

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Appendix

## List of Supplemental Reading Materials

	<u>Page</u>
<b>Iowa State University – University Extension Service</b>	
<b>Ages and Stages Series</b>	
1-12 Months .....	199
12-18 Months .....	203
18-24 Months .....	205
2-Year-Olds .....	207
3-Year-Olds .....	209
4-Year-Olds .....	211
5-Year-Olds .....	213
6-8 Years .....	215
9-11 Years .....	217
Preteen, Young Teen Development .....	219
<b>Understanding Children Series</b>	
Toys .....	221
Sibling Rivalry .....	225
Language Development .....	229
Learning to Read and Write .....	233
Disciplining Your Preschooler .....	237
Disciplining Your Toddler .....	241
Fears .....	245
Self-Esteem .....	249
Moving to a New Home .....	253
Temper Tantrums .....	257
Biting .....	261
Toilet Training .....	265
Children and Sleep .....	269
Childhood Stress: What Parents Can Do .....	271

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# 1-12

## Months



### **By 4 months**

#### **Physical development**

- weight: 10-18 pounds
- length: 23-27 inches
- sleeps about 6 hours before waking during the night
- sleeps 14-17 hours daily
- lifts head and chest when lying on stomach
- holds both eyes in a fixed position
- follows a moving object or person with eyes
- grasps rattle or finger
- wiggles and kicks with arms and legs
- rolls over (stomach to back)
- sits with support

#### **Mental development**

- explores objects with mouth
- plays with fingers, hands, toes
- reacts to sound of voice, rattle, bell
- turns head toward bright colors and lights
- recognizes bottle or breast

# AGES & STAGES

Babies learn and grow so quickly. By the end of this year your baby will have almost tripled in size. He or she will be crawling and maybe even taking a timid first step! Try to spend lots of time holding, cuddling, and playing with your little one. You will be richly rewarded with babbles, smiles, and squeals of laughter.

### **IDEAS FOR PARENTS**

- Baby proof everything! Store toxic substances such as dishwasher detergent, make-up, paint, or medicine up high. Put safety latches on cabinets, and covers on electrical outlets. Lower crib mattresses so an older infant can't fall over the rail. Cover sharp corners of tables or shelves that your infant might bump into.
- Provide interesting objects for baby to mouth and explore. Square nylon scarves, plastic measuring cups, large wooden spoons, and colorful washcloths are favorite household toys. Keep easy-to-swallow objects out of infant's reach. Baby should not be allowed to play with anything smaller than a half dollar (about 1 ¼ inch).
- If your baby is bottle fed, be sure to hold him or her while feeding. Even if your baby holds the bottle, being held and cuddled helps develop a strong nurturing parent-child relationship. Do not prop an infant drinking from a bottle as it may cause choking.
- Respect your baby's natural schedule. Most babies will settle into a regular routine for eating, sleeping, and soiling their diapers, but the schedule will vary depending on the baby. Some babies need to eat more frequently than others. Some will sleep through the night early on, others will continue to wake briefly well into their second year.
- Talk to your baby. Face your infant when talking so he or she can see you and smile with you. Talk about what you are doing, familiar objects, or people. You may even want to

*(continued on page 3)*



## **(4 months cont.)**

### **Social and emotional development**

- cries (with tears) to communicate pain, fear, discomfort, or loneliness
- babbles or coos
- loves to be touched and held close
- responds to a shaking rattle or bell
- returns a smile
- responds to peek-a-boo games

## **By 8 months**

### **Physical development**

- weight: 14-23 pounds
- length: 25-30 inches
- first teeth begin to appear
- drools, mouths, and chews on objects
- reaches for cup or spoon when being fed
- drinks from a cup with help
- enjoys some finely chopped, solid foods
- closes mouth firmly or turns head when no longer hungry
- may sleep 11-13 hours at night although this varies greatly
- needs 2-3 naps during the day
- develops a rhythm for feeding, eliminating, sleeping, and being awake
- true eye color is established
- rolls from back to stomach and stomach to back
- sits alone without support and holds head erect
- raises up on arms and knees into crawling position; rocks back and forth, but may not move forward

- uses finger and thumb to pick up an object
- transfers objects from one hand to the other
- hair growth begins to cover head

### **Mental development**

- cries in different ways to say he or she is hurt, wet, hungry, or lonely
- makes noises to voice displeasure or satisfaction
- recognizes and looks for familiar voices and sounds
- learns by using senses like smell, taste, touch, sight, hearing
- focuses eyes on small objects and reaches for them
- looks for ball rolled out of sight
- searches for toys hidden under a blanket, basket, or container
- explores objects by touching, shaking, banging, and mouthing
- babbles expressively as if talking
- enjoys dropping objects over edge of chair or crib

### **Social and emotional development**

- responds to own name
- shows fear of falling off high places such as table or stairs
- spends a great deal of time watching and observing
- responds differently to strangers and family members
- shows fearfulness toward strangers; is friendly to family members
- imitates sounds, actions, and facial expressions made by others

- shows distress if toy is taken away
- squeals, laughs, babbles, smiles in response
- likes to be tickled and touched
- smiles at own reflection in mirror
- raises arms as a sign to be held
- recognizes family member names
- responds to distress of others by showing distress or crying
- shows mild to severe stress at separation from parent

## **By 12 months**

### **Physical development**

- weight: 17-27 pounds
- length: 27-32 inches
- sleeps 11-13 hours at night; but may still wake up during the night
- takes naps—some babies will stop taking a morning nap, others will continue both morning and afternoon naps
- begins to refuse bottle or wean self from breast during day
- needs at least 3 meals a day with 2 snacks in-between
- enjoys drinking from a cup
- begins to eat finger foods
- continues to explore everything by mouth
- enjoys opening and closing cabinet doors
- crawls well
- pulls self to a standing position
- stands alone holding onto furniture for support
- walks holding onto furniture or with adult help

## Mental development

- says first word
- says da-da and ma-ma or equivalent
- “dances” or bounces to music
- interested in picture books
- pays attention to conversations
- claps hands, waves bye, if prompted
- likes to place objects inside one another

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

(continued from page 1)

babble back or echo sounds your baby makes much as you would in a regular conversation. Even though your infant cannot understand everything you say, he or she will be learning many words that will form the basis for language later on.

- Read to your baby. Babies enjoy cuddling on a parent's lap, looking at colorful picture books, and hearing the rhythm of a parent's voice. With time they begin to understand that words have meaning and can be used to identify objects.
- Encourage older infants to feed themselves by offering pieces of banana and soft bread. Give your baby a spoon with some mashed potatoes or other sticky food and let him or her practice eating with a spoon. Yes, it will be messy! Be patient. Learning this skill takes lots of practice!
- Play peek-a-boo. Hide your face behind a blanket, then peek out at your baby. Older babies will learn to do this themselves and will enjoy this game for a long time.
- Give your baby the freedom to move around. Young infants enjoy being on their back so they can kick, wiggle, and look around. Older infants need space and time to practice crawling, creeping, pulling up, and walking. Spending too much time in a walker, play pen, or infant swing may inhibit the development of these important skills.
- Help your baby develop a sense of trust and security by responding to baby's cries. Feeling secure encourages your baby to try new things. Be consistent so your baby knows what to expect.
- Stay with your baby when someone new is around. Encourage strangers to approach slowly. Introduce your infant, and let him or her explore someone new in the safety of your presence.

## Social and emotional development

- copies adult actions such as drinking from a cup, talking on phone
- responds to name
- likes to watch self in mirror
- expresses fear or anxiety toward strangers
- wants caregiver or parent to be in constant sight
- offers toys or objects to others, but expects them to be returned
- may become attached to a favorite toy or blanket
- pushes away something he or she does not want

## Toys

- pictures on wall
- mobile of bright and contrasting colors
- measuring cups
- crib mirror
- rattles that make a variety of sounds
- musical toys
- xylophone
- bath toys
- spoons
- pounding bench
- balls of different sizes
- stacking rings
- board or cloth books
- large plastic cars, trucks
- soft, washable dolls or animals



# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*, T. Berry Brazelton

*The First Twelve Months of Life: Your Baby's Growth Month by Month*, Frank Caplan

*What to Expect the First Year*, Arlene Eisenberg, Heidi Murkoff and Sandy Hathaway

*Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five*, Penelope Leach

*The Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know About Your Baby from Birth to Age Two*, William Sears and Martha Sears

*Caring for Your Baby and Child - Birth to Age Five*, American Academy of Pediatrics. Steven P. Shevlov, ed.



## Books for children

*Baby's Faces*, Ben Argueta

*The Rock-A-Bye Collection* (audio tape and book), J. Aaron Brown & Associates, Inc.

*Teddy In The House*, Lucy Cousins

*Touch and Feel: Baby Animals*, DK Publishing

*Grow! Babies!*, Penny Gentieu

*Animal Babies*, Harry McNaught

*Hide and Seek Puppies*, Roy Volkmann

## A word on development

Your child is unique. His or her learning and growth rates differ from other children the same age. If, however, your child is unable to do many of the skills listed for this age group, you may wish to talk to an early childhood specialist. You are the best person to notice developmental problems, if any, because of the time you spend with your child. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference.

If you have questions about your child's development or want to have your child assessed, contact:

- Your pediatrician or health care professional
- Area Education Agency—Early Childhood Special Education Department
- Iowa Compass 1-800-779-2001.

Contact your county Extension office to obtain other publications about children, parenting, and family life or visit the ISU Extension Web site at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/pubs/>.

The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been compiled from a variety of professional resources to help you understand your child's overall growth. It is not a standardized measurement tool.

File: Family life - 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

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# AGES & STAGES

The second year is a delightful time for parents and children. Your baby is developing a personality and rewards your time together with laughter, funny faces, and affectionate hugs. First steps and first words are exciting family events.

## Physical development

- weight: 17-30 pounds
- height: 27-35 inches
- crawls well
- stands alone, sits down
- gestures or points to indicate wants
- likes to push, pull, and dump things
- pulls off hat, socks, and mittens
- turns pages in a book
- stacks 2 blocks
- likes to poke, twist, and squeeze
- enjoys flushing toilets and closing doors
- enjoys carrying small objects while walking, often one in each hand
- holds crayon and scribbles, but with little control
- waves bye-bye and claps hands
- walks without help
- enjoys holding spoon when eating, but experiences difficulty in getting spoon into mouth
- rolls a ball to adult on request

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Enjoy some "floor time" with your child each day. Crawl around together, play peek-a-boo behind the sofa, or roll a ball back and forth. Your child will love having you down on his or her level.
- Review your baby proofing. Your child's increasing growth and mobility make it possible to reach unsafe heights and play with dangerous material. Get down on your knees in each room and look at things from your child's perspective. Put toxic items like paint, dishwashing detergent, medicine, and make-up in high cupboards, preferably with a safety cabinet latch.
- Put together a box of items that are fun to feel, poke, and squeeze. You might include plastic margarine tubs, an old sock, tissue paper to crumple, measuring cups of different sizes, a turkey baster, a nylon scarf, an egg carton, and paper cups. Choose items larger than a half-dollar to avoid choking hazards.
- Relax and have fun dancing to music with your child.
- Use bath time to point to some body parts and say them with your baby. Nose, ears, arms, legs, tummy, toes....
- Talk frequently to your child to increase his or her language skills and encourage cooperation. You can make dressing time more fun by pointing to and identifying body parts and clothes. For instance, "See this pretty red shirt? The shirt goes over your head. Your arms go into the sleeves. What shall we put on your legs?"
- Around 18 months your child may begin clinging and become anxious about being separated from you. If possible, reduce separations and be sure that your child is cared for by someone familiar.



## Mental development

- says 8-20 words you can understand
- looks at person talking to him or her
- says "Hi" or "Bye" if reminded
- uses expressions like "Oh-oh"
- asks for something by pointing or using one word
- identifies object in a book
- plays peek-a-boo
- looks for objects that are hidden or out of sight
- understands and follows simple one-step directions
- likes to take things apart

## Social and emotional development

- becomes upset when separated from parent
- likes to hand objects to others
- plays alone on floor with toys
- recognizes self in mirror or pictures
- enjoys being held and read to
- imitates others especially by coughing, sneezing, or making animal sounds
- enjoys an audience and applause

## Toys

- nesting cups
- bath toys, small boat
- soft, huggable dolls (large)
- large animal pictures
- objects to match
- large, plastic blocks
- musical records or tapes
- soft balls of different sizes
- push cart, dump truck
- teddy bear
- plastic jar with lid; lids and containers
- toy telephone

File: Family life 8

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# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five*, Penelope Leach

*Caring for Your Baby & Young Child, Birth to Age Five*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shevlov, ed.



