

10 Tips for Parents*

Be Warm and Loving. Your child will feel safe, secure and trusting.

Look and listen for your child's cues. Even before a child talks, her sounds, movements and expressions tell you a lot about how she feels and what she wants.

Talk, sing and read to your child every day. These activities help your child's brain grow. It's okay if it's the same song and story every day.

Do things the same way over and over again, especially at bedtime. Routines are reassuring to children, especially if they are pleasant.

Let your children explore, as long as they are safe. Children learn by playing and exploring.

Limit television to two hours per day. Watching too much television wires the brain very differently and makes it harder for your child to do other activities. Watch with your child and talk about what you see.

Use discipline as an opportunity to teach and be consistent.

Understand that each child is one-of-a-kind. Your child needs to know you love him/her just the way she is.

Choose quality child care and check up on your child regularly.

Take care of yourself. Your child needs you.

SUCCESS BY 6

Helping all children succeed for life.

Whether your child is 2 weeks or 10-years-old (going on 21!), you have a special relationship that is very unique. Parents are a child's caregivers, guardians, spiritual advisors, tutors, chauffeurs, coaches, teachers, and so much more. You've been through the process of planning and preparing for this child, and may have already experienced many parenting milestones. Now, regardless how far along you are in your parenting journey, you can gain new strength in praying for your child.

God's strength is available to you each and every day. Praying for your child will make a difference in her attitudes, the friends she chooses, the choices she makes, and ultimately, her salvation experience. Here are some simple guidelines for praying for your child. Adapt them to your own style, and make your prayers personal for each child.

- Your child is God's gift to you. Thank Him for this gift. Tell God what you are thankful for in parenting, whether it is a baby's smile or giggle, or a preteen's expanding independence.

- You don't have to have a long devotional time with your child, but make an effort to make interaction with God a family affair. Read Bible stories together, and pray according to your child's age and maturity level.

- Teach your child to pray as he goes. Model praying in everyday situations — in the car, when supper is burning, when a family member is sick or in the hospital, before a ball game. Your child will learn that he doesn't have to be on his knees to talk with God. 😊

