



Good -ginnings

Early Child Development · Parenting Education · Learning and School Readiness Tips

the Buzz...

The experiences in the earliest years of life are very important to your child's healthy growth and development. For example, recent research has shown that brain development begins right from birth. Good brain development depends on having many chances to interact with the world in interesting and motivating ways.

It is also well known that many of the skills and attitudes necessary for school success develop long before children ever enter school. How your child's physical skills, language abilities, self-control, social skills, and desire to learn develop in the early years will have a big impact on your child's ability to be a good learner.

Your everyday interactions with young children are critical for the development of these important school readiness skills and attitudes. *Good Beginnings* is a series of friendly newsletters designed to offer information, tips, and ideas to help you do your very best in your role as your child's first and most important teacher.



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Language Is Basic To Learning

The way parents and care givers use language in their everyday interactions with their children affects children's learning. Research has shown that children who were most successful in 3rd grade had parents or care givers who, before their children were 3 years old:

- **talked** to them a lot (even when children couldn't yet talk themselves).
- **told** them about things (labeling, describing, comparing, and classifying things) and asked them questions.
- **listened** patiently and closely to what children tried to say.
- more often used a neutral or positive tone of voice.
- gave **choices** as a way to guide children's behavior (for example, Do you want to put on your pajamas yourself or do you want me to help you?).



Your children's ability to think and to express themselves depends on the quality of the language they hear every day. Talk, read, sing, ask questions, and wonder out loud with your children. Listen to what they say. When you do, you help them develop the language they need to learn.

Catch Your Child Being Good!

Don't take your child's good behavior for granted. Let her know you notice and appreciate her good choices. Be generous with your positive attention. Especially helpful is describing what she has done. For example, tell her when she is being helpful, cooperative, kind, thoughtful, or playing nicely. That way she will know clearly what you value about her behavior and will be encouraged to repeat it.

Learning Begins With Play

Play is the main activity of childhood. It is the way children learn about themselves, about getting along with others, and about their world.

Often when we think of young children playing, we picture them with other children. However, children like to play with their parents, too. Enjoying games together strengthens the parent-child relationship and can teach many things.

Here are some suggestions of play activities to enjoy with your children that help them learn. Remember to play these games or any game only if it is fun for both you and your children. *(continued)*

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• Turn on some music or pull out one of your favorite dance tapes. Encourage your children to move to the beat or mood of the music by doing so yourself. Dance together to fast music and slow music. Clap your hands. Stomp your feet. Use your children's natural love of music to improve his muscle tone and coordination, to expose him to different kinds of music and rhythms, and to just have fun together.

• Collect different sized plastic containers with lids that are easily taken on and off (for example, empty margarine, yogurt, or sour cream containers). Remove the lids and then ask if your children can help you find the lid that fits each container. Most children like to make things fit together. Let your children experiment and make mistakes. Use words to describe why some lids fit and some don't (for example, bigger and smaller, alike and different).

Games that match shapes and sizes help increase skills your children will need to be able to tell the difference between letters. Also, snapping lids on containers gives children practice controlling the small muscles in their fingers and hands needed for writing.

Make time to play with your children. You will learn about them, they will learn about you, and you will be helping them to grow.

Getting Off To A Good Start

Crying in the baby world is called communicating. Because babies have not developed their language abilities, they have no other way of telling us clearly what is wrong. If you think it's frustrating for you to try to figure out what's wrong, imagine how they must feel!

Babies cry for a number of reasons. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to tell why. Still, it's very important to comfort your baby. It helps him feel secure and loved. Research tells us that these feelings are important for infants, healthy brain development. We also know that many infants cry less as they learn to trust that their parents will respond quickly and with sensitivity to their crying.

Sometimes no matter what you try, nothing seems to work. Stay calm. Be patient. Ask for help. If you are alone and feel like you are losing control, place the baby in a safe place and step out of the room for 1 or 2 minutes. Remember that it will not always be this way. In time and with your help, your infant will be able to communicate more clearly what he needs.

- need love
- scared
- hungry
- wet
- uncomfortable
- lonely
- hurting
- "hello, I'm here."



Guidance For The Very Young

Are there times when your toddler tries to play with things he shouldn't? Very young children cannot remember rules or warnings for more than a few minutes. Their need to explore often gets them into trouble. How do you keep them safe without destroying their natural curiosity?

For children with a short attention span, use a technique called "distraction." When your child is doing something you don't want him to do, find something else to get his attention (for example, a favorite toy or a game he

enjoys). He'll soon forget his original idea, and focus his attention on the new activity.

Using distraction lets you keep things positive with your child. It doesn't make you or your child feel bad. It will save you from having to raise your voice and will decrease your stress. And it is a first step in teaching children the self-control skills they will need as they grow.

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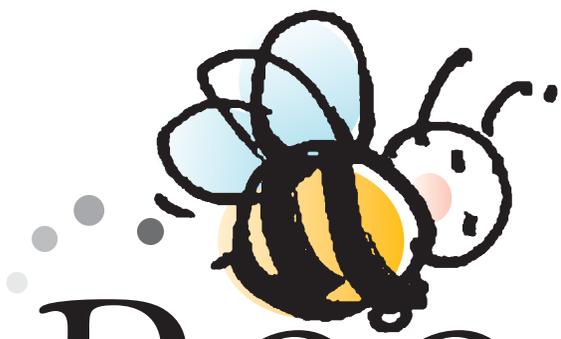
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