

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2021

Houston Early Learning Center



KID BITS

Picture book character

When you read stories with your child, look for examples of good character. He might notice how brave a little giraffe is in a story about a talent show. Or you could point out a kind boy standing up for a classmate who is being made fun of.

On-the-job training

Your little one might not be able to do all the steps of a chore, such as loading the dishwasher. Show her how anyway (“I’m putting the knives in with the sharp sides down”) and let her do as much as possible (“Here, you load the spoons”). She’ll gain confidence and be ready to tackle the job herself when she’s older.

Helmet safety

Keep your youngster safe by making sure he always wears a helmet when he rides a bike or scooter. It should fit snugly, have a liner that’s at least 1 inch thick, and sit level on his head. *Idea:* Let him make a helmet for a stuffed animal. Then, he may be more excited about wearing his own.

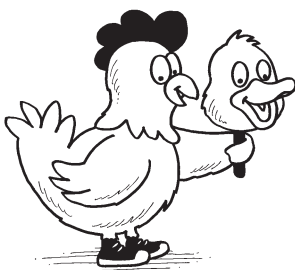
Worth quoting

“There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it’s going to be a butterfly.”
Buckminster Fuller

Just for fun

Q: Why did the chicken say, “Quack”?

A: It was learning to speak Duck.



Going with the flow

Flexible thinking lets your child adapt to changing situations and look at things in multiple ways. Stretch her thinking and problem-solving skills with these activities.

Two voices

Your youngster will need to shift gears to succeed in this twist on Simon Says. Give her instructions (“Touch your toes,” “Spin around”), but switch back and forth between two silly voices (say, a robot and a pirate). The catch? Tell her to listen only to the robot. If she follows the pirate’s instruction instead, her turn ends. Now she gets to choose two voices and give *you* directions.

Mystery pictures

Can your child figure out what’s in a picture even if she can’t see the whole thing? Cut a 1-inch hole in a sheet of paper, and lay it on top of a book illustration. Now let her slide the paper around,



peek through the hole, and think about what it could be a picture of. Something that looks rough and brown might be a furry animal. Or is it a football or a tree trunk?

What if?

This activity encourages your youngster to practice finding alternatives. Ask a “what if” question like “What if we didn’t have syrup for pancakes?” Take turns naming possible solutions (use jelly or honey, eat them plain, make toast instead). Keep going until you run out of ideas. Then, ask a new “what if” question. ♥

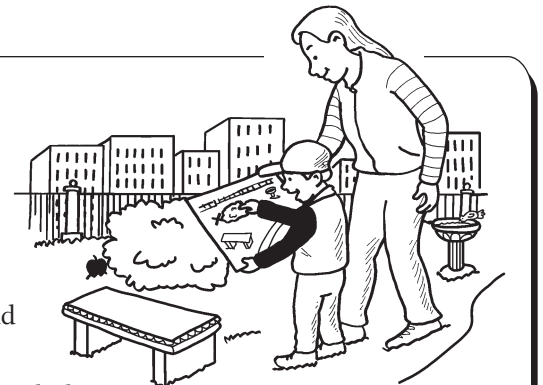
Search for treasure

Finding hidden treasure is a fun way for your youngster to learn how maps show where things are located. An X marks the spot with this idea.

1. Help your child draw a map of a room or the park. Encourage him to include landmarks like doors and furniture or trees and fences.

2. Have him cover his eyes while you hide a “treasure,” maybe a juicy apple, in the actual location. Put an X on the map where the treasure can be found.