Praying for Your

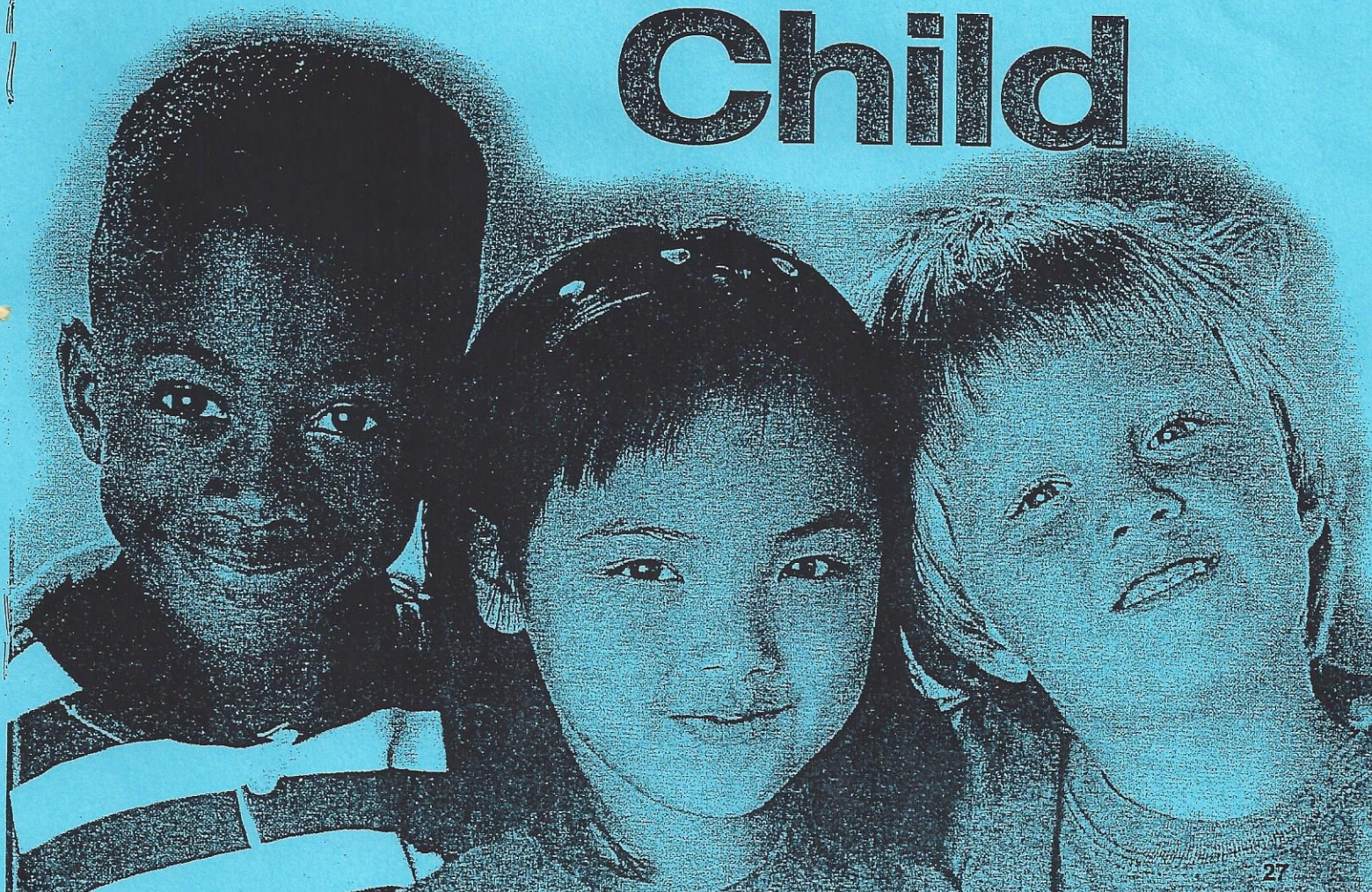
Child

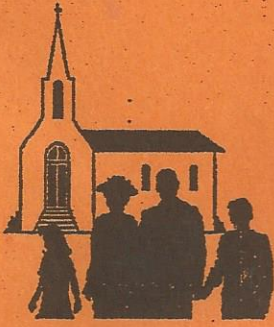
A Parent's Prayer

Dear God:

Thank you for the gift of children. I love how my children laugh and love life with every ounce of their being. Please help me to be enthusiastic too, about life, family, and You. Help me to share with my children how much You love us and care for us each day. I pray that (insert child's name) will be safe and happy today, as she plays with her friends and interacts with others at school. May our family be a safe haven, and a place where our children feel confident that they are loved, respected, and treated fairly. Give me patience when parenting is hard, and help me slow down enough to enjoy the wonderful moments parenting brings.

Amen





What It Means to Be Born Again

Parents, God has given you the responsibility of guiding your children's spiritual growth. In order to best accomplish this task, your own personal born-again experience is important. If you have not accepted Jesus as your Saviour or if you need to refresh your memory about what the Bible says about how to be born again, read and study the following Bible verses.

1. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Everyone is a sinner; there are no exceptions.

2. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Death means separation forever from God and His love through Jesus Christ.

3. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

God loves us sinners so much that He gave His Son to die for our sins.

4. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

To be born again, you must believe that Jesus died for your sins, and state publicly that you accept Him as Lord.

5. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

This is God's promise to you that if you accept Jesus as Lord, He will accept you.

After having read and studied these Bible verses, you may have additional questions about what it means to be born again. If so, contact the person or church that gave you this magazine. Christian friends are praying for you and your family that you may come to know Jesus as your personal Saviour.

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ALPHABET FOR BOYS AND GIRLS*

Act kindly.

Obey your parents.

Be honest.

Pray often.

Care about others.

Quit anything that is wrong.

Do your best.

Read the Bible.

Enjoy God's world.

Share what you have.

Forgive quickly.

Tell the truth.

Go to church joyfully.

Use your time well.

Have time to learn well.

Visit the old and the sick.

Invoke others to church.

Work cheerfully.

Join in family worship.

EXcel in doing good.

Keep trying.

Yield (give) yourself to God.

Love God with all your heart.

Have **Z**eal for the right.

Make many friends.

Notice ways to be thankful.

*Taken from Bible ABC Book

Fine Motor Skills A Developmental Checklist

Between Ages of Two and Three:

- Imitates circular scribble and horizontal and vertical lines
- Builds a tower of 6 blocks
- Holds crayon with thumb and fingers (*not fist*)
- Snips with scissors
- Puts tiny objects in small containers
- Folds paper in half
- Pulls toys with strings
- Strings 1 to 4 large beads
- Uses a spoon
- Turns single pages of a book
- One hand begins to be dominant
- Paints with some wrist action
- Pounds, rolls, pulls, and squeezes play dough

Between Ages of Three and Four:

- Builds a tower of 9 blocks
- Snips with scissors
- Completes a 5-6 piece puzzle
- Holds a crayon with three fingers
- Copies a circle
- Copies vertical and horizontal lines
- Draws a person with a head
- Uses a spoon and fork with little spillage
- Opens rotating door handles
- Strings 1/2 inch beads
- Traces a square
- Unzips separating zipper; zips and unzips non-separating zipper
- Unbuttons large and small buttons
- Identifies body parts

Between Ages of Four and Five:

- Builds a tower of 10 blocks
- Strings 1/4 inch beads
- Scissor skills improved - cuts on lines and cuts simple shapes
- Copies a cross and a square

- Can independently button and unbutton
- Laces shoes
- Uses dominant hand with better coordination
- Able to do 6-10 piece puzzles
- Can print some uppercase letters
- Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
- Holds writing tools with three fingers - control increasing
- Dresses and undresses independently - managing buttons and zippers
- No longer switches hands in the middle of an activity
- Builds a 6 block pyramid

Between Ages of Five and Six:

- Bounces and catches balls
- Builds a tower of 12 blocks
- Can build 3 steps from 6 blocks
- Draws angles, triangles, and other geometric shapes
- Draws a complete person with a head, body, legs, arms, and a face
- Can color within lines
- Cutting skills improved - can cut along lines and can cut out a circle
- Holds a knife in the dominant hand
- Copies first name
- Has mastered an adult grasp of a pencil
- Hand dominance is well-established
- Can use paste and glue appropriately
- Prints numerals 1 to 5
- Enjoys working with a variety of mediums: paint, clay, glitter, chalk, glue, etc.
- Begins to tie shoes
- Can "sew" lacing cards
- Completes a 12-15 piece puzzle
- Learning how to print upper- and lowercase letters

HOW DO I LEARN JUST WHO I AM?

