

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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John I. Dawes Early Learning Center

Melissa H. Foy, Principal

KID BITS



Win some, lose some

Before you play a family board game, remind your child that only one person or team will win. Then, brainstorm ways to be a good sport whether you win or lose. For example, she might fist-bump opponents or say, "Good game, everyone!"

"I'm bored"

A healthy dose of boredom now and then boosts your youngster's creativity. Instead of rushing to entertain him, encourage him to find ways to amuse himself. *Tip:* Together, make a poster with pictures of things he likes to do. Hang it up where he can check it for ideas when he's bored.

Learning about time

Help your child develop a sense of time as she goes through her daily routine. At home, you might say, "It's 12:00. Let's fix lunch now." In the car, you could tell her, "We'll be home in 15 minutes. That's about how long it takes to read a story."

Worth quoting

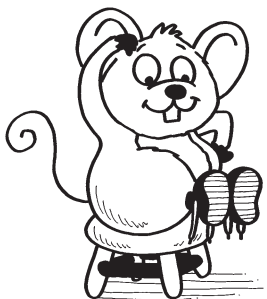
"To see the summer sky is poetry."
Emily Dickinson

Just for fun

Mason: These shoes don't fit!

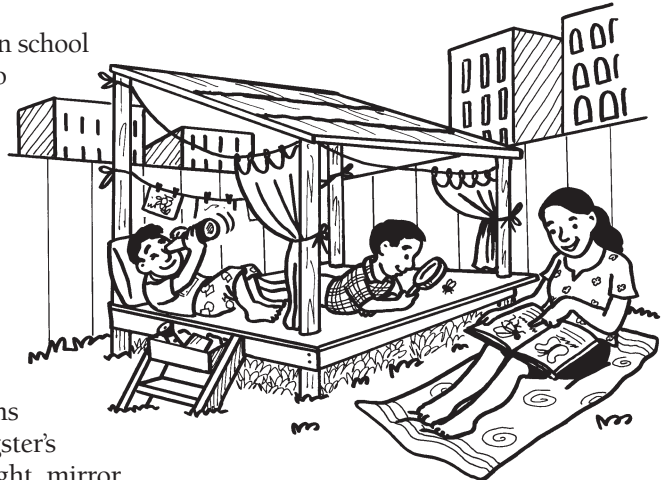
Mom: You put them on the wrong feet.

Mason: These are the only feet I've got!



A wonder-full summer

Caleb learned his ABCs in school this year. Abigail learned to count to 10. And Darnell learned to do science experiments. How can parents help their children remember what they learned—and learn even more—this summer? Try these activities.



Start a curiosity box

Fill a shoebox with items that will spark your youngster's curiosity. *Examples:* flashlight, mirror, calculator, magnifying glass, kaleidoscope. Then, encourage him to explore! He might make a rainbow using the flashlight and mirror, type numbers into the calculator, or examine insects under a magnifying glass. *Tip:* Swap out items regularly to keep him interested.

Make weekly postcards

Let your youngster record an "adventure of the week" on postcards to family members. Have him draw a picture on the blank side of an index card. Then, help him write on the left half of the lined side. Add an address and a stamp.

He might send one postcard to Grandma about learning to ride a scooter and another to his uncle about seeing a fire engine zoom down your street.

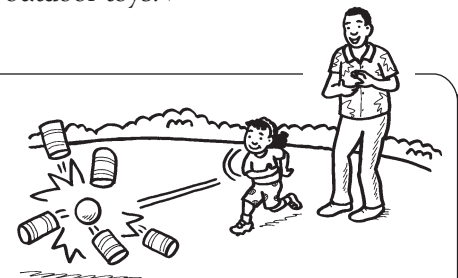
Take imaginary trips

Visit pretend versions of your child's favorite places. Is he a fan of the aquarium? Read books to learn about sea creature habitats, and let him set up a stuffed animal aquarium. If he loves going to the car wash, he might turn on the sprinkler and wash bikes and other outdoor toys.♥

Backyard carnival

Old-fashioned carnival games sharpen your child's hand-eye coordination. Play these versions in the backyard or at a park for some family fun.

- **Water balloon toss.** Help your youngster fill balloons with water and tie them off. Players try to land the balloons in a bucket.
- **Topple the pyramid.** Let your child build a pyramid of empty cans from the recycling bin. Take turns throwing a tennis ball at them to knock them down.
- **Frisbee throw.** Hang a hula-hoop from a tree branch. Family members can toss a Frisbee (or a ball) through the hoop.♥



Everyday wordplay

The more words your child hears and understands, the more ready she'll be to read and write. Try these activities to build her vocabulary.

Connect words. Say any random word (*zebra*), and ask your child to say a related word and explain the connection. (“*Stripes*, because zebras have stripes.”) Now you say a word related to *stripes*—perhaps one you think your youngster doesn't know.



(“*Referee*, because referees wear stripes.”) Keep going for as long as possible—then pick a new word, and play again!

Clap syllables. Have your child point out long words in books and magazines or on signs. Read them together, and clap for each syllable (*spec-tac-u-lar*). Then, tell your youngster what the word means, or look it up in a dictionary together. (“*Spectacular* means really awesome. The restaurant is advertising its *spectacular* ice cream sundae.”)

Solve riddles. Secretly pretend to be something that's related to summer, such as lemonade. Give your child hints to discover your identity, making sure to include new words. (“I am a sweet yellow beverage. I'm made from a citrus fruit. What am I?") Once she figures out what you are, she can choose a “secret identity” and describe herself.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Have a ball!



When your child plays with a ball, he's playing with science, too. Suggest these ideas to help him experiment with force and motion.

Friction

Ask him to try rolling a ball on different surfaces (pavement, grass, sand). Which surface allows the ball to roll fastest? (A smoother surface like pavement creates less friction with the ball than a rougher or bumpier one like grass or sand.)



Force

Have your youngster gently bounce a ball against a wall so that it bounces back to him. Now have him bounce it a little harder, and then as hard as he can. What does he notice? (The more force he uses, the more forcefully it bounces back.)

Energy

Let your child roll a ball into a toy car to make it move. (The ball transfers some of its energy to the car, making it roll, too.)♥

Growing more independent

Some children want to do everything by themselves. Others want help when they don't need it. Ask yourself these questions to strike a balance and foster your youngster's independence.



1. Is it safe? Slicing a banana with a butter knife? Yes. Cutting his meat for dinner? Probably not. You know your child best. If he wants to do something that you feel is safe, let him try.

2. Am I on “autopilot”? Before helping your youngster out of habit, pause to consider whether he could take over. Can he zip his jacket by himself? Shampoo his hair without assistance? Encourage him to do as much as possible for himself.

3. Could I make a suggestion? When your child struggles, offer advice instead of a rescue. (“Your tent might stay up better if you find a way to anchor it to the chair.”)♥

Q & A Work out worries through play

Q: My daughter sometimes acts out scary scenarios when she plays, like getting COVID or taking cover during a tornado. What should I do?

A: It's perfectly normal for children to use pretend play to handle scary things. Because your child is in charge of what happens when she plays, she feels like she has some control over a worrisome situation.

You can offer reassurance by having age-appropriate conversations about

her fears. For instance, explain to your daughter that children don't usually get very sick with COVID. Also, work together to make a plan for scenarios that concern her. For storms, she might put special snacks and toys in a basket to keep in a spot where you would shelter.

Note: If your daughter shows signs of stress, like stomachaches or changes in eating or sleeping habits, talk to her pediatrician.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
 800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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