## Books for children

*Baby! Talk!*, Penny Gentieu

*Baby's Colors*, Neil Ricklen

*Baby's First Words*, Lars Wik

*Farm Animals*, Phoebe Dunn

*Goodnight Moon*, Margaret Wise Brown

*Moo, Baa, La La La*, Sandra Boynton

## A word on development

Your child is unique. His or her learning and growth rates differ from other children the same age. If, however, your child is unable to do many of the skills listed for this age group, you may wish to talk to an early childhood specialist. You are the best person to notice developmental problems, if any, because of the time you spend with your child. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference. If you have questions about your child's development or want to have your child assessed, contact:

- Your pediatrician or health care professional
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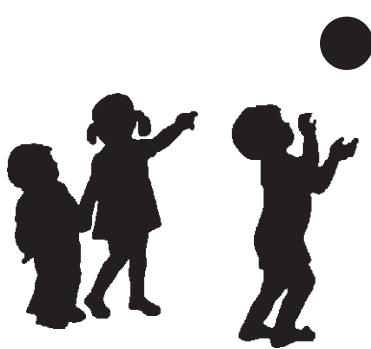
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# AGES & STAGES

Welcome to the world of toddlerhood! This stage brings a greater sense of independence to your child as he or she learns to walk, run, and climb with greater skill. Your little one now loves to imitate everything you do. Pretending to talk on the phone is a favorite activity.

## Physical development

- weight: 20-32 pounds
- length: 30-37 inches
- walks well
- likes to run, but can't always stop and turn well
- drinks from a straw
- feeds self with a spoon
- helps wash hands
- stacks 4-6 blocks
- tosses or rolls a large ball
- opens cabinets, drawers, and boxes
- bends over to pick up toy without falling
- walks up steps with help
- takes steps backward
- enjoys sitting on, and moving small-wheeled riding toys
- begins to gain some control of bowels and bladder; complete control may not be achieved until around age 3 (boys often do not complete toilet learning until age 3 1/2)

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Enjoy dancing with your child to music with different rhythms.
- Talk with your child about everyday things. After 18 months, he or she will learn new words at a rapid rate.
- Read simple books with your child every day. Choose books with cardboard or cloth pages and encourage your child to turn pages.
- Make your own scrap book of objects or people he or she knows by using a small photo album.
- Encourage language development by expanding on what your child says. When your child says "kitty" you can say "Yes, the kitty is little and soft."
- Play a simple game of "find." Place three familiar toys in front of your child and say, "Give me the \_\_\_\_\_. See if he or she tries to find it and hand it to you.
- Encourage your child to play dress-up by providing a full-length mirror on the wall and a "pretend box" filled with caps, scarves, and old shoes.

## Mental development

- has a vocabulary of several hundred words, including names of a few toys
- uses two to three word sentences
- echoes single words that are spoken by someone else
- talks to self and "jabbers" expressively
- has "favorite" toys

- likes to choose between two objects
- hums or tries to sing
- listens to short rhymes or fingerplays
- points to eyes, ears, or nose when asked
- uses the words "Please" and "Thank you" if prompted
- enjoys singing familiar songs



## Social and emotional development

- likes to imitate others
- begins to show signs of independence; says "no"
- has difficulty sharing
- very possessive
- finds it difficult to wait and wants it *right now!*
- gets angry sometimes and has temper tantrums
- acts shy around strangers
- comforts a distressed friend or parent
- refers to self by name
- uses the words "me" and "mine"
- enjoys looking at picture books
- tries to do many things alone
- enjoys adult attention
- enjoys pretending (wearing hats, talking on phone)
- enjoys exploring; gets into everything, and requires constant supervision
- generally unable to remember rules
- often gets physically aggressive when frustrated — slaps, hits
- shows affection by returning a hug or kiss
- may become attached to a toy or blanket

## Toys

- pegboard and pegs, pounding bench, shape sorter
- snap and lock beads, ringstack, plastic jar with lid and containers, beads to string, nesting cups
- soft, huggable dolls (large), teddy bear, soft balls of different sizes
- animal pictures (large), musical records or tapes
- crayon and paper, play dough
- push cart, riding toy, toy telephone

File: Family life 8

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# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five,* Penelope Leach  
*Caring for Your Baby & Young Child, Birth to Age Five,* American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shevlov, ed

## Books for children

*All About Baby,* Stephen Shott  
*Animal Time,* Tom Arma  
*Bunny and Me,* Adele Aron Greenspun  
*Goodnight Moon,* Margaret Wise Brown  
*The Little Quiet Book,* Katharine Ross  
*Trucks,* Byron Barton



## A word on development

Your child is unique. His or her learning and growth rates differ from other children the same age. If, however, your child is unable to do many of the skills listed for this age group, you may wish to talk to an early childhood specialist. You are the best person to notice developmental problems, if any, because of the time you spend with your child. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference. If you have questions about your child's development or want to have your child assessed, contact:

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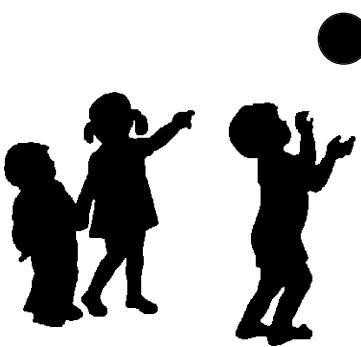
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# 2-Year-Olds



# AGES & STAGES

Two-year-olds like to be independent! Favorite words are "Mine" and "No" and "I do it!" A great deal of time is spent exploring, pushing, pulling, filling, dumping, and touching.

## Physical development

- weight: 22-38 pounds
- height: 32-40 inches
- has almost a full set of teeth
- walks up and down stairs by holding onto railing
- feeds self with spoon
- experiments by touching, smelling, and tasting
- likes to push, pull, fill, and dump
- can turn pages of a book
- stacks 2-4 objects
- scribbles with crayons or markers
- many children (but not all) will learn to use toilet
- walks without help
- walks backwards
- tosses or rolls a large ball
- stoops or squats
- opens cabinets, drawers
- can bend over to pick up toy without falling

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Baby proof your house again. Your toddler is now taller and more skillful at opening doors and getting into mischief.
- Read aloud to your child every day. Use books with large pictures and few words.
- Try to expand your child's words. If Anna wants more juice, let her hear the correct word order, but don't demand that she imitate you. If she says "more juice," say "Anna wants more juice."
- Encourage your child to identify noises like the vacuum, tap water, dogs barking, thunder, airplane, and car.
- Let your child help you with simple chores such as picking up toys, or putting clothes in the laundry basket. Let your child name things you are using.
- Add new information to what your child is saying. "Yes that's a car, a big, red car."
- Give toddlers clear and simple choices. "Do you want to drink milk or juice? Do you want to wear green or blue socks?"
- Know how to handle a temper tantrum
  - don't yell or hit the child,
  - remain calm,
  - talk in a soothing tone,
  - put your hand gently on child's arm if possible.
- Do not expect toddlers to share or take turns. Right now they are focused on learning how to physically handle themselves and on learning to talk. Learning to share will come later.
- Provide spaces where toddlers can spend time alone. An old cardboard box or a blanket over a card table works great.



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## Mental development

- enjoys simple stories, rhymes, and songs
- uses 2-3 word sentences
- says names of toys
- hums or tries to sing
- enjoys looking at books
- points to eyes, ears, or nose when asked
- repeats words

## Social and emotional development

- plays alongside others more than with them
- acts shy around strangers
- likes to imitate parents
- easily frustrated
- affectionate—hugs and kisses
- insists on trying to do several tasks without help
- enjoys simple make-believe like talking on phone, putting on hat
- very possessive—offers toys to other children, but then wants them back

## Toys

- large blocks, pegboard
- toy telephone
- tricycle, rocking horse
- water and sand toys
- bubbles
- table and chairs, play dishes
- dress-up clothes
- shape sorters, 3-4 piece puzzles
- small and large balls
- doll with bottle and blanket
- cars and trucks (large)
- nursery rhyme tapes, books
- large crayons, blunt scissors
- stuffed animals, wooden animals

File: Family life 8

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# BOOKS

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*Caring for Your Baby and Child, Birth to Age Five*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shevlov, ed

## Books for children

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?*, Bill Martin Jr.  
*Mouse Paint*, Ellen Stoll Walsh  
*The Little Red House*, Norma Jean Sawicki  
*When I Was A Baby*, Catherine Anholt  
*Sounds My Feet Make*, Arlene Blanchard  
*Harold and The Purple Crayon*, David Johnson Leisk  
*Mr. Little's Noisy Truck*, Richard Fowler



## A word on development

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# 3-Year-Olds



# AGES & STAGES

The 3-year-old is full of wonder, and spends a lot of time observing and imitating. They love to spend time with parents and enjoy helping out with simple household tasks.

## Physical development

- weight: 25-44 pounds
- height: 34-43 inches
- develops a taller, thinner, adult-like appearance
- develops a full set of baby teeth
- sleeps 10-12 hours at night
- sleeps through most nights without wetting the bed (occasional accidents are still quite common)
- uses the toilet with some help (many boys may not be ready for toilet learning until age 3 ½)
- puts on shoes (but cannot tie laces)
- dresses self with some help (buttons, snaps, zippers)
- feeds self (with some spilling)
- tries to catch a large ball
- throws a ball overhead
- kicks a ball forward
- hops on 1 foot
- walks short distance on tiptoe
- climbs up and down a small slide by self
- pedals a tricycle

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Make brushing teeth a part of your child's daily routine.
- Be patient with toileting — accidents will still happen for a while.
- Purchase easy-to-dress clothing.
- Provide large buttons or old beads to string on a shoe lace.
- Encourage sand and water play.
- Show your child how to throw, catch, and kick a ball.
- Show your child how to hop like a rabbit, tiptoe like a bird, waddle like a duck, slither like a snake, and run like a deer.
- Talk frequently, use short sentences, ask questions, and listen.
- Add new information to your child's sentences. "Yes, that's a flower—it's a tall, red flower and it smells so good."
- Teach your child to memorize his or her first and last name.
- Ask your child to tell you a story during your reading time.
- Sing simple songs with your child.
- Look at baby pictures together and talk about "When you were a baby."
- Talk about colors, numbers, and shapes in your everyday conversation. "We need ONE egg. That's a RED car. The butter is in this SQUARE box."
- Ask for help with simple tasks such as putting the napkins by each plate, socks in the drawer, or stirring the muffin batter.

## Mental and language development

- 75-80 percent of speech is understandable; talks in complete sentences of 3-5 words.  
"Mommy is drinking juice."  
"There's a big dog."

- stumbles over words sometimes — usually not a sign of stuttering
- listens attentively to short stories; likes familiar stories told without any changes in words



- repeats words and sounds
- enjoys listening to stories and repeating simple rhymes
- able to tell simple stories from pictures or books
- enjoys singing and can carry a simple tune
- understands "now," "soon," and "later"
- asks who, what, where, and why questions
- stacks 5-7 blocks
- enjoys playing with clay or play dough (pounds, rolls, and squeezes it)
- puts together a 6-piece puzzle
- draws a circle and square
- recognizes everyday sounds
- matches object and picture
- identifies common colors
- can count 2-3 objects

## Social and emotional development

- accepts suggestions and follows simple directions
- sometimes shows preference for one parent (often the parent of the opposite sex)
- enjoys helping with simple household tasks
- can make simple choices between two things
- enjoys making others laugh and being silly
- enjoys playing alone, but near other children
- spends a great deal of time watching and observing
- enjoys playing with other children briefly, but still does not cooperate or share well
- enjoys hearing stories about self, playing "house," imitating
- can answer the question, "are you a boy or a girl?"