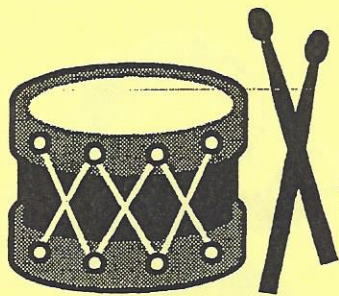
I learn from you who I am.
Within your eyes I see
reflected me.
Within your voice I hear
how you see me.
You are the mirror that I look into
and mold the image of myself.
I sense the way you hold me,
and from your touch
I feel my form, my shape.

And if I like what I see in
your eyes,
your voice,
your touch-
My heart responds and reaches out.
Then in its reaching, grows and grows,
until I see myself
as separate.
That separate self-in turn-
can love you back.
Because you taught me
who I am,
and I am loved.

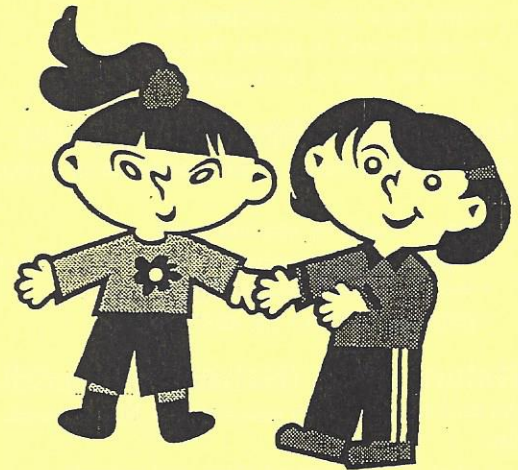
Listening to the Littlest by Ruth Reardon



How Many Ways Can My Child Be Smart?



1. Why does my child talk so much?
2. Why does my child move constantly?
3. Why does my child like to play alone?
4. Why does my child constantly beat on everything?
5. Why does my child talk to everyone?
6. Why does my child fill his pockets with nature items?
7. Why does my child want to know how everything works?
8. Why does my child remember where things are in the house?



Have you ever asked questions like these about your child? Are you sometimes frustrated about the way your child does something?

Good news has arrived! God created each person with a unique approach to learning. Eight different ways or approaches to learning have been identified. Each person possesses all eight ways of learning but usually is strong in two or three.

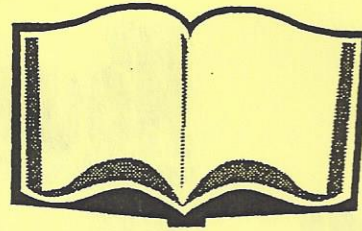
As parents, what can you do to help your child learn? Celebrate your child's strengths and encourage his weaknesses. As your child grows older, his ways of learning may change. On the next page are brief explanations of each way your child can learn. When you finish reading about the different learning styles, reread the eight questions above and try to match each question with an approach to learning. The answers are at the end.

Word Smart (Verbal/Linguistic)

A child who is word smart learns best through words.

He

- likes to read (or be read to).
- enjoys writing (or dictating).
- loves to talk, tell stories, tell jokes, and play word games.
- may have a large vocabulary.

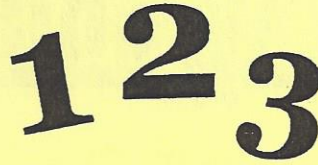


Number Smart (Logical/Mathematical)

A child who is number smart loves solving problems.

She

- enjoys working with numbers, puzzles, and games.
- likes to find patterns in the world.
- loves to ask questions.
- can reason through difficult situations.



Picture Smart (Visual/Spatial)

A child who is picture smart thinks in images and pictures.

He

- enjoys art and creating.
- likes to use his imagination.
- may seem to know where everything is in the house.
- can understand more from pictures than words.



Body Smart (Bodily/Kinesthetic)

A child who is body smart uses her entire body.

She

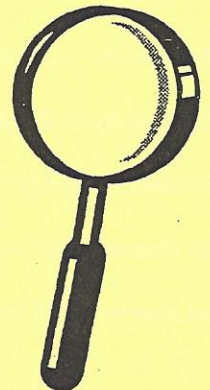
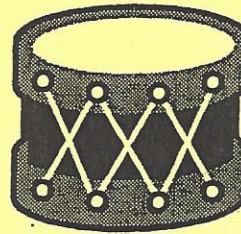
- cannot be still even when telling a story.
- may have good coordination.
- may do well in sports, dance, or drama.
- may be able to do things with her hands.