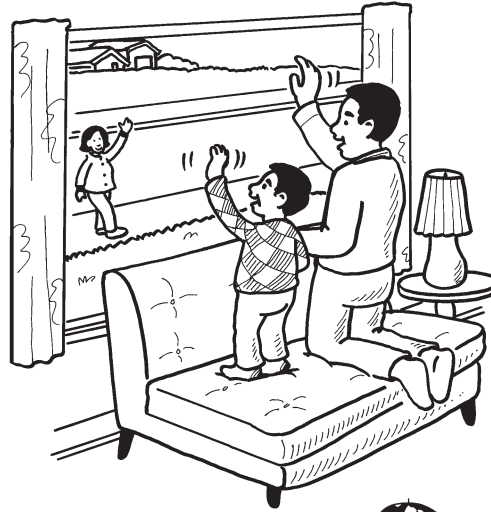
3. Challenge your youngster to use the map and find the treasure. When he locates it, let him erase your X, hide a treasure, and mark it on the map for you to find. ♥



K is for kindness

Simple acts of kindness make the world a friendlier place—and give your youngster warm, fuzzy feelings. Here are ways to inspire him to be kind.

Pretend to be a superhero. Suggest that your child draw himself as a “kindness superhero.” He can make up a superhero name, maybe Captain Kindness. On his drawing, help him write what superpowers he has. (“Cares about others.” “Loves to help.”) Then, encourage him to step into the role and put his superpowers to work whenever he sees the



opportunity to be kind. Maybe Captain Kindness will help you look for your misplaced car keys or offer to take a photo of his big sister.

Make a kindness calendar. Together, think of a month’s worth of ways to show kindness, and write each one in a calendar square. *Examples:* Smile and wave at neighbors walking by. Compliment a family member. Make a card for a friend. (It’s okay to use ideas more than once!) Every day, read the tip on the calendar, and have your youngster do it. He can draw a heart on each one as he completes it.♥



Q & A Storytelling at home

Q: My son’s kindergarten class is working on storytelling. How can we tell stories at home?

A: Start by asking your child to tell stories about pictures he draws. Listen to his tale, then ask questions that spark his imagination. If he draws people in a car, for instance, you could ask where they’re going. This is good practice for storytelling now—and creative writing later.

Also, take a few minutes before bed to let him tell the story of his day. He might describe a game he played and what he ate for lunch.

Encourage him to keep going by asking questions like “What happened after lunch?”



Share the story of your day, too, making sure to include lots of details. Listening to your story will help him learn to tell his own.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Splash and learn

April showers bring

May flowers—and lots of learning opportunities for your youngster! Sprinkle these activities into the next rainy day:

- Together, listen to the rain and think of words (real or made up) to describe the sound it makes when it hits the windows or pavement. *Examples:* tap, plop, plink. Then, put on slickers and rain boots, and let your child set different containers out in the rain. What words come to mind when she hears raindrops land in a plastic bucket, tin can, or glass jar?
- Help your youngster make aluminum foil boats and sail them on puddles. Which design floats best? Can she create a boat that will carry a small toy across a puddle? Have her use chalk to draw circles around puddles. Let her check back periodically and trace around the puddles again. She’ll notice they get smaller and eventually disappear (*evaporate*). Do bigger puddles last longer than smaller ones?♥



PARENT TO PARENT

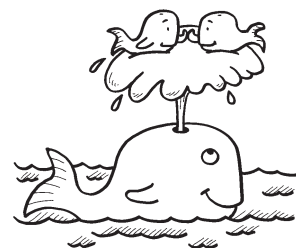
Help siblings get along

It seemed like my daughters Kate and Brianna were always bickering. My nieces, on the other hand, get along pretty well, so I asked my brother for advice.

He assured me that his girls don’t always get along. But he’s noticed their relationship is better when he lets them work out minor disagreements rather than taking sides. Sometimes, he pointed out, they seem to argue just to get his attention.

Now when my girls argue, I tell them to work it out. If they’re still fighting after 15 minutes, I send them to separate rooms to cool down, as my brother recommended. Afterward, I have them try again to solve their disagreement.

Knowing I won’t jump in and referee has cut down on my daughters’ arguments—and I’m hearing fewer complaints of “You always take her side!” ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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