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# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five,* Penelope Leach  
*Caring for Your Baby and Young Child, Birth to Age Five,* American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shevlov, ed

## Books for children

*Caps For Sale*, Esphyr Slobodkina  
*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Eric Carle  
*Is It Red? Is It Yellow? Is It Blue?*, Tana Hoban  
*All by Myself*, Mercer Mayer  
*I Just Forgot*, Mercer Mayer  
*I'm Sorry*, Sam McBratney  
*A Tree Is Nice*, Janice Udry



## Toys

- nesting toys, cups that stack, puzzles (3-6 pieces)
- matching games, small pegs, pegboard
- large wheeled toys, tricycle, slide, wagon

- small table and chairs, crayons, felt tip markers, play dough, glue and paper, paint, paint brushes, stickers
- puppets, toy animals, dolls
- balls (different sizes), large blocks

## A word on development

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- Iowa Compass 1-800-779-2001.

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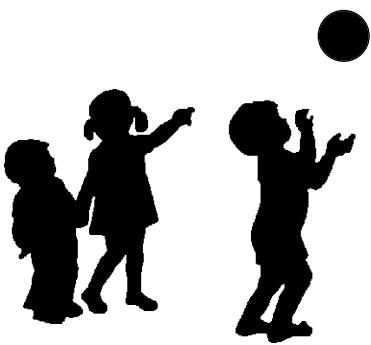
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Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

File: Family life 8

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# AGES & STAGES

Energetic and imaginative best describes the four-year-old. They are able to learn new words quickly, and use them in chatting with you, telling you jokes and wild stories.

## Physical development

- weight: 27-50 pounds
- height: 37-46 inches
- uses a spoon, fork, and dinner knife skillfully
- needs 10-12 hours sleep each night
- dresses self without much help
- walks a straight line
- hops on 1 foot
- pedals and steers a tricycle skillfully
- jumps over objects 5-6 inches high
- runs, jumps, hops, skips around obstacles with ease
- stacks 10 or more blocks
- forms shapes and objects out of clay or play dough
- threads small beads on a string
- catches, bounces, and throws a ball easily

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Read aloud each day and encourage your child to help you tell the story.
- Talk about reading. Show your child that words are everywhere: grocery labels, restaurant menus, department store signs, etc.
- Encourage your child to play with words by providing old coupons, junk mail, newspaper ads, and old cereal boxes.
- Ask your child to deliver short messages to family members.
- Say nursery rhymes and fingerplays together.
- Make playdough, play follow the leader.
- Cut out magazine pictures of different shapes, colors, or animals.
- Talk about things being in, on, under, behind, beside, etc.
- Pretend to walk like various animals.
- Sort and count everything in sight like silverware, socks, rocks.
- Teach your child the correct use of the telephone.
- Let your child help you plan activities and make lists for groceries, errands, etc.

## Mental development

- can place objects in a line from largest to smallest
- can recognize some letters if taught and may be able to print name
- recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs (STOP sign)
- understands the concepts of tallest, biggest, same, more, on, in, under, and above
- counts 1-7 objects out loud
- understands the order of daily routines (breakfast before lunch, lunch before dinner, dinner before bedtime)



- speaks fairly complex sentences. "The baby ate the cookie before I could put it on the table."
- enjoys singing simple songs, rhymes, and nonsense words
- adapts language to listener's level of understanding. To baby sister: "Daddy go bye bye." To Mother: "Daddy went to the store to buy food."
- learns name, address, and phone number if taught
- asks and answers who, what, when, why, where questions
- continues 1 activity for 10-15 minutes
- names 6-8 colors and 3 shapes
- follows two unrelated directions: "Put your milk on the table and get your coat on"

## Social and emotional development

- takes turns and shares (most of the time); may still be bossy
- understands and obeys simple rules (most of the time)
- changes the rules of a game as she goes along
- likes to talk and carries on elaborate conversations
- persistently asks why; may name call, tattle freely
- enjoys showing off and bragging about possessions
- fearful of the dark and monsters
- begins to understand danger — at times can become quite fearful
- has difficulty separating make-believe from reality
- lies sometimes to protect self and friends, but doesn't truly understand the concept of lying — imagination often gets in the way
- likes to shock others by using "forbidden" words
- still throws tantrums over minor frustrations

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

# BOOKS

## Books for children

*May I Bring a Friend?, De Regniefs and Beatrice Schenk*

*Blackboard Bear, Martha Alexander*

*Imogene's Antlers, David Small*

*Bedtime for Frances, Russell Hoban and Lillian Hoban*

*No Ducks in Our Bathtub, Martha Alexander*

*I Want To Paint My Bathroom Blue, Ruth Kraus*

*If You Give A Mouse A Cookie By Laura Joffe Numeroff*

*What Do You Do With A Kangaroo?, Mercer Mayer*



- expresses anger verbally rather than physically (most of the time)
- pretending goes far beyond "playing house" to more elaborate settings like fire station, school, shoe store, ice cream shop
- loves to tell jokes that may not make any sense at all to adults

## Toys

- matching games, puzzles 12-15 pieces, board games, dominoes, play money, pretend cash register
- plastic blocks, balls (all sizes)
- glue, crayons, paint, scissors and paper, washable markers, colored chalk, play dough
- trucks and cars, bicycle with training wheels, dress-up clothes
- puppets, books, bean bags, doll with clothes

## A word on development

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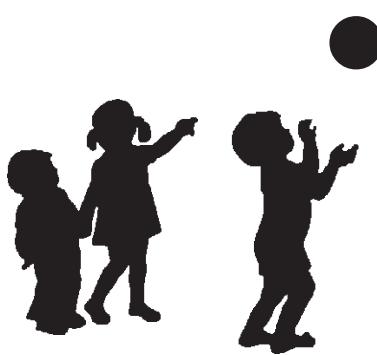
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# 5-Year-Olds



# AGES & STAGES

The 5-year-old is cheerful, energetic, and enthusiastic. Fives enjoy planning and discussing who will do what. A “best friend” is very important, but hard to keep as social skills are not well developed yet.

## Physical development

- weight: 31-57 pounds
- height: 39-48 inches
- sleeps 10-11 hours at night
- may begin to loose baby teeth
- able to dress self with little assistance
- learns to skip
- throws ball overhead
- catches bounced balls
- rides a tricycle skillfully, may show interest in riding a bicycle with training wheels
- uses a fork and knife well
- cuts on a line with scissors
- hand dominance is established
- jumps over low objects

## Mental development

- knows basic colors like red, yellow, blue, green, orange
- able to memorize address and phone number
- understands that stories have a beginning, middle, and end
- enjoys telling his or her own stories
- understands that books are read from left to right, top to bottom
- enjoys riddles and jokes
- draws pictures that represent animals, people, and objects

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Encourage physical development by playing follow the leader with skipping, galloping, and hopping.
- Help your child learn to use a pair of scissors by asking him or her to help you cut out coupons.
- Stop before the end of a familiar story and ask your child to add his or her own ending.
- Ask your child to tell you a story. Write it down and post it on the wall or refrigerator.
- Ask “what if” questions? What if there were five little pigs instead of three? What if Goldilocks stayed home?
- Involve children in writing “thank you” notes, holiday greeting cards, and letters. If your child likes to copy letters, let him or her dictate a short message and copy it from your writing.
- Give your child opportunities to sort, group, match, count, and sequence with real-life situations such as setting the table, counting the number of turns, and sorting out socks.
- Help children understand and cope with strong feelings by giving them words to use when they are angry. “I can see you are *sad* about going home, *angry* at your friend ....”
- Observe how your child plays with other children. Teach him or her to request, bargain, negotiate, and apologize.
- Specific praise helps your child understand the true value of his or her actions. Say “I like the way you stacked the toys neatly on the shelf” rather than “You did a good job!”
- Provide a comfortable place to be alone. A large cardboard box makes a wonderful hideaway.



- enjoys tracing or copying letters
- sorts objects by size
- identifies some letters of the alphabet and a few numbers
- understands more, less, and same
- counts up to 10 objects
- understands before and after, above and below
- is project minded—plans buildings, play scenarios, and drawings
- interested in cause and effect

## Social and emotional development

- invents games with simple rules
- organizes other children and toys for pretend play
- still confuses fantasy with reality sometimes
- can take turns and share but doesn't always want to
- often excludes other children in play — best friends only
- uses swear words or "bathroom words" to get attention
- can be very bossy sometimes
- likes to try new things and take risks
- likes to make own decisions
- notices when another child is angry or sad—more sensitive to feelings of others
- likes to feel grown up; boasts about self to younger less capable children
- has a very basic understanding of right and wrong
- understands and respects rules—often asks permission
- understands and enjoys both giving and receiving
- enjoys collecting things
- sometimes needs to get away and be alone

# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Caring for Your Baby and Young Child, Birth to Age 5*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shevlov, ed.

*Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five*, Penelope Leach

## Books for children

*Ira Sleeps Over*, Bernard Waber

*Little Bear*, Else Holmelund Minarik

*Whistle for Willie*, Ezra Jack Keats

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Judith Viorst

*Are You My Mother?*, Philip D. Eastman

*Harry and the Terrible Whatzit*, Dick Gackenbach



## Toys

- board games, card games, dominoes, puzzles (12 -15 pieces)
- blocks (plastic or wooden); play dough
- glue, scissors, paper, washable markers, crayons, water colors
- puppets; doll, clothes, dollhouse; dress-up clothes
- trucks, cars, large cardboard boxes (large appliance size)
- child-size tools; camping equipment

## A word on development

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# 6-8 Years



# AGES & STAGES

Your school-ager is now ready for a steady pace of growing and learning, one in which real life tasks and activities overtake pretend and fantasy. Equipped with a longer attention span, your child also is ready to delve into projects, solve problems, and resolve arguments!

## Physical development

- skilled at using scissors and small tools
- shows development of permanent teeth
- enjoys testing muscle strength and skills
- has good sense of balance
- can tie shoelaces
- enjoys copying designs and shapes, letters and numbers
- may have gawky awkward appearance from long arms and legs

## Mental development

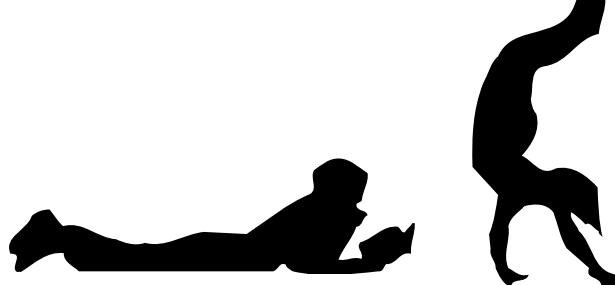
- may reverse printed letters (b/d)
- enjoys planning and building
- doubles speaking and listening vocabularies
- may show a stronger interest in reading
- increases problem-solving ability
- has longer attention span
- enjoys creating elaborate collections
- shows ability to learn difference between left and right
- can begin to understand time and the days of the week

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Provide opportunities for active play. Throwing at targets, running, jumping rope, tumbling, and aerobics may be of interest.
- Provide opportunities to develop an understanding of rules by playing simple table games: cards, dominoes, tic-tac-toe.
- Provide opportunities for your child to do noncompetitive team activities such as working a jigsaw puzzle or planting a garden.
- Encourage your child's sense of accomplishment by providing opportunities to build models, cook, make crafts, practice music, or work with wood.
- Encourage collections by allowing your child to make special storage boxes or books.
- Encourage reading and writing by encouraging your child to produce stories with scripts, create music for plays and puppet shows, produce a newspaper, record events, go on field trips, or conduct experiments.
- Help your child explore the world by taking field trips to museums, work places, and other neighborhoods.

