by asking which is littler?

Finally, give your child a turn or two, and be patient at some of the more bizarre combinations he come up with. That's the way kids learn. □



## Child's Day

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## Nutrition

### Make breakfast a pleasant time of day

How can parents get children to eat a wholesome meal and still get out of the house on time?

- Be creative. For toddlers, straws, colorful plastic spoons, a special bowl or a fancy cup can turn a picky eater into a good one.

A little table and chair set up in the kitchen may be preferable to always being under scrutiny where the adults sit.

For infants who can sit up in a high chair finger foods such as dry cereal or scrambled eggs in a wafer cone can keep their hands busy while you spoon in their baby food.

Cups with plastic tops can prevent spills as infants slowly but surely master the important task of drinking from a cup.

Avoid battles by offering a variety of foods and praise any attempts at self-feeding.

- Think small. Little children are overwhelmed by bowls of oatmeal that seem to have no

bottom or a stack of French toast that never disappears.

Small portions of varied foods such as a fruit cup and silver-dollar-sized pancakes will have them licking off the syrup and asking for more.

Allowing even babies to mix their own dish of oatmeal and applesauce increases the odds that they'll finish it.

- Try anything that works. The mother of twins admits, "My girls never did seem interested in a big dinner. So, the next morning I would heat their favorite leftover—spaghetti and meatballs—and serve it to them for breakfast. It worked every time."

Many a toddler eats peanut butter and jelly for lunch and breakfast and one more mother reports that the only time of day her child eats green vegetables is in the morning, "when he's too sleepy to fight about it."

Minimizing food choices in the morning reduces the amount of time you need to stand by the kitchen cabinet while you point to each cereal to a resounding chorus of "No!" □

### Exercises in learning

Around her first birthday, what kinds of thing is Baby now doing on her own?

If you watch her carefully, you will notice she is likely to try to do something in a different manner the second, or at least the third time she tries to repeat an action.

For example, when she discovers the fascination of dropping objects, she doesn't drop the same toy the same way each time. Instead she holds her arm in different positions. She also tries out all possible surfaces for dropping.

This is quite a change from her younger months when she used to do the same thing over and over, like banging an object or shaking her arms and legs to sway the bassinet.

What has happened is that she is no longer so fascinated with the effect she can produce when she

simply makes the same thing happen over and over again.

Her interest has shifted to the world of causes and effects outside herself. She is willing and able to make variations in her actions to learn about the nature of the objects themselves. She has now begun to sort and classify her experiences in a simple way.

Jean Piaget, the noted psychologist, divided a baby's learning experiences into two categories. First, when she has learned a new idea through her experience, she tries it out with a number of variations. She exercises the idea, so to speak. Baby's various ways of dropping an object is not just a one-time occurrence but a predictable happening.

Then along comes a situation where an idea doesn't work. Let's say that Baby is exercising the

idea that she can put objects into a box through a hole in the top. All of a sudden an object refuses to go through the hole—push though she will.

Now comes a tiny crisis. Baby's idea, which has been so stable, suddenly becomes unsettled. She must either reconcile the idea with this new happening or give it up entirely.

Of course, Baby soon learns to modify her idea slightly: All objects will go through the hole except those that are "too big."

This process of adapting an idea to new circumstances is the second category of learning experiences and is really the more important of the two.

By this means, all of us have gained a more highly refined understanding of the world and its ways. □

## Social Skills

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### Getting along with others

A youngster learns how to act with others from family members. But he needs to try out these ideas with other children in order to gain competence and confidence in himself.

With other children, he can work out different ways of acting and reacting that he probably wouldn't risk trying with you or other adults.

He can get practice being the boss as well as being bossed by another child. He can be a leader as well as a follower, a teacher as well as a learner, a caregiver as well as the one receiving care.

With you, your child is limited to certain behaviors that are appropriate because he is a child. With other children his options are more open.

Further, just as parents need time away from a child-centered life, a child needs to get away from the adult-oriented world.

He needs to be with other people whose view of the world and orientation toward life is similar to his own.

He needs to be able to work out satisfying relationships with other children in his own way, at

his own pace in terms of his own needs. This is why "free play" time or recess can be the most important part of children's school day.

If your child is in a preschool program, make sure he's getting some time each day to be with other children in activities which the children themselves structure according to their needs and desires.

Also, try to work out an arrangement with other parents to get your children together occasionally or on a regular basis, to play or go on outings. □

