

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2020



KID BITS

A family flag

Let your youngster practice using symbols by making a flag for your family. First, show him an American flag and explain what the parts stand for, such as 50 stars for 50 states. Then on poster board, he could draw symbols to represent family pastimes (a tent for camping, a cake for baking). Hang up the flag for all to see.

Welcome, baby!

A new baby can make an older sibling feel excited, but also left out. Include your big kid by giving her special jobs like bringing you clean diapers and singing lullabies. When you feed the baby, invite your older child to snuggle up beside you—you might have her hold a book while you read to her.

Hand sanitizer safety

It's best for your child to wash his hands with soap and water. But when hand sanitizer is the only option, supervise him to be sure he uses it safely. Dispense it yourself, and have him rub his hands together until they're completely dry so he doesn't get sanitizer in his eyes or mouth.

Worth quoting

Piglet: "How do you spell 'love'?"

Pooh: "You don't spell it ... you feel it." *A. A. Milne*

Just for fun

Q: What has five fingers but is not a hand?

A: A glove.



Decisions big and small

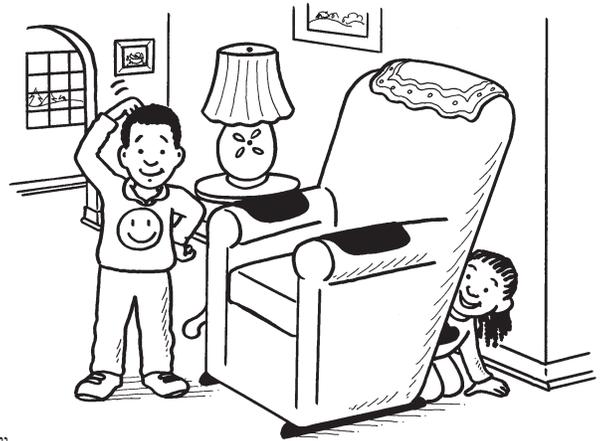
Blue or green shirt? Swings or slide? Daily life brings lots of choices for little ones. The good news is that making all those small decisions now will help your child handle bigger ones later. Try these strategies.

Keep it simple

Offer just two or three options for your youngster to pick from. For instance, ask, "Would you like oatmeal or scrambled eggs for breakfast?" instead of "What do you want to eat?" Having too many choices could overwhelm her—or she may choose something you'll need to say no to (unless cupcakes for breakfast is what you had in mind!).

Be consistent

Set up some decisions that are always up to your child. You'll lay the groundwork for her to consider past choices when she makes new ones. Maybe every weekend, she gets to decide which



playground to visit. She might think, "The one I picked last weekend didn't have swings," so this time she'll want to go to a playground that does have a swing set.

Use games

When your youngster plays games, she gets to experience the consequences of her choices very quickly. Play hide-and-seek, and she'll need to pick a good hiding place or she'll be found. Or play tic-tac-toe, and her decisions will determine whether she blocks her opponent from winning—or wins herself.♥

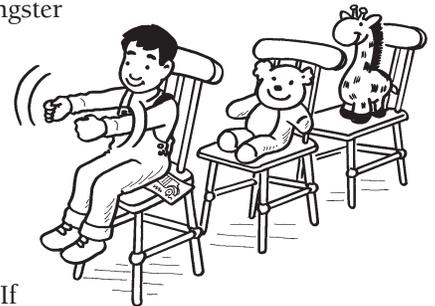
Guess the helper

This role-playing activity lets your youngster learn about community helpers.

On separate index cards, have your child draw pictures of helpers like a doctor, firefighter, and garbage collector. Help him label each card with the person's job title.

Shuffle the cards, and stack them face-down. Take turns picking one and acting out the role for the other person to guess. If your child selects the bus driver card, he could line up kitchen chairs and pretend to drive. If you have the nurse card, you might get a toy thermometer and "check" his temperature.

As your youngster acts out and guesses jobs, he'll learn about what these special people do to help us!♥



S-T-R-E-T-C-H your child's attention span

Zane bounces between his coloring book, trains, and toy piano, barely starting one activity before zipping to the next. Sound familiar?

The attention span of a typical 3- to 5-year-old is 5–20 minutes. And while your child's ability to focus grows along with him, you can stretch it with these tips.

Do:

✔ Let your youngster follow his passions. When he's doing something he's really interested in, he'll automatically concentrate longer.



✔ Limit outside distractions when you want your child to focus. He will be more apt to pay attention to a story if, for instance, the TV is off.

✔ Combine learning with movement, when possible. Your youngster may concentrate more easily if he doesn't have to sit still.

Don't:

✘ Plan activities that require concentration when your child is tired or hungry.

✘ Interrupt your youngster's play if you don't need to. He'll focus longer if he's left to play on his own.

✘ Force your child to pay attention. If he's getting antsy, encourage him to take a break.♥



Q & A

Benefits of pets

Q: We're thinking about getting a pet for our five-year-old son. Is this a good idea?

A: Pets have many benefits for little ones. Your child can learn responsibility when a pet depends upon him for food and attention. And developing empathy and compassion for animals can translate into the same feelings toward people.

To choose a pet, consider your family's needs and lifestyle. For example, a high-energy puppy requires regular walks and lots of playtime. A goldfish is low maintenance, but your son can't play or snuggle with it.



If you do get a pet, teach your youngster to care for it. He could pour cat food into a bowl, refill a hamster's water bottle, or go with you when you walk a dog. Be sure to supervise him as he gets to know his new friend.♥

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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PARENT TO PARENT

Sharing family treasures

Like many families this year, we've had a lot of virtual visits with relatives. During a recent online get-together, my daughter Audrey asked my dad about the horseshoe hanging on the wall behind him. That led to Grandpa telling stories about growing up on a horse farm—and gave me an idea for helping Audrey discover our family history.



Now we ask relatives to share something they treasure from the past. My mother, who was born in Indonesia, showed Audrey pictures of the house she grew up in and talked about how she learned from her grandmother to make satay. She promised to teach my daughter to cook the dish in their next video chat.

Our hangouts have gone from "Hi, how are you?" to meaningful conversations that are teaching Audrey about our heritage. I've learned a few things, too!♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Signs of the season

There's a chill in the air, and signs of winter are everywhere. Use these signs to help your youngster put her scientific observation skills to work. Here's how.

Draw wintry scenes. Back at home, have your youngster draw a picture showing "winter things" she noticed. Then she could sketch the same scene—but this time pretend it's summer.

Take a winter walk. Go for a walk together, and encourage your child to look for clues that winter is on its way. She might spot frost on cars, bare trees, and a person wearing a hat and coat.



Maybe she'll draw cars without frost, a tree full of leaves, and a person in shorts and flip-flops. *Idea:* Ask her what the seasons have in common (sunshine, green pine trees).♥