Early Childhood Parents make the difference!
Charles City Public Schools
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Show your preschooler how to investigate using five senses

Does your child know about the five senses—*sight, hearing, touch, smell* and *taste?* These concepts are taught in preschool and kindergarten; however, it's never to early to introduce them to your child.

Read a book together about the five senses and then challenge your child to use them to investigate new things. For example, give your child a piece of fruit, such as an apple. Next, ask five questions:

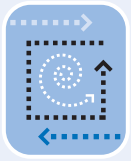
1. **What do you see?** Have your child look at the apple and describe it in words. "It's red and shiny."
2. **What do you hear?** Apples don't make noise, but have your child tap it with a spoon or a finger. What does it sound like?
3. **What do you feel?** Have your child touch the apple and describe how it feels. Is it soft or hard?
4. **What do you smell?** Have your child smell the apple and describe its scent. Does it smell sweet?
5. **What do you taste?** Have your child take a bite and describe the taste.

Encourage your child to connect the senses, too. If the apple smelled sweet, did it taste sweet, too? What sound did it make when your child bit into it?

Have your child choose other types of fruit to investigate using this same five-question method.

While this activity works well with food, it's important to remind young children *never* to put anything into their mouths without permission.

Geography begins with simple maps



The results from the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed that only 25% of students are proficient in geography.

However, studies show that children can and do get interested in geography. One effective way to foster that interest is to start when they are young by focusing on the places that are most meaningful to them.

Teach your preschooler to draw a simple map that includes your family's house and street. The map can be as basic as a square with a triangle on top for the house and a straight line underneath for the road. What matters is that the place that is familiar to your child.

Drawing simple maps like these helps your child think "geographically." A child who draws a map of a house at the age of five may go on to draw the neighborhood at eight and the city at 12.

Source: P. Brillante, Ed.D. and S. Mankiw, Ed.D., "A Sense of Place: Human Geography in the Early Childhood Classroom," *Young Children,* National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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Teach your preschooler valuable skills with the magic of music



There is almost no limit to what preschoolers can learn from music. Music can help them identify emotions—some songs sound happy, others sad. It can also help improve language skills as they learn lyrics.

Music can even help preschoolers identify patterns—a key math skill—as they learn to recognize when the chorus will appear in the song.

To help your preschooler benefit from music:

- **Set aside time every day** to listen to music together.
- **Give your child opportunities** to move to music. This is more fun for children if they have something to wave as they move. Long strips of fabric or scarves work well.
- **Blend music** with other creative activities. Your child could listen to music while painting a picture.
- **Expose your child to rhythm.** Clap your hands in time to the beat and encourage your child to do the same.
- **Make up songs** when doing activities around the house—like picking up toys or getting ready for bed.

> **"Music touches us emotionally, where words alone can't."**
>
> *—Johnny Depp*

Learning lessons of respect prepares your child for school



It's difficult to learn in a classroom where students don't show respect for others. Thankfully, it's easy to teach about respect at home.

Talk to your preschooler about what it means to show respect for people and property. Give real-life examples and find ways to demonstrate it. For example, you can:

- **Draw attention to respectful** behavior when you see it. Thank the person who holds a door open for you. Thank the playmate who shares a book with your child.
- **Be a good role model.** Wait politely in line or elsewhere. Talk to your child about being patient. "I wish it were our turn. But let's smile and play a quiet game while we wait."
- **Watch a TV show** together and discuss the characters' behavior. Who is being respectful? Who isn't? How can you tell?
- **Write a song or poem** about respect with your child. It can be silly, as long as it's meaningful and easy for your child to remember. Recite it cheerfully together.
- **Plan ahead.** If you're going somewhere, ask your child to think of three ways to show respect while there. For example, at the library your child should speak quietly, handle reading materials carefully and put books back on the shelves.
- **Create a collage.** Look through a magazine together and find pictures of people showing respect. Cut them out and have your child glue them onto paper.

Source: M. Borba, Ed.D., *Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids to Do the Right Thing*, Jossey-Bass.

Are you helping your preschooler explore the world?



Preschoolers are just beginning to learn about the world, and they need their parents' help. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're helping your child experience and learn from new things:

___**1. Do you take** your child to new places? Think of destinations that are fascinating, such as an airport or construction site.

___**2. Do you read** new books along with old favorites? Visit the library to find fresh, exciting stories.

___**3. Do you give** your child opportunities to meet new children and socialize? Visit a local playground on a warm spring day.

___**4. Do you take** your child to hear live music or see people playing sports or performing?

___**5. Do you encourage** your child to try new foods? Remember, it may take many tries before he likes them.

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're helping your child learn by doing. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Spring offers preschoolers fun learning opportunities

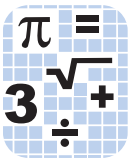


The changing seasons offer many opportunities for preschoolers to investigate and learn. It's easy to engage your child in some fun spring learning activities. Together, you can:

- **Observe the weather.** Talk about the weather with your child each morning before school. Look outside and discuss whether it is sunny, cloudy, windy or rainy. Then, open the door and feel the air. Is it warm? Does it feel chilly?