Music Smart (Musical/Rhythmic)

A child who is music smart is sensitive to rhythm and melodies.

He

- sings, hums, or whistles tunes.
- enjoys listening to music and is sensitive to rhythm and pitch.
- moves to music and creates rhythms.
- plays instruments (or anything).



Nature Smart (Naturalist/Scientific)

A child who is nature smart enjoys God's world.

She

- likes to take care of plants and animals.
- enjoys learning about and identifying plants and animals.
- collects objects from nature.
- enjoys being outdoors.

People Smart (Interpersonal)

A child who is people smart is a "people person."

He

- makes friends easily.
- may be a good talker.
- recognizes the feelings of others.
- enjoy playing with a group or in group games.



Self Smart (Intrapersonal)

A child who is self smart often chooses to be alone.

She

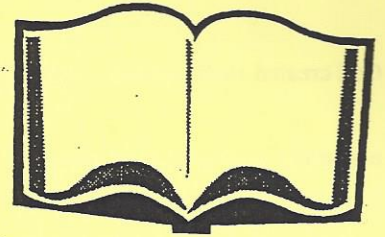
- understands who she is and her feelings.
- has a sense of independence (or strong will).
- prefers to work by herself rather than with a group.
- has a strong self-concept.

Ways My Child Is Smart

Determine your child's approach to learning. Check the statements that apply to your child at this time in each category.

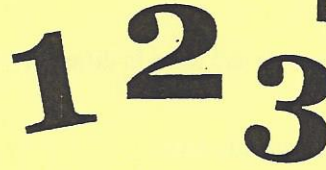
Word Smart

- Enjoys reading or looking at books
- Enjoys writing or dictating
- Enjoys hearing and telling stories
- Memorizes stories or poems easily
- Enjoys playing word games and learning new words



Number Smart

- Enjoys counting and measuring
- Enjoys computers
- Asks many "how" and "why" questions
- Notices patterns and puts things in order
- Experiments with cause and effect ("What if _____?" statements)



Picture Smart

- Enjoys activities such as scribbling, drawing, and painting
- Likes playing with sand, Legos, or other building materials
- Enjoys taking apart and putting together machines and toys
- Has the ability to find his way around a neighborhood, store, or church
- Enjoys looking at pictures

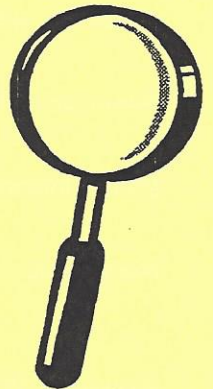
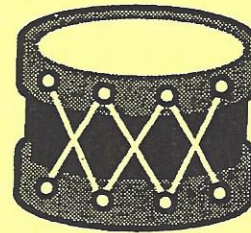


Body Smart

- Loves being outdoors
- Enjoys clay and finger painting
- Likes to "ham it up" in skits, plays, and at home
- Finds it difficult to sit for very long
- Enjoys sports, dance, gymnastics, and other types of movement

Music Smart

- Bangs rhythmically on toys, furniture, and other objects
- Loves listening to music
- Enjoys making up own songs
- Shows interest in playing musical instruments
- Makes tapping sounds or sings songs while working and playing



Nature Smart

- Enjoys being outdoors
- Collects objects from outdoors
- Enjoys taking care of plants and pets
- Wants to learn the scientific names of plants and animals
- Enjoys nature shows on television

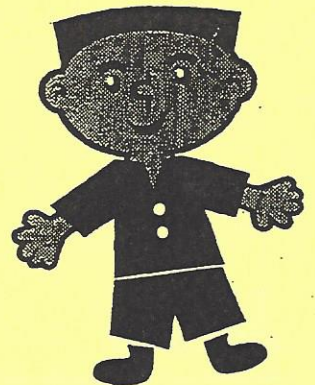


People Smart

- Makes friends easily
- Enjoys meeting new people—even strangers
- Enjoys playing with friends
- Wants to help someone who is hurting
- Notices moods and feelings of others

Self Smart

- Enjoys being alone
- Prefers working alone on a hobby or other activity
- Self-reliant and independent
- Needs time to adjust when routines are being changed
- Understands own feelings



Now What Do I Do?

God created each child as a unique individual. Encourage your child's strengths as well as her weaknesses. Provide many experiences to encourage each way of learning.

God created each person to be unique and learn in different ways. Jesus used a variety of learning methods to reach people. Examples in the Bible relate to the different ways people learn.

- Solomon, who was known for his writings, is an example of a person who was word smart.
- Paul was math smart. He used logic to reason with his readers.
- Ezekiel acted out many of his prophecies and could be considered body smart.
- John was picture smart as he used vivid images in his writings.
- David, a writer of psalms and songs, was music smart and nature smart. Many of his psalms dealt with nature.
- Barnabas, "the encourager," was people smart because of the way he related to people.
- Mary, Jesus' mother, is an example of a person who was self smart. She spent much time in personal reflection as she "pondered" events that had happened.

