

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2020



John I. Dawes Early Learning Center

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## KID BITS

### Steps toward independence

Identify parts of your child's morning routine that she could take over, like brushing her hair and pouring her cereal. Help her until she gets the hang of each task. She'll become more independent, and mornings will go more smoothly for everyone.

### Above or below?

Build your youngster's spatial awareness—his understanding of where objects are in space—with this fun activity. Sit back-to-back, and take turns describing what to draw using position words like *above*, *under*, *beside*, and *between*. (“Draw a boy sitting *under* a tree.”) Now turn around and compare your pictures.

## DID YOU KNOW?

You're better able to care for your children if you take good care of yourself—especially during trying times. Try to carve out alone time to relax, maybe to do crossword puzzles or knit. Also, consider limiting how much news you watch or read. And get a better night's sleep by turning off screens at least one hour before bed.

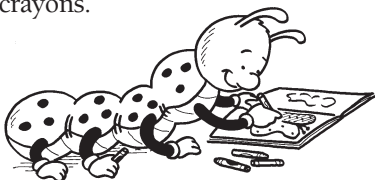
### Worth quoting

“A problem is a chance for you to do your best.” *Duke Ellington*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Which hand is best for coloring?

**A:** Neither. It's better to color with crayons.



## Settling in for a new year

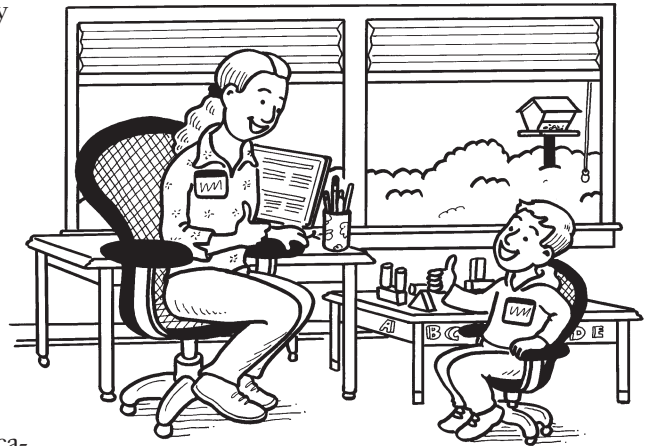
Parents and children may feel uncertain about how this school year will go because of COVID-19. Here's advice for helping your youngster learn and adjust to changes.

**Q:** *How can I keep my child learning on days when he isn't in school?*

**A:** Your youngster learns the most from what comes naturally to him—playing! Set out educational toys like magnetic letters, building blocks, and jigsaw puzzles. If you work from home, invite him to be your coworker. Let him make badges for the two of you to wear, and give him “jobs” (sort office supplies, decorate your work area).

**Q:** *My son struggles with social distancing. What's the best way to explain it?*

**A:** “Social distancing” is a tough phrase for little ones, since learning to socialize is an important part of their development. So try using different language. (“We need extra personal space because



there are extra germs going around.”) Or encourage him to picture himself in an imaginary bubble. Gently say “Bubble” to remind him to keep his distance.

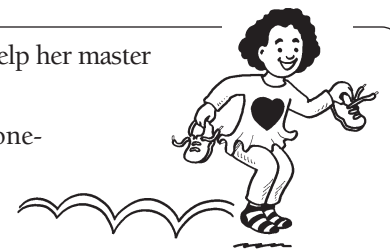
**Q:** *My child misses his grandparents. What should I do?*

**A:** This is a good opportunity to help your child learn about compassion and empathy. Explain that staying away from Grandma and Grandpa is a kind thing to do right now, because older people may get very sick from COVID-19. Encourage him to call his grandparents often, and, if possible, plan online chats so he can “see” them.♥

## School success checklist

Is your little one ready for the school year? Help her master the skills on this checklist to start the year right.