## Social and emotional development

- being with friends becomes increasingly important
- shows interest in rules and rituals
- wants to play more with similar friends—girls with girls, boys with boys
- may have a “best” friend and “enemy”



- shows strong desire to perform well, do things right
- begins to see things from another child's point of view, but still very self-centered
- finds criticism or failure difficult to handle
- views things as black and white, right or wrong, wonderful or terrible, with very little middle ground
- seeks a sense of security in groups, organized play, and clubs
- generally enjoys caring for and playing with younger children
- may become upset when behavior or schoolwork is ignored

# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Parent's Guide for the Best Books for Children*, Eden Ross Lipson

*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, Adele Faber and Elizabeth Mazlish

*Caring for Your School-age Child: Ages 5 to 12*, American Academy of Pediatrics



## Books for children

*A Chair for My Mother*, Vera Williams

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No good, Very Bad Day*, Judith Viorst

*Anna Banana and Me*, Lenore Blevard

*Everybody Needs A Rock*, Byrd Baylor

*The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, Chris Van Allsburg

*The Kid Next Door and Other Headaches: Stories About Adam Joshua*, Janice Lee Smith

*Little House in the Big Woods*, Laura Ingalls Wilder

*Ramona*, Beverly Cleary

## Toy list

- arts and crafts materials
- musical instruments
- sports equipment
- camping equipment
- construction sets
- electric trains
- bicycles (use helmets)
- models
- board games
- skateboard (use helmets)

## A word on development

Your child is unique. Each child's learning and growth rates differ from other children the same age.

If, however, your child is unable to do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you may wish to talk to an early childhood specialist. You are the best person to notice developmental problems, if any, because of the time you spend with your child. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference.

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# 9-11 Years



# AGES & STAGES

Friendships and accomplishments are important to older children. Secret codes, made-up languages, and passwords are used to strengthen the bonds of friendship. Be prepared to use all your "patience" skills as your child may tend to think that he or she does not need adult care or supervision.

## Physical development

Girls:

- are generally as much as 2 years ahead of boys in physical maturity
- may begin to menstruate

Boys and girls:

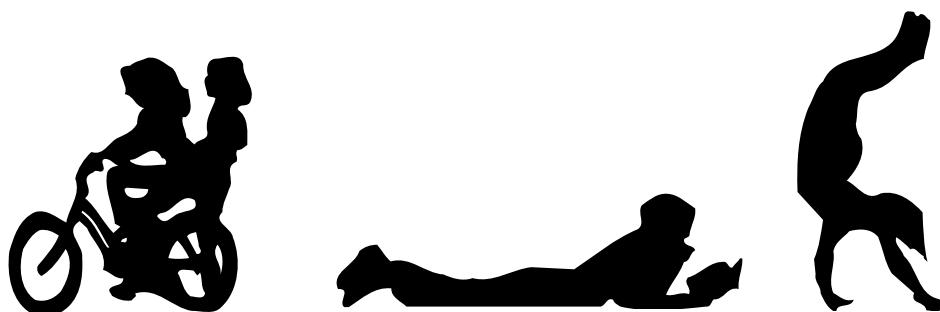
- have increased body strength and hand dexterity
- show improved coordination and reaction time
- may begin to grow rapidly at the end of this age period

## Mental development

- shows interest in reading fictional stories, magazines, and how-to project books
- may develop special interest in collection or hobbies
- fantasizes and daydreams about the future
- enjoys planning and organizing tasks
- becomes more product and goal oriented
- has great ideas and intentions, but difficulty following through
- enjoys games with more complex rules

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Provide opportunities for older school-agers to help out with real skills. Cooking, sewing, and designing dramatic play props are useful ways to use their skills.
- Provide time and space for an older child to be alone. Time to read, daydream, or do school work uninterrupted will be appreciated.
- Encourage your child to make a call to a school friend.
- Encourage your child to participate in an organized club or youth group. Many groups encourage skill development with projects or activities than can be worked on in the home.
- Encourage your older child to help with a younger one but avoid burdening older children with too many adult responsibilities. Allow time for play and relaxation.
- Provide opportunities for older children to play games of strategy. Checkers, chess, and monopoly are favorites.
- Remember to provide plenty of food. Older children have larger appetites than younger children and will need to eat more.



## Social and emotional development

- begins to see that parents and authority figures can make mistakes and are not always right
- often likes rituals, rules, secret codes, and made-up languages
- enjoys being a member of a club
- has increased interest in competitive sports
- has better control of anger
- may belittle or defy adult authority
- shows interest in opposite sex by teasing, joking, showing off
- prefers spending more time with friends than with parents
- may sometimes be verbally cruel to classmates with harsh "put downs" and snide remarks
- tends to see things as right or wrong, with no room for difference of opinion

## Toys and hobbies

- arts and crafts materials
- musical instruments
- sports equipment
- camping equipment
- construction sets
- electric trains
- bicycles (26-inch wheels for kids 10 and older; use helmets)
- models
- board games
- skates

# BOOKS

## Books for parents

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*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, Adele Faber and Elizabeth Mazlish

*Caring for Your School-age Child: Ages 5 to 12*, American Academy of Pediatrics



## Books for children

*Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, Judy Blume

*Chocolate Fever*, Robert Kimmel Smith

*How It Feels to Be Adopted*, Jill Krementz

*How To Eat Fried Worms*, Thomas Rockwell

*The Indian in the Cupboard*, Lynn Banks

*Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade*, Barthe DeClements

*The Oxford Book of Poetry for Children*, compiled by Edward Blishen

*Ramona's World*, Beverly Cleary

*Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, Judy Blume

## A word on development

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File: Family Life 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension human development specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King

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# Preteen, Young Teen Development

Parents often have concerns as their children approach the teen years, and this time can be uncomfortable for their children, too. Of course, young people vary greatly in when and how quickly they experience the changes of growing up. However, your preteen likely has begun the transition to the teen years, and will continue to show changes in his or her body, thinking, emotions and relations with you and others. This publication will discuss typical changes, as well as individual differences.

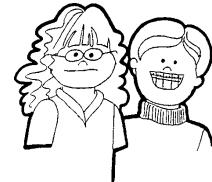
## Physical changes

Both parents and young people themselves notice physical changes during the pre- and early teen years. Physical growth that occurs during this time is more rapid than at any time since infancy. Besides growing bigger and taller, the maturing child begins to develop bodily characteristics that distinguish the male and female adult. For example, the beginning of breast development in girls may start as early as 9 years and as late as 13. By age 12½, half of the girls have begun menstruation. In boys, enlargement of the testes is the first sign of puberty and begins from about 9½ to 13½. These changes in sexual development usually happen before rapid increase in height. This sexual maturation also is related to skin changes, which can cause embarrassment for teens, too.

Many pre- and early teens have difficulty adjusting to these physical changes. They may begin to

## *When your little girl begins to grow up (OR I can't believe how tall she's getting)*

*John and Linda wonder what's going on with 12-year-old Lisa. Always an easy child, Lisa usually gets along well with her parents. Sometimes she had problems, like fighting with her younger brother, but usually things have gone smoothly with Lisa. Almost overnight, she has become argumentative and gets irritated or angry at the drop of a hat. She spends hours in her room with the door shut or talks on the telephone with her friends. What happened to the happy-go-lucky child Bill and Linda once knew? Is her behavior normal?*



feel extremely self-conscious—as if everyone is watching them. Whether the changes occur early, late or at the same time as most youngsters, many young people feel they don't look right. Girls may have concerns about menstruation and boys may need help understanding that "wet dreams" are normal.

It helps for parents to take their children's feelings seriously while, also letting them know these changes are normal. It's important for parents to talk with both boys and girls about physical changes before they begin to experience them.

## Emotional changes

The same hormones that cause physical growth and maturation also help create changes in emotions and in relationships with others. Emotional swings can be confusing to both parents and their growing children: the young people may feel wonderful one minute and irritable, angry or sad the next minute. Although adults experience

the same kinds of feelings that pre- and young teens do, the feelings may be more intense and young people typically give in to impulses more than do adults.

It helps for parents to understand that their pre- and young teen may be just as uncomfortable with their intense feelings as are their parents.

## Changes in thinking

At the same time that bodies and emotions are changing, the youngster's ability to think in the abstract increases. Beginning at age 11 or 12, youngsters are able to analyze situations and use reason. They are able to think in terms of possibility rather than merely concrete reality. This means that adolescents are able to fantasize, speculate, and think more like an adult than younger children.

These abilities can create problems in the relationship between pre-adolescents and their parents. Now, more than ever, youth are apt to question their parents' rules and

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values. Young people often are quick to feel that something is "unfair." As a parent, you may find yourself wondering what happened to your happy-go-lucky child, who pretty much went along with things and got along well with you.

### Social changes

■ **Importance of friends.** There is a gradual shift during elementary school toward greater reliance and importance of same-age friends. Most children by fourth or fifth grade enjoy spending much of their free time with friends. Friends become even more important during the pre- and early teen years. Parents may worry about peer pressure when, in fact, peers can provide a positive as well as negative influence. Good friends with similar values can help your child gain confidence to meet the changes and adjustments of this phase. Youth at this age typically enjoy hanging around with "the gang" or having "secret clubs" with no adults around. They may enjoy keeping secrets from parents. This is normal unless there are signs of dangerous behavior (See Pm-1547h, another publication in this Parenting series).

Some parents express sadness that children at this age spend less time with the family. While the family continues to be extremely important, preteens and teens do spend more time with their friends. Some youngsters in middle school and junior high actually seem to be embarrassed to be seen with parents. Parents may feel hurt when their child expresses this feeling but it is usually a normal sign of independence. When the young person feels more confidence with friends, the feeling often goes away.

It is important to let your child know that you still want and expect him or her to spend time with the family. At the same time, help your child know growing independence is important. It may be helpful to set aside certain times each week for family activities.

■ **Loss of self-confidence.** Some parents are surprised to find that it's common for pre- or young teens to lose self-confidence. Their youngster may appear self-assured or even cocky, but beneath the surface he or she probably feels less confident. In addition to feeling physically awkward, youth compare themselves to some image of what they should look like and they often have new concerns about getting along with peers. Youth, as well as their parents, often worry about these years: "Will I have enough friends?" "Will I make the team?" "Will my body look the way it's supposed to?"

### Individual differences

Physical, emotional, cognitive (thinking) and social changes are typical for pre- and young teens. However, no two young people will experience these changes in exactly the same way. Some start the transition as early as 9 while others may be 13 or older before the changes begin. Also, the child's personality and past behavior must be considered. A child who has always had difficulty with change, or who has had intense feelings as a young child, may have more difficulty with the preteen stage.

It helps to realize that about 80 percent of teens never present serious problems to their families or get into real trouble. Parents need to know that their influence remains strong into the teen years and

adulthood. Research shows that young people typically return to the values of their families in young adulthood.

### Parenting tips

The following ideas may help make your child's transition to the teen years easier for both of you.

- Understand that most changes you see in your child are normal.
- Listen to your child and take his or her feelings seriously.
- When problems arise, work together for solutions.
- Talk to parents of older children to get a sense of perspective.
- Schedule time for family fun.
- Realize that your child's growing signs of independence are normal and healthy.

Once you realize that changing bodies, emotions and new ways of thinking and reasoning are normal for pre- and young adolescents, you can relax and worry less about how your child is "turning out." It helps to realize that one job for preteens and early teens is to test the rules, to challenge authority, and to begin to think for themselves. It's just as normal for pre- and early teens to want to think for themselves and to do more with friends as it is for toddlers to be curious. The job of parents is to have firm expectations and continue to show love and respect for their preteen, even when their preteen challenges their authority, tests the rules and, at times, puts down their parents. This is no easy task! Reading, going to parenting workshops, and talking to other parents can make the job easier and more fun.

For further reading, get copies of publications in the *Living with your Teenager* series, Pm-944a-d, available at any ISU Extension office.

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# Understanding Children

## Toys



Fond memories of childhood usually bring to mind a favorite toy. A cuddly doll, colorful crayons, or a special wagon are all childhood favorites.

Toys bring a great deal of joy to children, but they also can be valuable learning tools. Exploring, pretending, and sharing are just a few of the important skills children develop when they play.

Toys don't have to be expensive. After all, cardboard boxes in the backyard and measuring cups in the bathtub are favorite standards. But parents who do wish to purchase toys may find it helpful to know what toys to choose and which to avoid for children of different ages.