Many books have been written about learning styles. Check your local library or bookstore for books by Howard Gardner, Thomas Armstrong, and Cynthia Tobias. Books by these authors contain interesting information about the ways children and adults learn. *Sunday School for a New Century* by Lumpkin and Sanders and *Teaching Preschoolers: First Steps Toward Faith* by Sanders and Bradberry also provide information about approaches to learning. Both of these books are published by LifeWay Press and available at LifeWay Christian Stores. Read more and discover your own personal learning style. God made you and your child. You are both unique and special!

Answers: 1. Word Smart; 2. Body Smart; 3. Self Smart; 4. Music Smart; 5. People Smart; 6. Nature Smart; 7. Math Smart; 8. Picture Smart.

IT LOOKS LIKE PLAY BUT WE ARE LEARNING:



to work and play together
to respect the rights of others
to listen as well as speak
to express ourselves creatively
to grow in self-control
to grow from dependence to independence
to listen to directions and to follow them
to develop good working habits
to finish what we start
to clean up after worktime
to participate in group activities
to enjoy using a variety of materials
to share toys, equipment and experiences
to dramatize stories and experiences
to develop an interest in books
to develop an interest in the world around us
to improve muscular coordination
to stay with plans for increasingly longer periods of time
to develop new interests and extend old ones
to understand new words and be able to use them
to be happy





Raising mission-minded kids

by Brent Rinehart

There are a few lines in Tim McGraw's song "Humble and Kind" that I really love: "When you get where you're going / Don't forget turn back around / And help the next one in line / Always stay humble and kind."

We all want our kids to grow to be humble, kind and focused on others. We want them to be mission-minded. As we see the state of the world—the hatred, violence and evil that exists—we realize the importance of raising our kids to care more about others than themselves. They are, after all, the next generation of leaders in our country.

But are we doing what is necessary on our end to see that come to pass?

Not too long ago, I was going through some old user manuals in my file cabinet. I came across a thick booklet of instructions for an old baby backpack we had. As I thought about it, though, I could not understand why such an in-depth manual was necessary. It is simple: you take the baby, you put him or her in the backpack, and you put on the backpack. Easy as 1-2-3.

We tend to over-complicate everything, and perhaps the same could be said of our parenting. Maybe it is as simple as turning to the Bible for the best advice on this topic. Our mission as parents is spelled out pretty clearly: Love God with everything you have, and teach your children how to do the same.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command

you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7 ESV).

With our children, we should talk constantly of God, His love for us, and our response to that love: when we rise, before we sleep, when we are in our homes, and when we are outside our homes. This teaching is not reserved for Sundays only.

But it is not all talk. As parents, we must live in a way that encourages our children to ask questions about why we do what we do. Deuteronomy 6:20 says that in time our children will come to us and ask, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?" In other words, if we are living faithfully, keeping this great commandment of loving God as we should, our kids will ask questions.

The life of a mission-minded Christian should look different. We should be a little strange when compared with the world. And our kids should want to know why. If they do not, perhaps we are not doing our part to make God real to them. It starts with us as parents. Our kids are watching. They are learning by seeing what we do, not just by hearing what we say.

What is the secret to raising mission-minded kids? It is no secret. It starts with being mission-minded parents. *



* Brent Rinehart is a PR practitioner and freelance writer. He blogs about the amazing things parenting teaches us about life, work, faith and more at apparentstuff.com. You can also follow him on Twitter at www.twitter.com/brentinehart

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Language Development of a Preschooler

Tonya R. Rodgers

Involvement parents want to provide their preschoolers with the positive stimulation necessary for healthy development. One area of prime interest is language.

Language is communication. It is the basis of all learning and relationships. How children learn, and the extent of what they learn, depends primarily on the language they acquire from birth to eight years of age. At these ages, when parents have more influence on their little ones than anyone else, they have a tremendous responsibility of teaching their preschoolers to communicate.

Each child is unique, and develops in his own time and on his own built-in schedule. With this in mind, look at the "guidelines" of "average" language skills development at various ages.

BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS:

An infant grows and changes daily,

**Keep in mind that
each child is a
unique individual
who develops in
his own time and on
his own schedule.**

so this period is very important. Generally, at six months, a child begins to coo, gurgle, and babble for attention. He also responds to loud or new sounds.

At eight months an infant responds to his name, notices an object changing from one hand to another, and waves "bye-bye."

An infant uses "mama" and "dada," plays peek-a-boo, and shouts for attention at 10 months. He also babbles as if he is really talking. In addition, he understands "no" and "give me that."

At 12 months he learns two or three new words other than "mama" and "dada." He begins to associate a word with an object. For example, he realizes that when he says "baba," he will be fed.

Tips and Activities:

- Respond to those coos and gurgles.
- Talk to your child about every-

thing that is around him. Name things, and bring attention to loud or new sounds. (By doing this you will teach him new words.)

