



Growing Together[®]

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Academics

Arithmetic readiness

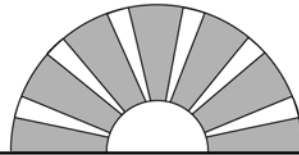
Here's an activity to help a child sharpen her ability to make comparisons: to perceive relationships of one size to another; to order by size; to make predictions and then assess their accuracy.

Materials: 6-10 empty plastic syrup or salad dressing bottles; their screw-on lids; cloth tape to seal the bottles; colored water.

Procedures: (1) Fill the bottles with water at $\frac{1}{2}$ " gradations, that is, the first bottle could have 4" of water, the next 4- $\frac{1}{2}$ ", then 5" and so on.

(2) Ask your child to line up the bottles by the increasing amounts of water. Later you can reverse your request and ask that the bottles be lined up by decreasing amounts.

(3) Include the vocabulary for arithmetic: "Which bottle has the least amount?" "Which has the most?" "Show me the ones that have a lot of water." "Show me the one(s) that has just a bit." "How many bottles are in between?" "Can you count them?" □



Child's Day

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Science & Nature

Discovering nature with children

As she skips down the sidewalk after a rain, your youngster nearly steps on a slinky, pink earthworm. Bending down to investigate, she asks, "Where are his ears?"

Your first reaction may be one of disgust, "Don't touch that!" Or you might feel embarrassed about being unable to answer her question.

But you're pleased at her inquisitiveness and want to encourage her desire to learn.

The way you deal with your child's explorations will shape her feelings about the natural world. Your reactions can tell her that nature is something to fear and avoid, or that it's a source of endless interest and excitement.

Foster curiosity

What can you do to foster a child's innate curiosity about nature? How can you rediscover your own sense of wonder and share it?

Look

In this instance, you might say, "I don't know if earthworms have ears—let's have a look."

Bend down together and spend some time observing in silence.

Your child's original question might go unanswered, but she might notice that one end of the worm's body is more pointed than the other and there's a thick "belt" around its middle.

Touch

If your child wants to pick up the worm, encourage her to be gentle and ask, "What does it feel like when he crawls on your hand?"

Instead of leaving the worm on the sidewalk, suggest that she find a safe place for it in a nearby lawn or garden.

Pretend

Later, at home, you can encourage your child to wiggle across the floor like a worm, or make some earthworms in play dough.

Read

If you're still wondering whether or not earthworms have ears, you may want to visit your local library together to find a book that will help you both with answers. □

Safe, fun outdoor play

As children grow older, they develop physically and socially, learn new physical skills, and change the kind of play they enjoy. This development impacts the safety of play equipment and its appropriateness.

• 18 month to 3 years

This age child plays alone a great deal of time in the sandbox or outside on the grass.

Physically the toddler likes to pull himself up, walk up ramps (holding onto handholds), swing and slide. Play structures should have small steps (3" to 4"), railings and a slide with sides. Swings should be the kind that encircles the entire child.

This age child likes building blocks, fantasy play props (telephones, small cars, tea sets, little table and chairs); these can be used outside too.

Big, light, rubber balls are fun at this age — and sand and water play as well.

• 3-5 years

This age child likes to play with other children. Sometimes they share; sometimes they don't.

They love to balance on a beam, climb steps and ladders, jump, slide, swing, and engage in more complex fantasy and constructive play. They are beginning to play "follow-the-leader" and "hide-and-seek."

Play equipment for the three- to five-year-old includes balance beams, sandbox (with lots of sand toys), platforms, swings, playhouse, slides, fort, areas to hide, large building blocks, and things for dress up: hardhats, lunch pails, purse, shoes, clothes, radio. Basic cubes that can be used for tables and chairs encourage fantasy play.

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Developmental

Constructive feedback

Whether your child has done a good job at something or has failed, try to focus on what it is he's done rather than on him. For example, if he remembers to wipe his feet before coming in, thank him for doing so rather than simply telling him he's a "good boy."

That kind of praise—telling him he's a "good boy"—takes the responsibility away from him and sets you up as judge and jury. It doesn't help build his self-confidence because it makes him too dependent on your judgment.

The other side of the example is that if he were to forget to wipe his feet before coming in the house, tell him you're upset when he does that because then you have to clean it up. Don't tell him he's a thoughtless, sloppy person. Such generalized blame and criticism only causes generalized feelings of guilt and destroys self-confidence. It doesn't teach better behavior.

If you learn to say what you mean and mean what you say, you'll help your child learn from his mistakes and feel good about himself rather than feeling he's a bad person for making mistakes. □

Think: Don't react

When we were children, we vowed we'd never treat our children in some of the ways our parents treated us when they got mad.

Now that we are parents, we find ourselves reacting in many of those same ways we vowed we'd not repeat.

Try to remember how you felt when you were small — how easily you could be hurt and frightened by those you depended on for guidance and comfort.

Try to think before reacting to your child. When you do react in a way you think was unfair or overly harsh, let your child know.

It's helpful for her to see that you too can make—and acknowledge—mistakes. It will build her trust in you, and it may make her more considerate of your feelings in the future.

It's not always easy to behave as we want toward our children. No one can be kind, considerate, fair, patient, and respectful all the time. Try to accept yourself as you are, and do the best you can. Just by trying you will succeed, and your child will learn from your example. □

Born Musicians

Discover the Gift of Song

Ask about
music classes
for your child