### ■ Infants and toddlers

Infants and toddlers learn about the world through their senses. They are interested in the

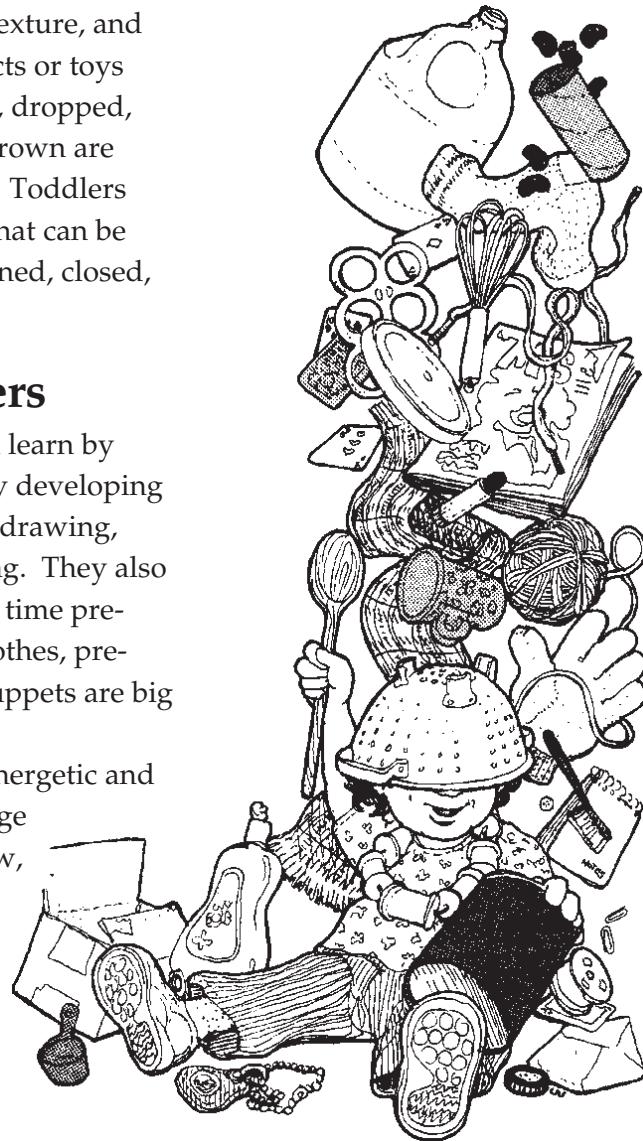
sight, sound, smell, texture, and taste of things. Objects or toys that can be squeezed, dropped, poked, twisted, or thrown are sure to cause delight. Toddlers also enjoy any item that can be stacked, poured, opened, closed, pushed, or pulled.

### ■ Preschoolers

Preschool children learn by doing. They are busy developing new skills. They like drawing, painting, and building. They also spend a great deal of time pretending. Dress-up clothes, pretend "props," and puppets are big favorites.

Preschoolers are energetic and active. They need large balls to roll and throw, wagons to pull, and tricycles to ride.

(continued on p.4)



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Pm-1529m | Reprinted | June 1997

Age	Toys to choose	Toys to avoid	Age	Toys to choose	Toys to avoid
<b>Newborn to 1 year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• brightly colored objects</li> <li>• pictures within view but out of reach</li> <li>• mobiles that have objects attached with cords less than 12 inches long</li> <li>• unbreakable toys that rattle or squeak</li> <li>• washable dolls or animals with embroidered eyes</li> <li>• stacking ring cones</li> <li>• tapes or records with gentle music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• toys with parts smaller than 1 1/4 inch (about the size of a half dollar)</li> <li>• toys with sharp edges</li> <li>• toys with detachable small parts</li> <li>• toys with toxic paint</li> <li>• toys with cords more than 12 inches long</li> <li>• stuffed animals with glass or button eyes</li> <li>• balloons</li> </ul>	<b>2 to 3 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• play dough</li> <li>• large crayons</li> <li>• peg boards with large pieces</li> <li>• low rocking horses</li> <li>• sandbox toys</li> <li>• soft balls of different sizes</li> <li>• cars or wagons to push</li> <li>• simple musical instruments</li> <li>• simple dress-up items like hats, scarves, shoes</li> <li>• sturdy riding toys</li> <li>• books that rhyme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• toys with sharp edges</li> <li>• toys with small removable parts</li> <li>• small objects such as beads, coins, or marbles</li> <li>• electrical toys</li> <li>• lead soldiers</li> <li>• tricycles with seats more than 12 inches high</li> <li>• riding toys</li> </ul>
<b>1 to 2 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• push and pull toys</li> <li>• books with cloth or stiff pasteboard pages</li> <li>• nonglass mirrors</li> <li>• take-apart toys with large pieces</li> <li>• blocks—foam, plastic, or cardboard</li> <li>• nested boxes or cups</li> <li>• musical and chime toys</li> <li>• floating tub toys</li> <li>• pounding and stacking toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small toys that can be swallowed</li> <li>• toys with small removable parts</li> <li>• stuffed animals with glass or button eyes</li> <li>• toys with sharp edges</li> </ul>	<b>3 to 4 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dolls with simple clothes</li> <li>• balls, any sizes</li> <li>• nonelectrical trucks, trains</li> <li>• building blocks</li> <li>• toy telephone</li> <li>• dress-up clothes</li> <li>• sturdy tea sets</li> <li>• plastic interlocking blocks</li> <li>• blunt scissors</li> <li>• play dough</li> <li>• washable markers, large crayons</li> <li>• sewing cards</li> <li>• simple board games</li> <li>• books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• electrical toys</li> <li>• lead soldiers</li> <li>• flammable costumes</li> <li>• toys with sharp edges or small, removable parts</li> <li>• riding toys used in hilly or inclined driveways</li> </ul>

Age	Toys to choose	Toys to avoid	Age	Toys to choose	Toys to avoid
<b>4 to 5 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building blocks</li> <li>• simple construction sets</li> <li>• modeling clay</li> <li>• nonelectrical trains, battery operated toys</li> <li>• puppets and puppet theater</li> <li>• finger paint</li> <li>• stencils</li> <li>• board and card games</li> <li>• simple musical instruments</li> <li>• small sports equipment</li> <li>• bicycles with 20-inch wheels and training wheels (all should wear bike helmets)</li> <li>• books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• toxic or oil-based paint sets</li> <li>• flammable costumes or ones that can be easily tripped over</li> <li>• kites made of aluminized polyester film (this material conducts electricity)</li> <li>• electrical toys (unless battery operated)</li> <li>• shooting toys and darts with pointed tips</li> <li>• fireworks of any kind</li> <li>• lawn darts</li> </ul>	<b>6 to 8 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• construction sets</li> <li>• sled, roller skates</li> <li>• sewing materials</li> <li>• simple camera</li> <li>• printing and stamp sets</li> <li>• paints, colored pencils</li> <li>• sketch pads</li> <li>• kites</li> <li>• battery powered electrical toys (Underwriters Laboratory approved)</li> <li>• jigsaw puzzles</li> <li>• dominoes</li> <li>• board games</li> <li>• simple tool sets</li> <li>• dolls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kites made of aluminized polyester film (this material conducts electricity)</li> <li>• shooting toys, and toys with loud noises like cap guns</li> <li>• fireworks of any kind</li> <li>• sharp-edged tools</li> <li>• electrical toys run on household current</li> <li>• bikes or skateboards ridden without helmets</li> </ul>
			<b>8 to 12 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hobby materials</li> <li>• arts and crafts materials</li> <li>• musical instruments</li> <li>• sports equipment</li> <li>• camping equipment</li> <li>• construction sets</li> <li>• electric trains</li> <li>• bicycles (26-inch wheels for kids ten and older)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fireworks of any kind</li> <li>• air rifles, chemistry sets, darts, skateboards, and arrows (unless used with parental supervision)</li> </ul>

## ■ School-age Children

School-age children feel more grown-up and love activities that lead to "real products" such as jewelry, "designer" T-shirts, or stamp collections. They also develop a keen interest in sports and enjoy having adult-like physical equipment such as softball gloves, tennis rackets, or skates. They have a better understanding of rules and enjoy playing with others. Board games, cards, or



Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Illustration by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

dominoes teach math concepts and problem-solving skills.

### Think toy safety

More than 120,000 children are taken to hospital emergency rooms each year for treatment of toy-related injuries. Evaluate toys for your children from the standpoint of safety. The following are some guidelines.

- Choose toys appropriate to the child's age. Some toys intended for children more than 3 years old may contain small parts, which could present a choking hazard for infants and toddlers. Toddlers should never play with anything that is smaller than a half dollar.
- Think BIG when selecting toys, especially for children under age three. Big toys without small parts can be enjoyed by youngsters of different ages. Keep toys intended for older children, such as games with small pieces, marbles, or small balls, away from younger children.
- Keep uninflated balloons out of reach for children under age 6, and discard pieces of broken balloons because of the choking hazard.
- Explain and show your child the proper use of safety equipment such as bicycle

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helmets. Studies show that helmets can reduce severe injuries from a fall.

- Check all toys periodically for breakage and potential hazards. Damaged toys can be dangerous and should be repaired or thrown away immediately.
- Store toys safely. Teach children to put toys away so they are not tripping hazards. Periodically check toy boxes and shelves for safety.

### Store toys safely

Toy safety involves choosing the right toy, checking it regularly for damage, and storing it safely. One of the greatest dangers in toy storage is the toy chest with a free-falling lid. Children are injured when the lid falls on their head, neck, or arms. Upright lids in trunks and footlockers pose this kind of hazard.

Open chests or bins, chests with lightweight removable lids, or chests with sliding doors or panels do not present the hazard of a falling lid.

Low, open shelves where toys can be reached easily and put away are a safer alternative and are often preferred by children. Small items such as building blocks or puzzle pieces can be stored in plastic tubs or boxes.

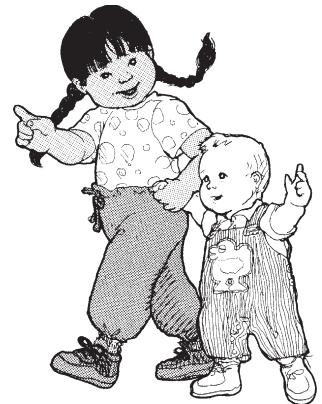
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# Understanding Children

## Sibling Rivalry



You have a headache and the dog is barking. You cannot get the sales person off the phone and you can see the long list of chores posted on the refrigerator door. On top of everything else, your kids are fighting like crazy with everything they've got— biting, scratching, and throwing toys.

### Fighting among young children

Constant fighting, put downs, and arguing among children cause frustration and concern in most parents. Although sibling rivalry can have several reasons, brothers and sisters often fight to get the attention of parents or to show power or superiority over another child.

Some bickering is normal among brothers and sisters. Constant arguing, fighting, and creating potentially dangerous situations, however, are not normal. The following are some ideas to help reduce your frustration over quarrelsome siblings and lessen the fighting too.

### Let siblings express their feelings about each other

When children complain about each other, parents often try to talk them out of their feelings. ("You shouldn't be mad at your sister," or "Stop complaining. He's the only brother you have.")

Instead, acknowledge their anger or frustration. Let your children know that you understand their anger. That can help them feel better and even treat another child better.

Use this as a tool to lessen sibling rivalry in several ways. Identify the angry child's feelings with words, ("You sound furious! You wish he'd ask before using your things.") and suggest symbolic or creative activity ("Would you like to draw a picture of how mad you feel?").

You may be surprised at how quickly the anger disappears when you let your children know that you're aware of, and understand their frustration.

Jennifer has two sons, Jimmy, 5, and Danny, 4, who had trouble getting along since they were very little.

Playing together often ends in grabbing toys, calling each other names, and complaints to Jennifer. At an evening class on parenting, Jennifer heard that kids fight less when the parent describes what the kids might be feeling. It seemed too good to be true, but Jennifer decided to give it a try. The next time Danny came to complain about Jimmy, Jennifer said, "Sounds like you're feeling pretty mad at Jimmy." To her amazement,



Danny looked puzzled for a minute and then said, "Yeah, I am mad at him." She then heard Danny go to another room and play by himself.

## ■ Don't compare your children

It's natural for parents to notice that one child is more cooperative or better behaved in some ways than another child in the same family. Comparing siblings, however, does not encourage better behavior, but intensifies jealousy and envy. It also is likely that the child you compare unfavorably may want to get even with the child you praise.