- Talk in simple sentences, but don't use baby talk!
- Praise him often!

ONE TO TWO YEARS

A young child waves bye-bye, scribbles with a crayon, and follows one step commands at 14 to 16 months. A child should be able to demonstrate the concepts "up" and "down," and make at least five animal sounds.

At 18 months a child's vocabulary may be anywhere from 15 to 20 words or more. These are words such as "more," "juice" and "cookie." A child begins to associate voices and pictures with names. A child will be able to point to what she wants. It is important that each of these skills be mastered, because one skill builds upon another.

Tips and Activities:

- Encourage age appropriate skills.
- Flip through a magazine and name and talk about what you see.
- Read colorful books.
- Encourage creative play. (Make believe with a doll or puppet)

TWO TO THREE YEARS:

A child understands questions and simple commands at two years of age. A child also begins to listen to the meanings of words. She will be able to name her body parts, and create two word sentences. For example, a two-year-old may say, "more juice" or "me go." At two, a child may have a vocabulary of 300 words. A child ideally should sit still and listen to someone read a book for about six minutes without losing interest or being squirmy.

Usually a two-and-a-half-year-old has a 450 word vocabulary, matches colors, and knows her name and age. She should also be able to control her behavior physically and verbally.

Tips and Activities:

- Talk about everything she sees and

experiences.

- Read simple books that last about five to six minutes,
- Ask questions to extend her sentence length. Don't let her get away with pointing at something. Make her say, "I want the doll."
- Carry on a conversation with her, and be a good listener. (Look at her,

How children learn, and the extent of what they learn, depends primarily on the language they acquire from birth to eight years of age.

nod appropriately. This is body language she needs to have modeled for her.)

- Praise, love, and encourage her daily!

THREE TO FOUR

At this age, a child should be creating three to four word sentences. He will recite simple nursery rhymes, draw a line, a circle, and sing simple songs. Preschoolers know the numbers 2, 3, and 4. They should stay on a task for around 8 to 10 minutes.

Tips and Activities:

- Teach him simple songs and nursery rhymes. This activity helps to sharpen his memory skills.
- Begin reading longer stories.
- Have him retell the story.
- When he colors, have him tell you the color he is using. Focus in on the basic colors, such as red, blue, green, and yellow.
- While he is playing, eating, or bathing, teach by demonstrating con-

cept words like empty, full, more, less, in back of, and in front of.

- When you are driving down the road, count all the cars you see. Pay special attention to see if he can count at least to five.

FOUR TO FIVE

At this age, your preschooler can identify colors and shapes upon request. The four-year-old usually asks many "who, what, and why" questions. This is a basic step which later enables her to answer these "who, what and why" questions. She usually talks in four to five word sentences. Past tense and contractions are used at this age. Preschoolers should also be able to stay on task for about 11 minutes.

Tips and Activities:

- Encourage role play and pretend situations.
- Teach and allow your child to use the phone.
- Read longer books.
- Put her in charge of a simple chore.
- Let her be a part of planning her next birthday party.
- Emphasize and teach concept words like "backward," "forward," "beside," "bottom," "short," "fat," "long," "most" and "least."
- When retelling a story, stress words such as "first," "second," "third," "next," and "last."

These skills may not seem like much; however, each step is a building block for what is to come. For instance, the concept words are very important because when your child gets to school, the teacher will use these words in giving instructions. Realize that children are unique and the above guidelines are just that—a guide! Some children will master these skills before a projected date, and others shortly after the appropriate age. Support and celebrate your child's uniqueness!

Tonya R. Rodgers is a speech therapist currently working on her masters of education.

No one prepares mama for the first day of preschool.

Volumes have been written on preparing your child for the first day of school. Too bad no one prepares mama.

Putting my career on hold to raise a child never bothered me—I knew the day would come when my youngster would begin school and I would again be free to resume my life. But somewhere along the way, that notion changed. I began to enjoy being a mother.

One night after dinner, my husband said to me, "Don't you think it's time for B.J. to start preschool?"

What? B.J. was only a baby! "I'd like to wait until he can tell someone he has to go to the bathroom," I answered.

"He's been telling you for a year and a half now."

"He's *only* three. . . ."

"Yes, but I don't think they'll accept him when he's 15."

My husband was right. If we were going to send our son

The first day of school arrived. I wasn't ready for this, but I refused to let my doubts show. I kept telling myself B.J.'s ready, and that's what's important.

As we drove off, I told him about how much fun he would have. I told him about all the new things he would learn. I just knew he would be miserable, but I didn't tell him that.

I took him to his classroom and watched as he began playing with the other children. Then I went home to wait.

That first day, my son was gone for what seemed like an eternity—from 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. I drank coffee, paced, and wondered. *What if he has to go to the bathroom and no one understands him? What if he misses me and no one pays attention to his crying? What if . . . ? What if . . . ?*

It was time to pick him up. I waited in the car for him to

Ready for Preschool?

Wanda Nevans

to college someday, we had to start somewhere.

