

AS THEY GROW

Newsletter for parents of preschool children



University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension Family Living Education

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Dear Parent,

Happy New Year! Raising a child is hard work but raising a child brings its special pleasures, too. Preschoolers have an endless supply of energy and a boundless sense of curiosity. It takes strength and energy to parent a preschooler! However, we know that children don't stay young forever! So, enjoy your child to the fullest and treasure these times together.

This newsletter is for YOU! You will find useful information about the growth and development of preschool children. You'll find articles on food and nutrition, discipline, family activities, and much more.

Enjoy your child!

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CHILDREN'S FEARS

Children have fears about many different things in their lives -- both real and imagined. They need supportive adults to help them gain control over their fears and feel safe and secure. Because children think and understand the world differently from adults, we need to remember that a fear that sounds imaginary may turn out to have a basis in fact. For example, a child afraid to go to bed at night for fear of the monster growling in the closet may actually be hearing noises from outside the house.



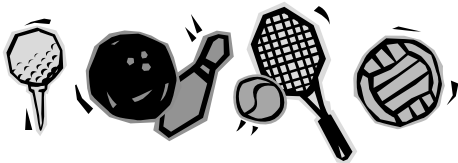
It is important not to get angry or be impatient with a frightened child. Punishing a child who is feeling insecure is likely to increase the child's feeling of fear, not reduce them. Children need to feel confident to seek help and comfort from caring adults. Providing an opportunity for children to talk about their fears may help them to understand them. Young children may need help in putting the fear into words. They may be able to express their fear through drawing pictures or modeling clay.

COOKING AS A FAMILY

Children love to cook and with a little planning, even very young children can be involved in meal preparation. Cooking can increase precious time together. Sharing a common activity is a good way to open and maintain communication. For the very young child, this provides an important sense of contributing to the life of the family.

Here is a list of tasks children can learn to do well at early ages:

- shape dough for drop cookies
- shape meatballs
- slice bananas
- mix muffin batter
- beat eggs
- grease baking pans
- tear lettuce
- toss salads
- open packages
- wipe table
- shape burgers
- wash vegetables with vegetable brush



TOY SWITCH-A-ROO

Sometimes (maybe especially now after Christmas) children have more toys than they can use, or more than there is room for.

When children play with a toy for only a short period of time, or are bored with it, it may be time to put some of the toys away for a while. With a more limited selection, children will learn to be more inventive and resourceful in looking for new ways to play.

From time to time, switch toys from storage to playroom for an ever-changing variety. Your child may help you decide which toys to put away and which to bring out.

THE JOYS OF READING



Most parents enjoy reading aloud to their children as much as children love being read to. Reading together involves sharing warm feelings and can be one of the most peaceful and magical moments of the day. Children whose parents read to them daily learn to pay attention, to remember more details and to formulate questions. Reading also stimulates an early interest in learning literature.

Young children like being directly involved in the reading experience. They may enjoy turning the pages in the book. They may choose the same book to read over and over again. This familiarity with the story increases the child's enjoyment. You may make a game out of reading favorite books by omitting words and letting the child supply them.

Preschoolers are quickly developing language skills. To satisfy their natural curiosity they will ask endless questions. But be patient, you will get to the end of the story! By answering preschoolers' questions, you will be enhancing their intellect. Allow your child to "read" to you as favorite books are memorized. This gives the child a strong sense of accomplishment.



WAYS TO SAY "VERY GOOD"

- ☺ That's right!
- ☺ Great!
- ☺ That's really nice.
- ☺ Keep it up!
- ☺ Super!
- ☺ Good work!
- ☺ I like that.
- ☺ You're very good at that.



TEMPER TANTRUMS

Dealing with tantrums is part of being a parent. Every child has temper tantrums and most outgrow this behavior by around five years of age. Tantrums are usually the result of a build-up of anger or frustration. They occur when children are over-tired, over-stimulated, hungry or don't get their own way. The child may kick, scream, cry, throw himself on the floor, bite, hold his breath and throw toys.

A calm, caring approach in dealing with tantrums will make these difficult times easier. The child does not enjoy it any more than you do!

Ways to handle a tantrum:

- Count to 10 (or 20) before dealing with your child's rage. Approach your child only when you are calm.
- Some children who are having a tantrum are helped by being held gently, or stroked, and spoken to in a gentle voice.
- Some children having a tantrum need to be left alone. At home, you can go to another room until the tantrum stops.
- Remember, tantrums are tough for the child too. Children don't choose to have tantrums and find them scary and exhausting, just like you do.
- After a tantrum, regain the closeness and reassure your child. Spend some quiet time together. Don't talk a lot about the tantrum.

Here are some ways to help prevent tantrums:

- Maintain a regular routine of meals, naps and bedtimes.
- Be clear and simple in the messages you give your child.
- Model using words to express your own anger. "I feel angry when you hit your brother." Recognize, though, that it will be awhile before your preschooler can learn to use words to express anger.
- Be realistic in what to expect from your child. Make sure you don't ask for something the child isn't old enough to do yet.
- Be sure your child is allowed to make some choices. "Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue one today?"
- Listen to your child!



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



Your child is an important person and needs your help to learn and feel confident. There are ways you can talk to your child and help your child feel important and confident. There are many times when a parent must and should say no, but there are many times when you can say something in a positive way instead of a negative way.

Try This:

How fast can you put your shoes on?

How many beans can you eat?

You pick up a block and I'll pick up a block.

Be gentle. Pet the dog like this.

Remember that running is for outside.

Now you can rest and you'll feel better when you wake up to play. Go to bed!

Instead of This:

Put your shoes on now!

Eat your food!

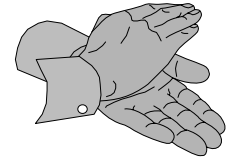
Pick up those blocks!

Don't hit the dog!

Don't run in the house!

WE CAN CLAP

We can clap very quickly	(clap to the rhythm)
We can jump very high	(one big jump)
We can bend and touch our toes	(bend)
And nearly reach the sky.	(stretch)



MANAGEABLE MEALS

Preschoolers learn by watching other people. At mealtime, they see what you eat and are influenced by that. If you enjoy your meals, your child will also come to enjoy meals.

Provide your child with three meals a day and have planned snacks between meals. Children need snacks because their stomachs are small and they need a lot of energy. Structured meals and snacks help children regulate their own eating. With regular meal times, children learn when to expect to eat. This makes it easier on the parent and the child will learn the consequences of their behavior. If the child doesn't eat dinner, they will find out that they will get hungry before the next eating time.

REMEMBER...

As a parent, you are responsible for what and when your child eats and drinks.

Your child is responsible for how much and whether to eat.

You can help your child stay healthy by:

- ❖ Making good food choices
- ❖ Practicing healthy eating habits
- ❖ Encouraging active play every day

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