Instead of comparing one child unfavorably to another, comment only on the behavior that displeases you. ("I see a brand new jacket on the floor. That bothers me. This

jacket belongs in the closet." instead of "Why can't you hang up your clothes like your brother?")

Also, avoid praising one child at the other's expense. ("You're sure better at picking up your toys than your brother.") The child you're praising may feel sorry for the sibling you are criticizing or the child may feel superior and look down on the other child.

*Sherry and John have 3 children — Mark, 6, Julie, 4, and Todd, 1. Sherry, in her concern for Julie as "the middle child," got in the habit of pointing out Julie's good behavior to Mark. For instance, she would say, "Mark, look how Julie is cleaning up her plate. See if you can finish your dinner, too." One day when Sherry asked the kids to pick up toys, she heard Mark say to Julie, "I'm not going to pick up anything. You're the one who does everything right."*

Sherry then made a commitment to stop comparing Mark to Julie. The next day when she saw Julie hanging up her jacket and Mark dropping his on the floor, she resisted the urge to compare the children and said to Mark, "I see a coat on the floor that needs hanging up."

## ■ Treat children individually, not equally

Parents sometimes believe that the best way to avoid arguments and unhappiness among their children is to give equally to each child. New clothing for a child often is matched with something new for the siblings too. Spending time with one child often means trying to spend an equal amount of time with the other.

This practice of attempting to give equally to all the children only encourages comparisons by the children who often feel cheated. No matter how hard you try to make things the same—portions of favorite food, time spent, or gifts given—children are bound to find some way that you're not being fair.

Children feel special and valued when you give to each according to individual need. Instead of telling children that you love them equally, privately point out their special qualities that have nothing to do with others in the family. ("I love spending time with you" or "You're the only one like you in the whole world and I love you.")



## ■ Don't take sides

Resist the urge to figure out who started the fight. Parents often believe that the older or stronger child started the fight and should be punished. Often it's nearly impossible to tell who started the fighting. Even very young children can start a fight when you're not looking, in the hope that you will punish the older child.

Even if you are sure who started the fight, taking sides only makes things worse. The "victim" may feel pleased to have you on his or her side, but the one who is blamed probably will want to get even with the other child. Avoid frequent blaming of one child for starting fights as it may make the child feel like a "bad apple" who cannot get along. Even if punishing the one who started the fight may stop the behavior temporarily, it may lead to resentment or poor self-esteem in the long run.

Instead of taking sides, comment on the behavior you can observe. ("I see two kids fighting" instead of "Bobby, leave her alone.")

*Larry and Sue were concerned about the possibility of 3-year-old Lisa injuring the baby, who was 1 1/2. If the children were in the same room and the baby started crying, Larry assumed that Lisa was picking on him and usually sent her to her room.*

*When the situation grew worse, Larry talked to his sister. She thought that Larry might be making things worse by punishing Lisa. She suggested separating the children when the baby cried without scolding or punishing Lisa. Next time the baby cried when Lisa was near him, Larry simply moved the baby to a different spot and said nothing to Lisa. After a few weeks of*

*separating the children without assigning blame, Larry and Sue noticed that Lisa and the baby were getting along better.*

## ■ Let children work it out for themselves

Your children may still argue or bicker. The more you can stay out of their minor fighting, the sooner they will learn to settle their differences themselves. Remember the three B's.

1. **Bear it.** Ignore the fighting as long as you can. Turn on some music and pretend you're not even aware of the bickering.
  2. **Beat it.** When you can't ignore it any longer, go to another room where you can't hear it as well. Your children may get the message that you're not going to settle things for them. Some parents try the "bathroom retreat" in which they lock themselves in the bathroom with some reading material for a short time while the fighting continues. Obviously, this option does not work when you are concerned for the safety of an infant or when children are out of control.
  3. **Boot 'em out!** Ask the children to take their fighting somewhere else. ("If you two kids need to fight, please do it outside where I don't have to hear it.") When children know you're not going to take sides, the fighting often settles down quickly.
- Remember, these ideas only are appropriate when the fighting is minor and does not appear to be dangerous.

*Bob and Ellen loved being parents to their two daughters, aged 5 and 6, except for one thing—the fighting*

*between the girls. Bob had grown up getting along well with his older brother and Ellen was an only child. It was hard for them to accept their daughters' competitiveness and constant fighting. The fighting was so upsetting to Ellen that she would try to settle the arguments the minute they started.*

*After reading an article in the newspaper on sibling rivalry, Bob suggested to Ellen that they try letting the girls work out their problems themselves. Since both Bob and Ellen worked outside the home, the problem was in the evenings and on weekends. They decided to ignore the fighting as long as they could. When Ellen wanted to settle an argument, she was to get Bob and do something around the house with him to distract herself.*

*Bob sat down with the girls and explained the new plan. He said, "Mom and I have decided that you two are old enough to settle your own arguments. When you have a problem, we're going to leave it up to you to come up with a solution. Mom and I are going to stay out of it." Things seemed to get worse for a few days, but after a while Bob and Ellen noticed that the fighting was happening less often.*

## ■ Step in when children cannot work it out

Step in during fighting between brothers and sisters in the following situations:

- when the same fights happen over and over with no resolution,
- when the fighting is serious and may be dangerous.

If the children fight over the same issues day in and day out even after you have given opportunities for

them to work it out, you may need to teach conflict resolution skills. Do this when everyone has calmed down and avoid taking sides.

For example, teach children how to use a timer to take turns with a plaything. Teach social skills by showing them how to ask someone nicely rather than grabbing or yelling. Also, ask both children in the situation for their ideas on how to solve the problem between them. Even children as young as 4 or 5 can come up with useful ideas.

## ■ Stop dangerous fighting

When sibling rivalry turns into real fighting in which one or both children may be injured, parents must step in. A parent's job is to protect children from fighting that could lead to physical or emotional damage. The following steps can help you deal with problem situations without choosing sides.

1. Describe the situation you see. ("I see two sisters who are getting ready to hurt each other.")
2. Separate the children. ("This looks dangerous. Sally, you go to the front yard and Janey, you go to the back.")
3. Wait for a cooling down period.
4. Listen to each child's point of view and acknowledge feelings.
5. Work out a possible solution together for dealing with the problem in the future.

At times, fighting that starts as a play fight turns into a serious fight. Let children know that it's only a play fight when both children agree that it's in fun. When one child is not having fun, the fighting must stop.

*Laura was worried about the fighting between her two sons, aged 6 and 4. The fighting got worse after the divorce and had Laura concerned about Joey injuring his younger brother, John. One day she heard John cry out and saw Joey clutching a pair of sharp scissors, ready to use it like a dagger on John. She grabbed the scissors and spanked John, but she knew that it would happen again unless she figured out a better way to handle it.*

*That night, Laura called her friend, Jeanne, who had three sons of her own, and asked for her advice. Jeanne had seen Laura's boys in dangerous situations before and she gave Laura this advice. "You've got to do something to keep your boys safe, Laura. Spanking and yelling doesn't seem to help. What worked with my boys was to separate them without scolding anyone when the fighting got bad. Then, when they had calmed down, I would talk to them and let them come up with ideas of how to solve the problem that had led to the fighting."*

*Next day, when Joey was holding John down and pinching him, Laura said, "I see somebody getting hurt. John, you go to the TV room and Joey, you play in the kitchen." She knew the problem wasn't over, but at least she had prevented injury and hadn't made Joey feel like getting even with John later on.*

## ■ Give yourself time

The stories at the end of each section make it sound as if the fighting can stop like magic if only you do the right thing. Realistically, it takes time and persistence for you to learn new ways of treating your children, and for them to learn new ways of getting along. Don't give up. It may even seem like it's getting worse before it gets better.

Learn to let your children express their feelings, avoid comparing them, and treat each child as an individual. Their relationships are bound to improve. It is possible for you to remain neutral and yet teach your children to stop fighting and handle differences. Remember that when you help your children get along better, you are preparing them for important relationships in the future with co-workers, spouses, and even their own children.

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Written by Virginia Molgaard, Ph.D., extension human development specialist. Illustrated by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

File: Family life 8

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# Understanding Children

## Language development



What could be more exciting than hearing your baby's first word? As that first word grows into a sentence and later into conversation, you will be watching a miracle—the miracle of language development.

As a parent, you are your child's first teacher. When you take time to listen, talk, read, sing, and play games with your child, you help teach important language skills that last a lifetime.

### ■ Age 0 to 6 months Typical language skills

- Cries in different ways to say, "I'm hurt, wet, hungry, or lonely."
- Makes noises to voice displeasure or satisfaction.
- Babbles.
- Recognizes and looks for familiar voices and sounds.

### Nurture your child's language skills

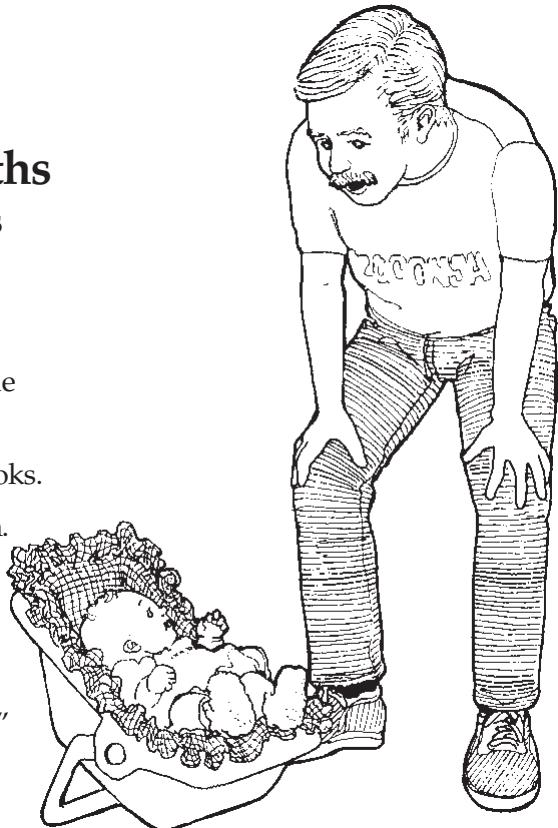
- When babies babble, gurgle, and coo, respond with the same sounds.
- Talk with infants when you feed, dress, or play with them.
- Sing songs.
- Play soft music.

### ■ Age 6 to 12 months Typical language skills

- Waves bye-bye.
- Responds to name.
- Understands names of some familiar objects.
- Shows interest in picture books.
- Pays attention to conversation.
- Says first word (maybe).
- Babbles expressively as if talking.
- Says "Da-da" and "Ma-ma" (maybe)

### Nurture your child's language skills

- Teach babies their names and names of familiar objects.
- Talk to them about what you are doing: "Now I am getting Sara's socks."



- Play peek-a-boo.
- Hold babies in your lap and show them pictures in magazines and books.
- Sing simple songs.

## ■ Age 12 to 18 months

### Typical language skills

- Identifies family members and familiar objects.
- Points to a few body parts such as nose, ears.
- Follows simple, one-step instructions.
- Says two or more words.
- Imitates familiar noises like cars, planes, birds.
- Repeats a few words.
- Looks at person talking.
- Says “Hi” or “Bye” if reminded.
- Uses expressions like “Oh-oh.”
- Asks for something by pointing or using one word.
- Identifies an object in a picture book.

### Nurture your child’s language skills

- Teach your child names of people, body parts, and objects.
- Teach sounds that different things make.
- Read simple stories.
- Make a scrapbook with bright pictures of familiar objects such as people, flowers, houses, and animals to “read.”

- Speak clearly and simply; “baby talk” confuses children who are learning to talk.

## ■ Age 18 months to 2 years

### Typical language skills

- Says about 50 words, but can understand many more.
- Echoes single words that are spoken by someone else.
- Talks to self and jabbers expressively.
- Says names of toys and familiar objects.
- Uses two to three word sentences like “Daddy bye-bye,” “All gone.”
- Hums or tries to sing simple songs.
- Listens to short rhymes or fingerplays.
- Points to eyes, ears, or nose when asked.
- Uses the words “Bye,” “Hi,” “Please,” and “Thank you” if prompted.