Using all the care one would give to selecting a surgeon when a heart transplant is needed, I checked out the schools in our area and narrowed the choice to one school. I called the owner to set up an interview appointment. All the while, visions of my first teacher kept running through my mind. I felt uncomfortable subjecting my baby to that type of person.

At the school, my husband and I were greeted by an attractive, witty, charming, competent, young woman. I grilled her like she was a suspect in a nationwide crime spree.

"Seems nice," my husband said when we left.

"Oh, sure," I replied, "and when the parents are gone the place probably turns into a dungeon where the kids are locked up until class is over and that woman will transform herself into a Mrs. Riddle, just like a werewolf does when there's a full moon."

"Be sensible," my husband said, shaking his head.

But why should he believe me, I thought. He's always been swayed by a pretty face and, besides, he never knew Mrs. Riddle.

come out and thought about what I would say to convince him he should give school another try. Maybe I would say, "First days are always terrible. You'll see, the next time won't be so bad."

I saw him coming down the walk. I haven't seen my son look so happy since that day he took his first steps alone. Come to think of it, *he was headed away from me then, too.*

Each day, my son's first question is, "Is today a preschool day?"

He loves it. He has learned letters and numbers, shapes, and colors. He communicates better. He has new friends. He has adjusted very well.

This, however, is not an entirely happy story. My two worst fears have been realized. First, I have lost the number one spot in my son's life to a four-year-old, blond, blue-eyed girl named Amy Rachele. Second, I've learned my son can function quite well without me.

Now, if I can just learn to function again without him. . . .

□

Wanda Nevans is a homemaker and writer. She and her husband, Tim, have one son, B.J.



Teach Your Child to Cut with Scissors

Elizabeth Simmons

Lots of practice and praise makes scissor use successful.

Here's how to teach your child how to safely use scissors:

1. Wait until your child is ready. Your child is ready to use scissors when:

- he is interested in learning.
- she can follow simple instructions.
- he can demonstrate manual dexterity and control in other areas — using crayons and pencils, building with small blocks, etc.

2. Stress safe habits from the beginning.

Practice "sit safe" — sit flat before picking up scissors, and lay scissors down before getting up. Talk to your child about the different types of scissors and their purposes, such as cutting hair and cutting material for sewing. Stress that her scissors are for paper only.

3. Use good scissors. There are several styles of blunt-tipped, safety scissors on the market. Buy at least three kinds, including "lefties." Stay away from pinking shears,

pointed scissors, or other fun styles until your child has mastered the basics. Make sure the scissors cut well and check them often.

4. Teach your child to hold scissors properly and "open/close."

Using plain typing paper, demonstrate proper technique and repeat "open-close, open-close" as your child cuts. Don't rush.

5. Hold scissors at a right angle to the paper. Watch for a tendency to turn the thumb down and attempt to cut upside down.

6. Let your child make one cut after another around the edge of a paper. It may take awhile to learn to continue the cutting motion across the width of the paper. Give your child time to learn this on his own.



Photo by Randy Powers

7. Introduce cutting around simple black outlines once your child has mastered some degree of control and is cutting with confidence.

Instruct your child to cut within the line that is in his sight, rather than hidden behind the blade. This makes a big difference in accuracy!

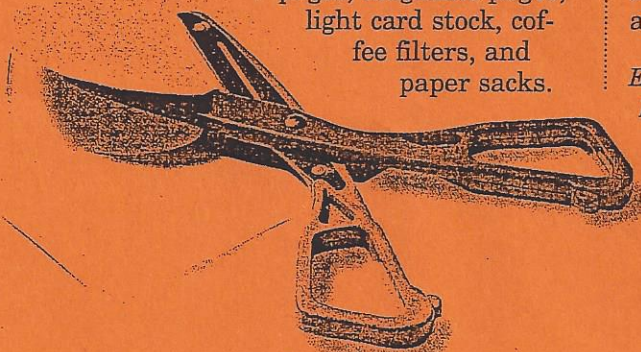
8. Practice, practice, practice! Allow your child plenty of time to practice on different types of paper, such as coloring book pages, magazine pages, light card stock, coffee filters, and paper sacks.

9. Praise, praise, praise. Praise every effort, each skill mastered.

10. Incorporate cutting into projects and art experiences. Let your child cut paper for collages, construction paper faces for puppets, etc. Look for ways to help him advance his skills such as cutting snowflakes or paper dolls.

If your child continues to show frustration each time you work with her on cutting, wait a month or more and try again.

Elizabeth Simmons is a preschool teacher. She and her husband have three grown children.



WHEN YOU THOUGHT I WASN'T LOOKING

(Written by a former child)

A message every adult should read, because children are watching you and doing as you do, not as you say.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you hang my first painting on the refrigerator, and I immediately wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw you feed a stray cat, and I learned that it was good to be kind to animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make my favorite cake for me and I learned that the little things can be the special things in life.