  Next, talk about how to dress for the weather. Which clothes would keep your child comfortable today? Does your child need to wear a coat or rain boots? Talk about why it is important to dress appropriately for the weather.
- **Grow plants.** Plant a few flowers or herbs in pots with your child. If you have more room, consider helping your child plant a small garden or flower bed.
- **Learn about baby animals.** Many animals give birth in the spring. If you live near a farm or a zoo, consider planning a visit so your child can see some baby animals. If not, ask your librarian for books about animals and their babies. Try *Baby on Board: How Animals Carry Their Young* by M. Berkes.
- **Play outdoors.** Do you know your child's favorite outdoor game? Play it together, even if it is just a quick game of tag or hopscotch. Discuss ways to be a good sport—win or lose.

Show your preschooler that math is a natural part of life



Early childhood is a great time to show children that math is not only fun, it's also a natural part of their daily lives.

Nearly everything children do involves math. For example, when kids get dressed, they follow a sequence. That's a basic math skill.

To promote your preschooler's awareness of math:

- **Look for numbers everywhere.** If your child doesn't recognize numbers yet, point them out. "That big sign has a number 2 and a number 5 on it!"
- **Have a "shape of the day."** In the morning, show your child a shape. "Look at your plate. It is a circle. We're going to have a circle hunt today!" Throughout the day, point out circles where you see them.
- **Look for patterns.** Help your child find patterns on sheets, curtains and clothing. "Your shirt has a red stripe, then a yellow stripe, then a red stripe, then a yellow stripe. That's a pattern."
- **Estimate.** Say, "I think you can finish your sandwich in 10 bites. Let's see." Then help your child count the bites it takes.
- **Sequence.** Preschool children love daily routines and knowing what's going to happen next. Talk about the course of the day. "First, I'll drop you off at preschool. After preschool is over, Grandma will pick you up. Then, you will go back to her house to play."

Q: My four-year-old daughter has a hard time telling the truth. How should I react when she tells me something that I know isn't true?

Questions & Answers

A: Young children are still learning the difference between fantasy and reality. So if your child tells you something that she wishes were true, but couldn't be, it's not *really* a lie. It's practicing make-believe, an important part of her development.

Telling the truth is a quality that a young child develops over several years. To encourage this trait:

- **Model honesty.** Your child may not always listen to you. But she will mimic you. So don't let her catch you in a lie.
- **Tell the truth *for* your child.** You walk into the kitchen and see cookie crumbs on the table. If you ask your child if she was in the cookie jar without permission, she will probably say *no* right away. Instead, supply the truth. "I know you don't want to be in trouble. But there are cookie crumbs everywhere, including on your face. I think you ate cookies. It's OK to tell me."
- **Appreciate honesty.** Pushing your child to tell the truth will backfire if you punish her when she does. At this stage, your child should be praised for telling the truth. Then, calmly let her know what you expect her to do next time.

  Staying calm when your child is honest will also pay off when she is a teenager. At that age, dishonesty can put her in danger. Knowing she can always come to you with the truth helps ensure her safety.

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The Kindergarten Experience

Activities can reinforce key school lessons



Your child is learning so many important things in kindergarten. Keep that learning going at home! Reinforce what your child learns in school by planning activities related to reading, math, history, geography, science and more.

You can:

- **Read and tell.** With your child, choose a book and read it aloud. Afterward, have your child tell you the story. This is an effective way to check understanding and build thinking skills. Ask questions such as, "What happened next?" and "What would you have done?"
- **Play matching games.** Collect similar objects of various shapes and colors. Then have your child match or sort them. "Let's put all the black socks in one pile." "Can you arrange the blocks from smallest to biggest?"
- **Discuss different countries.** Name a country you would like to visit. Find it on a map or a globe. Together, research the country's climate and culture. Plan an imaginary trip, including meals and activities.
- **Observe nature.** Together, make a list of things in nature that you both find fascinating, such as trees, insects, flowers and birds. Together, spend time looking at them, drawing them and describing them. Ask your child, "What do you see?" This simple question may lead to exciting discoveries!

Support your kindergartner's emerging independence

Can you believe there are only a few months left in the kindergarten year? You may be noticing a big change in your child. Many children seem so much more mature after months of kindergarten instruction and responsibilities.

To encourage this new-found independence, expect your child to:

- **Get dressed by herself.** It's OK to help with difficult tasks like buttoning buttons and tying shoes.
- **Clean up after herself.** She should put books and toys away when she's finished with them. She should also keep her schoolwork area neat.
- **Get things for herself.** Provide a sturdy step stool. Store things she needs, like cups for water, in low drawers she can easily reach.
- **Hang up her jacket** and put her shoes away.



- **Help prepare her breakfast** or lunch. She can pour dry cereal into a bowl, get the milk out of the refrigerator and peel a banana. For lunch, she can make a simple sandwich.

Inspire your child to write an acrostic poem about the spring



Looking for a simple project that will give your kindergartner's emerging writing skills a boost? April is National Poetry Month, so why not help your child write an acrostic poem?

An acrostic poem is a poem in which the first letter of each line spells out a word when read vertically. Here's how to help your kindergartner make one:

1. **Write the word *spring*** vertically down the left side of a piece of paper.
2. **Ask your child** to think of spring-related words that start with each of the letters in the word *spring*. For example, *sun* for the letter S and *plant* for the letter P.
3. **Spend time observing spring** together if your child has trouble thinking of words. What does your child see inside? Outside? While doing errands? Bring the poem with you, and help your child write down words.
4. **Have your child** add illustrations once the poem is completed and then share it with family.