### Nurture your child’s language skills

- Read at least one book to your child every day.
- Encourage your child to repeat short sentences.
- Give simple instructions. (“Give the book to Jon.”)
- Read rhymes with interesting sounds, especially those accompanied by actions or pictures.

## ■ Age 2 to 3 years

### Typical language skills

- Identifies up to 10 pictures in a book when objects are named.
- Uses simple phrases and sentences.
- Responds when called by name.
- Responds to simple directions.
- Starts to say plural and past tense words.
- Enjoys simple stories, rhymes, and songs.
- Uses two- to three-word sentences.
- Enjoys looking at books.
- Points to eyes, ears, or nose when asked.
- Repeats words spoken by someone else.
- Vocabulary expands up to 500 words.

### Nurture your child’s language skills

- Play word games like “This Little Piggy” or “High as a House.”
- Listen, talk, and read with your child every day.
- Teach your child simple songs and nursery rhymes.

## ■ Age 3 to 4 years

### Typical language skills

- Talks so 75 to 80 percent of speech is understandable.
- Says own first and last name.
- Understands location words like over, under, on, and in.

- Understands now, soon, and later.
- Asks who, what, where, and why questions.
- Talks in complete sentences of 3 to 5 words: "Mommy is drinking juice." "There's a big dog."
- Stumbles over words sometimes—usually not a sign of stuttering.
- Enjoys repeating words and sounds over and over.
- Listens attentively to short stories and books.
- Likes familiar stories told without any changes in words.
- Enjoys listening to stories and repeating simple rhymes.
- Enjoys telling simple stories from pictures or books.
- Likes to sing and can carry a simple tune.
- Recognizes common everyday sounds.
- Identifies common colors such as red, blue, yellow, green.

## Nurture your child's language skills

- Include your child in everyday conversation. Talk about what you are going to do, ask questions, listen.
- Play simple games that teach concepts like over, under, on, and in.
- Read books with poems, songs, and rhymes.
- Encourage your children to repeat favorite stories.

- Give children a few books of their own and show them how to take good care of them.

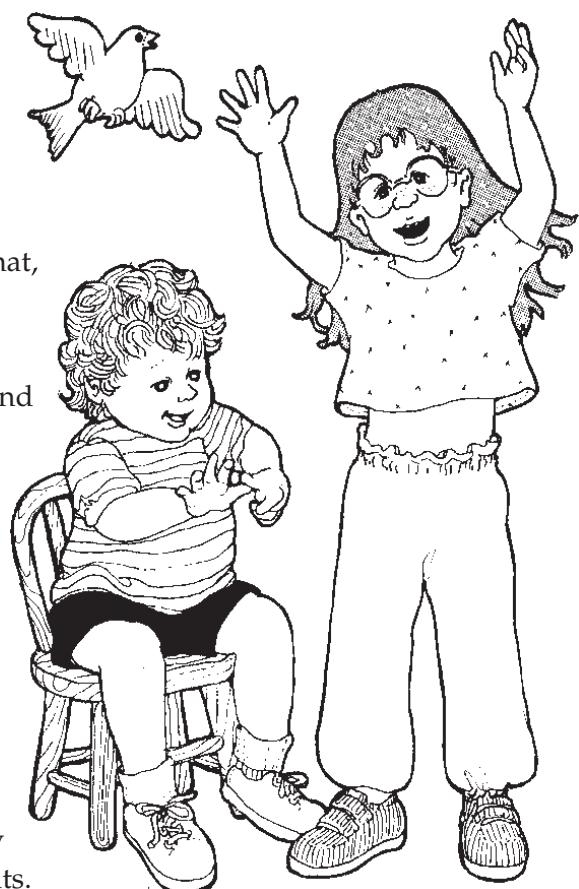
## ■ Age 4 to 5 years

### Typical language skills

- Recognizes some letters if taught and may be able to print own name.
- Recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs (STOP sign, fast food signs).
- Speaks in fairly complex sentences—"The baby ate the cookie before I could put it on the table."
- Enjoys singing simple songs, rhymes, and nonsense words.
- Adapts language to listener's level of understanding. To baby sister: "Daddy go bye-bye." To mother: "Daddy went to the store."
- Learns name, address, and phone number if taught.
- Asks and answers who, what, why, where, and what if questions.
- Names six to eight colors and three shapes.
- Follows two unrelated directions. "Put your milk on the table and get your coat on."
- Likes to talk and carries on elaborate conversations.
- Likes to shock others by using "forbidden" words.
- Loves to tell jokes that may not make any sense to adults.

## Nurture your child's language skills

- Visit the public library regularly.
- Play games that encourage counting and color naming.
- Encourage children to tell you stories.
- Help children create their own story books with magazine pictures or post cards.
- Read books with poems and songs.
- Take turns telling jokes.
- Record your child telling a story or singing a song.



## ■ Age 5 to 6

### Typical language skills

- Speaks with correct grammar and word form.
- Expresses self in pretend play.
- Writes first name, some letters, and numbers.
- Reads simple words.

### Nurture your child's language skills

- Visit the public library regularly.
- Encourage pretend play. Help children create props from old sheets, cardboard boxes, and household items. Show children how to label their creations with simple signs like "Shoe Store" or "Tickets."
- Encourage children to put on simple plays and shows.
- Let children help you sort coupons and cut ads out of the newspaper.
- Ask your child to help you locate and find grocery items in the grocery store.
- Check how many store signs your child can identify when you are out running errands.

## ■ Try fingerplays and songs

Can't carry a tune? Don't have a piano? That's not a problem with young children. Kids love to sing!

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You may not realize it but you probably know quite a few songs from your own childhood. Some familiar songs you might know are:

- "Hokey Pokey"
- "Farmer in the Dell"
- "Mulberry Bush"
- "Hush Little Baby"
- "Eensy, Weensy Spider"
- "If You're Happy and You Know It"
- "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"

Children also delight in fingerplays like "This little piggy" and "Eensy, weensy spider." You also might like to try the following.

#### Old Owl

An owl sat alone on the branch of a tree (use arm as a branch, raise thumb for owl)

She was quiet as quiet as quiet could be

Twas night and her eyes were wide open like this (circle eyes with fingers and look around)

She looked all around; not a thing did she miss.

Some little birds perched on the branch of the tree, (fingers of other hand fly on tree)

And sat there as quiet as quiet could be

The solemn old owl said "Whoo-whooo-whooo," (wave hand away, fluttering fingers behind back)

And jumped at the birds and away they flew.

If you would like to learn more songs and fingerplays check with your local library for children's records and audio-cassette tapes.

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about children and families, ask for the following publications from your county extension office.

*Kindergarten Ahead*, PM 784 (cost)

*Understanding Children—Learning to read and write*, PM 1529e

*Child's Play - Fingerplays Plus*, PM 1770 (cost)

*Puppets for Kids*, PM 1229 (cost)

*Making Toys that Teach*, NCR 187 (cost)

*So Alive—Three to Five*, PM 1431 (cost)

## ■ Books for Children

*The Listening Walk*, Paul Showers

*The Snowman*, Raymond Briggs

*Baby's Favorite Things*, Marsha Cohen

*My First Look at Colors*, Stephen Oliver

*Gobble, Growl, Grunt*, Peter Spier

*Push -Pull, Empty -Full*, Tana Hoban

*Are You My Mother?* P. Eastman

*Rosie's Walk*, Pat Hutchins

*Caps for Sale*, Esphyr Slobodkina

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal.

File: Family life 8

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# Understanding Children



## *Learning to read and write*

Learning to read and write is an exciting adventure for a young child. This adventure can begin in infancy and last a lifetime.

As children learn that books are for reading — not chewing — and that pictures and words are different, they begin to lay the foundation for reading and writing.

### ■ Reading

#### Stage one Exploring

Although parents do not always enjoy it, touching, tasting, and even occasional tearing are favorite activities for infants and toddlers as they first discover books. It is never too early to show books or read to your child. Read to infants and toddlers and provide opportunities for them to explore written material.

Snuggling up in a comfortable lap while listening to a story sets the stage for a lifelong love of

books and learning. Parents also might buy inexpensive cloth books and allow children to play with old magazines.

#### Stage two Repetition and anticipation

As children grow older they begin to copy their parents or older siblings and "pretend to read." They may ask parents to read a story over, and over, and over! Although parents may tire of the same book, children enjoy the repetition as they anticipate the chain of events.

Repeatedly hearing the story also helps children develop an understanding of connected

events. As children discover that stories have a beginning, middle, and an end, they learn to memorize and retell stories with amazing accuracy! During this stage children become particularly interested in details; if parents



skip over a sentence or paragraph in a book, children will protest quite loudly!

## Stage three

### Words as symbols for ideas

During the third stage, children begin to develop a basic understanding that the pictures and words in their book have different purposes. Gradually, they understand that written words are symbols for ideas and thoughts.

## Stage four

### Identifying and matching words

In the fourth stage children begin to identify and match words. Although they may not really understand the meaning of specific words or sentences, children often will run their fingers along the sentence or point to individual words as the book is

read. Following along with a finger helps children learn that words are placed in sentences from left to right and in a certain order.

## Stage five

### Focus on meaning

In this final stage of development, children begin to focus on the meaning of words. They may stop the story repeatedly and ask "What does this say?" They begin to recognize simple words from their favorite books in other reading materials or places. The word "STOP" on a corner stop sign can cause great excitement.

Reading, listening, and writing are important skills that parents can foster early in a child's life. The following are some suggestions for parents to help their children in the fascinating world of words.

- Establish a regular time every day for reading. Reading a story gives children a sense of what reading and writing are all about.

- Get your child a library card and make regular visits to the library. Take advantage of story times and special events sponsored by your library.

- Read to infants and toddlers. They learn to associate reading with the comfort and security of being held and with the wonderful sound of a parent's voice.

- Preschoolers enjoy hearing the same story over and over again. When reading books that repeat phrases, such as *The House that Jack Built*, give young children an opportunity to participate by letting them read the repetitive parts with you.

- Preschoolers love to "pretend" to read by telling a favorite story they have memorized. Increase your child's involvement by stopping occasionally to ask questions or talk about what is waiting for them at the turn of a page. Questions help children develop important language skills. Try "How many pigs are there? Let's count them together," "Why is the puppy dog sad?" "Can you show me everything in this picture that is red?" "What do you think will happen next?"

- Encourage older children to read aloud to younger siblings, or to read aloud a dramatic piece from a play or a poem. Most children love to put on a good performance.



- Help your child understand the structure of a book by making a "Me" book using a photo album. Collect pictures of family members, friends, favorite animals, toys, etc. Albums with sturdy pages are easy to keep clean and allow you to change pictures easily. You also can use snapshots, post cards, magazines, and catalog pictures.
- Explain the joy and importance of reading regularly. Before children can become readers, they must learn why people read and what people do when they read.
- Invite your children to help you read a recipe as you cook. Read cooking instructions out loud. Point out measurement markings on measuring cups and spoons.
- Show your children how you must read and write when you pay bills. Let them open your junk mail and decide what is to be saved or tossed. Encourage younger children to use junk mail in pretend play.
- Encourage older children to check the weather predictions and read movie commercials or comic strips in the newspaper. You also might want to help your child start a collection of newspaper and magazine stories about sports, nature, science, etc.
- Provide alternative reading materials such as TV schedules, old catalogs, and magazines. When traveling, read out loud traffic signs, road signs, and billboards. Check with your local librarian for a list of magazines written specifically for children.
- Record a favorite book on tape so that your child can read along. Older children frequently enjoy taping books as a gift for a younger child.
- For more information, ask for *Ages and Stages*, PM 1530a-g, at your county extension office.
- Let your child play with an old typewriter (provide a supply of typing paper).
- Write notes to your child about chores and errands and don't forget to include a thank you. Encourage them to write letters and thank you notes to friends and family members. Take dictation for a child who cannot write and read the letter back for the child's approval.
- Let children write with colored chalk on a sidewalk or basement floor.
- Give gifts of pens, pencils, stationery, or a crossword puzzle book.

## ■ Writing

When children write, they begin to focus on the details of written words. The following are some ideas to help you encourage your child's writing skills.

- Let your children make grocery lists and greeting card lists, record birthdays on the family calendar, and make charts for chores.