When you thought I wasn't looking I heard you say a prayer, and I knew there is a God I could always talk to and I learned to trust in God.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make a meal and take it to a friend who was sick, and I learned that we all have to help take care of each other.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you give of your time and money to help people who had nothing and I learned that those who have something should give to those who don't.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you take care of our house and everyone in it and I learned we have to take care of what we are given.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw how you handled your responsibilities, even when you didn't feel good and I learned that I would have to be responsible when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw tears come from your eyes and I learned that sometimes things hurt, but it's all right to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw that you cared and I wanted to be everything that I could be.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I learned most of life's lessons that I need to know to be a good and productive person when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I looked at you and wanted to say, "Thanks for all the things I saw when you thought I wasn't looking."

WHY IS ART IMPORTANT?

For young children, art offers opportunities to make things all their own. It provides colors, textures, and designs to explore, and ways to express feelings they can't yet translate into words.

Each satisfying experience encourages your child to explore and experiment, to trust his or her own sense of creativity, and to take pride in her accomplishments. As your child manipulates scissors, uses crayons, or pastes constructions together, her fine-motor skills and hand-eye coordination are being developed.

Art experiences like finger painting and molding playdough offer sensory and tactile experiences. Language is also developed as your child describes her painting or project and sees her words written down. The best part of working with art materials is that there is no right or wrong way to use them. Here are suggestions to help you encourage your child's self-expression through art:

PLAYDOUGH POWER

Children (and adults) of all ages can have fun with playdough. Here's a recipe to make together:

Uncooked playdough: Mix 1½ cups flour, ½ cup salt, ¼ cup vegetable oil, and about ¼ cup water (with a little food coloring added). Knead the dough until it is smooth and the color is well-mixed. Add more flour if the mixture is too wet or more water if it's too dry. Store the dough in an airtight container and keep it in the refrigerator.

Keep plastic utensils, cookie cutters, safety scissors, etc. nearby so your child can work with the playdough in many ways. Art is also a sensory experience. Ask your child how the dough feels. Add texture to it with grains of rice or sand. Try using the dough when it's chilled. The next time you make a batch, experiment together with the quantity of each ingredient so your child can experience concepts such as oily, sticky, runny, mushy, floury, and thick.

PUPPET PALS

Did you ever wonder what to do with those stray single socks? Make puppets! Gather socks together and invite your child to choose one. Provide scraps of fabric for eyes, a nose, and a mouth. Young children may have difficulty cutting shapes that look like eyes or gluing them in the "right" places, but it will be a puppet face to them. You might suggest yarn for hair and fabric scraps for ears.

Puppets can also be made from paper bags or old gloves using crayons and markers or scraps of material. After you've finished enjoy some puppet conversations together.

One of the greatest values of art is self-expression. If your child wants to make one "just like yours" or asks you to make to hers for her, recognize that she is looking for a sharing experience with you. Encourage her, with your presence, to make her own.

COLLAGE CREATIONS

This is a great way to use little bits and pieces of gift wrapping, ribbon, old greeting cards, and other fun tidbits. You and your child can have a collage hunt together

around the house. Almost anything works, from rubber bands to postcards. After you have an assortment of materials, find a place for your child to work comfortably. Provide glue and styrofoam trays, cardboard squares, or shoe-box lids for bases.

Collages offer opportunities for making choices and experimenting with design. As your child works, talk about the objects and textures she is using. Ask, "What do you like about them? How do they feel?"

FINGER-PAINTING FUN

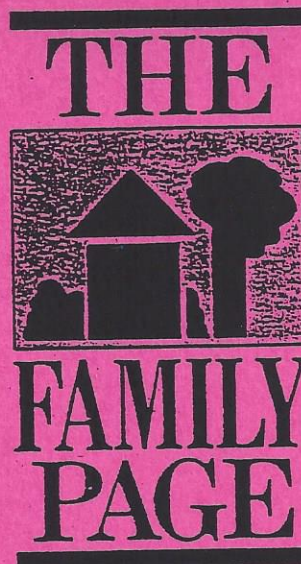
Brighten up a rainy day with finger painting. Cover a table with an oil cloth and have sponges, towels, and soapy water ready. If you don't have ready-made finger paint, you can make your own.

Dissolve ½ cup cornstarch in 1 cup cold water. Pour mixture into 3 cups boiling water and stir constantly until shiny and translucent. Allow this to cool and use as a base. Stir in tempera paint or food coloring. You can also use a whipped soap mixture (Ivory Snow works well), either white or tinted with food coloring. Let your child help beat this up.

To vary the experience, try providing music by which children can finger paint, or start with one color and slowly add others. To make finger painting even more of a sensory experience — add sand to give a gritty feeling and texture or glycerin to make the paint slick and smooth. You might suggest using straw, string, bits of sponge, or even an elbow or a toe to paint with!

As with any work of art, be careful not to ask a child to label her work. Rather than guessing what a picture is or asking your child to name it, comment on the pleasure she is feeling as she works or ask her to tell you about it. Say, "You've really worked a long time on that. Would you like to tell me about it?" Your comments let her know you're interested without making her feel like her work is being judged or your emphasis is on an end product.

Whether your child is working alone with her playdough or your whole family is involved in a giant mural-making project, keep one goal in mind — have fun! □



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