

Boost Kid's Brain Power

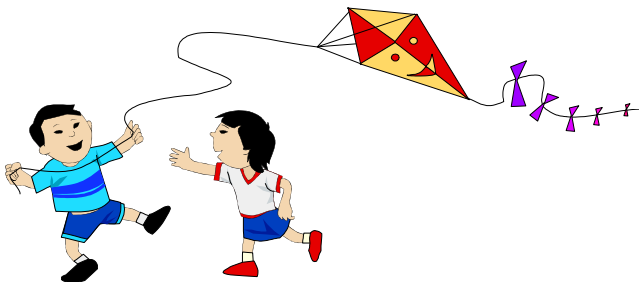
Adapted from Better Kid Care, Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension

Does Your Child Drive You Crazy with "Why" Questions?

You don't want to discourage your preschooler's curiosity, but you can come to really dread hearing "Why?" over and over again. One of the best ways to handle the dreaded why questions is to ask a question back. "What do you think?" Your preschooler's ideas may surprise you, and will often help you understand what your child really knows. Then you can use what your child says as a way to start talking about the topic. Often you discover that what your preschooler wants to talk about is not what was asked about, so take your time to listen before you answer a question—it may not be the real question at all.

Help Learn Problem Solving

All kids squabble from time to time. Instead of struggling to play judge and jury, try something new. Make your children responsible for finding a way to work it out. You will have to supervise to make sure that older children don't take advantage of younger children, but even children as young as three can learn how to solve problems with a brother or sister.



If they are arguing over a toy, put the toy out of sight and say, "You can have the toy when you have figured out a plan to play with it that you both agree to." Most often both of the children want the toy enough that they are willing to work together to get it back. Even young children will work out plans: "She'll play with it for five minutes and then I'll play with it for five minutes." As long as they both agree to the plan, you can give the toy back. If children agree to taking turns, you might offer them a kitchen timer to help. This is a simple trick that really helps them succeed. Sometimes they enjoy using the timer as much as the toy!

Sometimes one child doesn't want it enough to work out a plan and walks away or refuses to talk. If this happens, give the toy to the child who was willing to try to work it out. Say, "Since she doesn't want it enough to talk about it you can use it now."

For reluctant problem solvers you can set a timer. "If you won't work out the problem in five minutes then I'll decide for you." It is always best to make the solution in favor of the child who was willing to work out the problem and less favorable for the child who did not put in real effort to work out the problem. This is a great consequence for not problem solving—kids learn that it is better to work with others than to refuse to try to work things out.

Encourage Your Child's Thinking

- **Restrict viewing of TV or videos and time spent at a computer or playing video games.** Children learn best by doing. The American Academy of Pediatrics is recommending no

television for children under two years and restricted viewing of only one to two hours a day of quality programming for children three and above.

- **Family Game Night.** Some families have a regular Family Game Night each week, for board games or card games. It's fun, makes your family feel close, helps children learn to think, and keeps the TV off.
- **Have a family dinner time regularly.** Talk with your children at the table. Mealtime conversation helps children learn words and can be the most important way to prepare your children for school.
- **Give your children time for play.** With our busy schedules it can be hard to find time to just relax at home, but make sure your child has time regularly for satisfying play time.
- **Read, read, and read some more to your child.** The wonderful world of books will open up to your child with daily reading. Pick stories about things that are interesting to your preschooler.
- **Explore your child's interests.** If you have a child who is interested in trucks, visit a construction site, read books about trucks, talk and wonder about trucks together, and play trucks. All of this helps children learn many things about the world while developing their unique talents and abilities.



- **Ask your child questions such as “What do you think?” or say “Tell me about it,” and**

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really listen to the answers. These kinds of open-ended questions have no right or wrong answer and build great conversation. The answers will also help you understand what your child does and doesn't know.

- **Treat problems as opportunities.** You lost some pieces of a game? Make up a new game. You don't have tape—what else could you use? This makes your children resourceful and good at coming up with fresh ideas.

Let Your Child Make Safe Mistakes and Experience Some Failure

Sometimes we protect our children from failure because we don't want them to be hurt or disappointed, but failure is a wonderful teacher for those brave enough to take the lesson. If your child wants to try out an idea that is doomed to failure, don't stop your preschooler. Let your child create the raft that will sink, or the plane that won't fly. Discovering that it doesn't work is worth far more than a lecture — it's a lasting life lesson. As long as the mistake puts no one in harm's way, let your child learn some lessons from the best teacher, the school of real life.

Encourage Your Child's Thinking

Watch your child—what interests your preschooler?

Listen—really listen—to your child's ideas.

Take what you know about your child to further stretch your preschooler's thinking with conversation and activities.

Source: Parents Count. Better Kid Care, Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension, March, 2005.

This document can be made available in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or audio tape, by contacting your county Extension office. (TTY 1-800-947-3529)

For more information on Parenting and Child Development, contact: Joan E. LeFebvre, Area Family Living Agent, University of Wisconsin, Extension, 330 Court Street, Courthouse, Eagle River WI 54521-8362, 715-479-3653, FAX 715-479-3605, E-Mail joan.lefebvre@ces.uwex.edu December, 2005