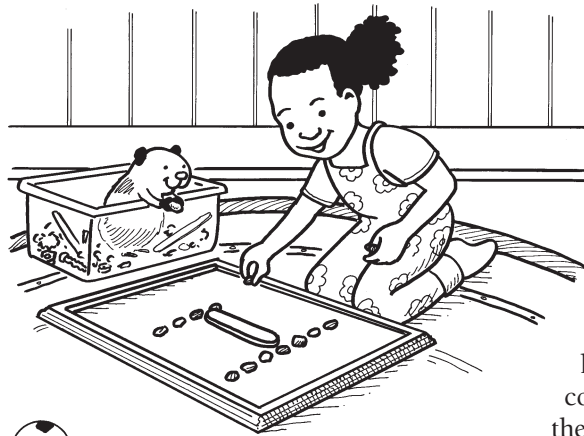
- I can follow directions:** Give your youngster one- and two-step instructions. “Hop to your bedroom, and put your shoes away.” When she masters following two steps, add a third.
- I'm a good listener:** Ask your youngster to close her eyes while you make three sounds (clap your hands, tap a spoon against a glass, crumple a piece of paper). Can she name the sounds in order?
- I take turns:** Encourage your child to spot examples of turn taking, perhaps when your family passes food around at dinner or plays a board game.♥



# Play and learn with loose parts

Nuts and bolts, bottle caps, marbles, and other “loose parts” you have around the house can inspire your child to think creatively and flexibly. Fill a box with loose parts, and try these ideas.

**Frame a picture.** Place a frame (glass removed) on the table, and let your youngster arrange loose parts inside it to create pictures. She



might make a random design, or maybe she'll form letters, numbers, or shapes. For example, she could use pebbles and craft sticks to make the first letter of her name inside the frame. Now she can clear the frame and make a new picture.

**Find the similarities.** Hand your child a loose part (say, a pom-pom). How many other objects in her box match it in some way? Ask her to tell you what they have in common. She may notice a marble is the same shape (round), a block is the same color (red), and a sponge has a similar texture (squishy). Then, put the item back in the box, and let her choose something for you to match up.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

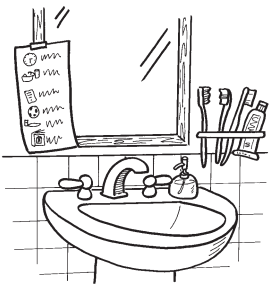
### Make life more predictable

With all the disruptions to our lives this spring and summer, my son Diego became clingy and whiny. My aunt, who raised five children, pointed out that a predictable routine could help him feel more secure.

So together, Diego and I made a picture schedule that showed what we would do each day. We listed items like “Eat breakfast after getting dressed for school,” “Play outside before dinner,” and “Read a bedtime story.”

Diego drew a picture beside each one—a bowl of cereal for eating breakfast, a soccer ball for playing outside, and a book for story time.

We hung the schedule on our bathroom mirror, so Diego sees it first thing in the morning and knows what to expect that day. Life may still be stressful, but having a routine has made things feel a little more normal.♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Get up, get moving

Young children need up to three hours of active play each day to build healthy bodies and minds. Use these activities to get your little one moving.

#### Gallop like a horse

Let your child pretend to be a horse. He can roll a die and gallop forward that number of times. Then, he should roll again. How many gallops does it take for him to get from one end of the room to the other? How about through your whole house?



#### Dance with a balloon

Turn on music, and have your youngster bat a blown-up balloon straight up into the air. Now everyone dances like crazy until the balloon touches the ground. When it lands, dancers freeze in place for a count of five. Launch the balloon, and dance again.♥

## Q & A Introducing ... me!

**Q:** How can I work with the teacher to help my daughter do her best this year?

**A:** Start by writing an email or a note to the teacher. Ask your daughter what she would like you to include—perhaps information about your family or about her favorite things. *Examples:* “Ellie has a baby brother” and “Her favorite color is green.”

Then, add information to help the teacher understand

your daughter’s needs. *Examples:* “She goes to her dad’s house every other weekend.” “Ellie might not always speak up when something is hard for her.”

Be sure to touch base with the teacher throughout the year. From time to time, send an email or a note—both when things are going great and when you have a question or concern. The teacher will be happy to hear that your child enjoyed a book she read to the class, and the regular communication will make it easier to work as a team if a problem arises.♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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