- Suggest they write for free pamphlets and samples. Supply them with postcards and stamps.
- Set up a message center at home and let children fill out phone memo pads. Encourage older children to write down messages about their whereabouts or school activities.
- Buy a diary for older children (promise to respect their privacy).

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about children and families, ask for the following publications from your county extension office.

*So Alive—Three to Five*,

PM-1431 (cost)

*Kindergarten Ahead*, PM-784 (cost)

*Child's Play - Art*, PM 1770a(cost)

*Child's Play - Fingerplays Plus*,

PM 1770b (cost)

*Puppets for Kids*, PM-1229 (cost)

*Understanding Children: Language development*, PM-1529f

File: Family life 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Carol Ouvernon and Muktha Jost. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

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# Understanding Children

## *Disciplining your preschooler*



Preschoolers are delightful to have around, but at times can be quite a challenge! Learning how to get along with others and follow rules takes lots of practice for preschoolers; learning how to guide and discipline preschoolers takes lots of patience for parents.

### ■ Understanding preschool children

Preschool children are busy learning about the world around them. They ask lots of questions and they love to imitate adults. They are learning to share and take turns (but don't always want to). Sometimes they want to play with others and sometimes they want to be alone.

Preschoolers also are quite independent. They like to try new things and often take risks. They may try to shock you at times by using "forbidden words." Getting attention is fun, being ignored is not.

Preschoolers like to make decisions for themselves because it makes them feel important. They also are likely to get carried away and become rather bossy.

Preschoolers have lots of energy—sometimes more energy than adults! They play hard, fast, and furious; then they tire suddenly and get cranky and irritable.

Preschoolers spend a lot of time learning how to get along with others. "Best friends" are very important, but such friendships are brief and may last only a few minutes. Hurt feelings (and sometimes swift kicks) are part of the learning process too.

### ■ Ideas for parents

There is no one right way to discipline. An approach that is successful in one situation may not work in another. Also, different children respond in different ways to disciplining methods. Successful parents often use a

variety of approaches to deal with behavioral problems.

#### **Set up a safe environment**

One of the most important things a parent can do is to establish a safe environment.



Preschoolers move quickly and love to climb and explore. Take a close look at your home including the exterior, garage, and yard. You may be able to avoid some accidents. Fix, repair, toss, or lock up anything that might be a danger to your child.

It also is important to be on the look out for dangerous situations while running errands or visiting others with your children. Having a safe place to play and appropriate toys to play with can save you from saying "NO," making your job as a parent much easier.

## Establish a routine

Preschoolers need a consistent routine and reasonable bedtimes. Their small stomachs and high energy levels frequently need nutritious snacks and meals. Establishing consistent times for eating, napping, and playing helps children learn how to pace themselves. Balance the day with active times, quiet times, times to be alone, and times to be with others. Take care of basic needs to help prevent frustrating situations with a cranky and whiny child.

## Set a good example

Preschoolers love to imitate adults. Watch your bad habits because your youngster will be sure to copy them! If you want your child to use good manners or pick up his or her room, be sure to demonstrate how to do it.

Preschoolers are very interested in "why" we do things; it helps to explain what you are doing in very simple terms.

## Time out

Many parents like to use a technique called "time out." A time out is just that—a time out or cooling off period. When a child is misbehaving or out of control, he or she needs to be removed or isolated for a few minutes. Time out can be used with children ages 3 to 12 and with as many children as you have private places. For young children, however, the time out period needs to be no longer than 5 minutes or they tend to forget the reason for the time out.

A time out gives a child a few minutes to settle down and think about what has happened. Parents need to follow-up by talking with the child about the misbehavior.

Young children do not always understand their misdoings. It helps to explain what happened, what they should not be doing, and what they can do instead. They also need the opportunity to practice the correct behavior. Keep such discussions simple. You might say, "It's not OK to hit your sister. Instead, tell her with words that you want to play with the blocks, too."

## Active listening

**Child:** John won't let me ride in the wagon.

**Father:** Sounds like you are upset about that.

**Child:** Yeah, he's mean!

**Father:** Hmm. You sound really angry!

**Child:** Yeah! I had the wagon first.

**Father:** You were playing with the wagon before John was?

**Child:** Yeah, then he took it away.

**Father:** Hmm. Wonder why?

**Child:** I dunno. Maybe because I wouldn't let him play.

**Father:** Wonder how both of you could play with the wagon?

**Child:** Maybe he could ride and I could pull!

This is an example of active listening in which the father is trying to understand the problem as well as the child's feelings. The father does not try to end the conversation; instead, he encourages it. With the father's time and support, the child is able to explore the situation, understand the problem, and even offer a solution.

Sometimes preschoolers do not need an adult to intervene.

Rather, they need someone who will listen and help them work through a problem.

Young children still have very limited problem-solving skills. The child in the above example was 5 years old. With a 3-year-old in the same situation, the father may have needed to be more direct or offer a suggestion. For example:

**Father:** Maybe you could both sit in the wagon, or maybe one of you can pull and the other one can sit. Which idea do you like best?

## Natural or logical consequences

Natural or logical consequences help children understand the connection between their actions and the results of their misbehavior.

Natural consequences are results that would naturally happen after a child's behavior if the parent did not do anything.

The following examples show how natural consequences work.

- Four-year-old Cara was tossing a quarter around in the car. Her mother asked her to put the quarter in her pocket. Cara continued to toss her money and the quarter flew out the window. She lost her quarter.
- Five-year-old Juan kept forgetting to put the ball in his toy box when he came inside from playing. One afternoon the ball disappeared. Juan lost his ball.

Logical consequences should be used whenever natural consequences are dangerous or unpractical. For example, it would be dangerous for a child to experience the natural consequence of running into the street and getting hit by a car!

Logical consequences happen when a parent helps the child correct the behavior. A logical consequence of a child running into the street could be losing the privilege of playing outside. Dad might comment, "Looks like you will need to play inside. When you can stay out of the street, then you can play outdoors."

The following examples also illustrate the use of logical consequences.

- Four-year-old Alex said "Yuck!" and hurled his muffin across the kitchen. Dad calmly picked up the muffin and put it in the trash. Dad commented, "When you keep your food on your plate, then you can eat." Alex went without a snack.

## Watch your language

Use your words carefully to teach children. Focus on what to do rather than what not to do.

### Try saying:

Slow down and walk.  
Come hold my hand.  
Keep your feet on the floor.  
Use your quiet voice inside.

### Instead of:

Stop running.  
Don't touch anything.  
Don't climb on the couch.  
Stop screaming and shouting.

- Five-year-old Dena and four-year-old Peter are fighting. Mom says, "Looks like you two are having trouble getting along. Find something that you can play with together or you'll have to play alone in separate rooms."

this can work effectively. Withhold all attention, praise, and support. Eventually, the child quits the unacceptable behavior because it does not bring the desired attention. This works particularly well when a child uses forbidden or swear words to get attention.

## Redirection

Often, the problem is not what the child is doing, but the way he or she is doing it. In that case, redirecting or teaching the child a different way to do the same thing can be effective. If the child is drawing on books, remove the books and say, "Books are not for drawing on." Offer a substitute at the same time and say, "If you want to draw on something, draw on this paper." If your child is throwing blocks, you can remove the blocks and offer a ball to throw. If the child wants to dance on the coffee table, help him or her down and ask your child to perform for you on the front porch.

## Ignoring the behavior

Undesirable behavior can sometimes be stopped by not paying attention to it. In some situations

## When all else fails

Sometimes children have a behavioral problem that seems to happen over and over. When nothing seems to be working, try the who, what, when, where, and how method. Ask yourself, "When does the troublesome behavior seem to happen? What happens just before and after? Where does it happen and with whom? How do I usually respond? How could I prevent the behavior? What other approaches could I use?"

The best method to find a more successful way to cope with behavioral problems is to take the time to think about options.



## ■ Does spanking work?

Preschoolers often respond well to physical action when you need to discipline them. Touching them on the arm, taking them by the hand, picking them up, holding, or restraining them are all good ways to get their attention.

Spanking also will get their attention, but doesn't do a very good job of teaching children how to behave. In fact, it generally distresses a child so much that he or she can't pay attention to your explanations and directions. It's hard to reason with a screaming, crying child.

Spanking and slapping can quickly get out-of-hand for both parents and children. Most reported cases of abuse involve loving, well-meaning parents who lost control. Studies show that children who experience or witness a great deal of spanking, slapping, or hitting are much more likely to become aggressive themselves. Children who are bullied by older brothers, sisters, or other children often react by bullying others. Children who are spanked frequently often hit younger children.

Preschoolers love to imitate. Most parents find it more successful to focus on teaching a child *what to do* rather than *what not to do*. It may help to think of behavior problems as opportunities to teach your child new skills. After all, the word discipline comes from the word disciple, which means to teach.

## ■ Taking care of yourself

Parenting preschoolers is challenging and works better when you remember to take care of yourself. Remember to rest, eat well, and relax. Above all else, try to maintain a sense of humor. When you discover your child dumping flour on the floor or finger painting with the sour cream, remember that someday this will be a great story to tell your grandchildren. Grab a camera and take a picture! You will want to remember this. Honest.

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about children and families contact your county extension office and ask for the following.

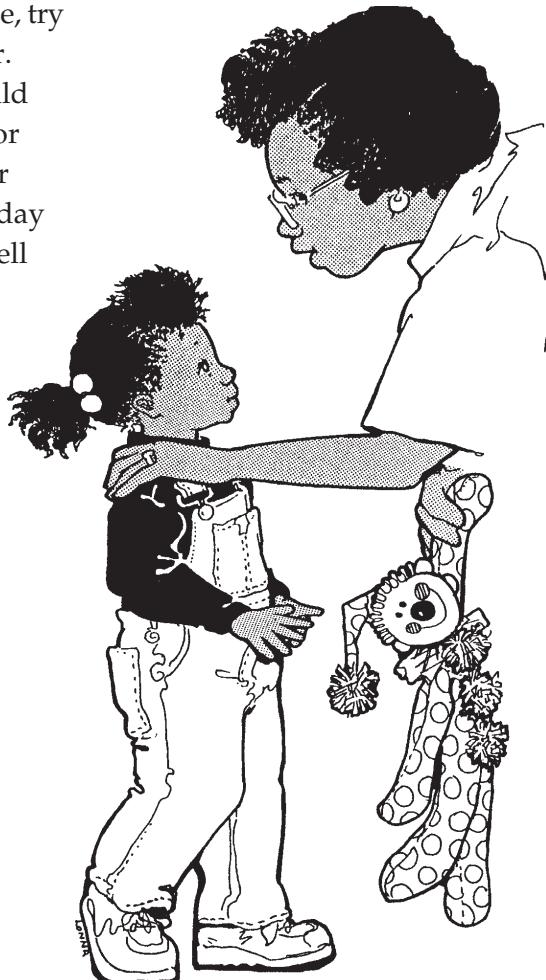
*Is Your Baby Safe at Home*, PM 954a-d

*Understanding Children: Temper tantrums*, PM 1529j

*Understanding Children: Toilet training*, PM 1529k

*Understanding Children: Biting*, PM 1529a

*Ages & Stages*, 1530e-g



File: Family life 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

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# Understanding Children

## *Disciplining your toddler*



No doubt about it, toddlers are a handful! At times, it will seem like they can be in two places at the same time, and be headed for trouble in a third one yet. Many a parent can recite nerve-racking stories of toddlers perched on top of the bookcase, or of a fall that resulted in an emergency room visit.

Setting limits and maintaining some kind of control are difficult tasks with toddlers because they are so independent, yet have so few skills to communicate and solve problems. The key to disciplining your toddler includes love, understanding, and quick thinking!

### ■ Understanding toddlers

#### Toddlers are limited in their ability to communicate

Toddlers are interesting little people. Like babies, they still like to be held, talked to, and comforted. And they still often express themselves by crying, shrieking, jabber-

ing, grunting, and pointing. Unlike babies, however, toddlers can say a few words, which can mean many things. "Cup!" may mean "Hand me my cup," "I want more milk," "The cup just fell off the table," or "The dog just stole my cup!" A toddler, with this limited capacity to communicate, is therefore very hard to understand.

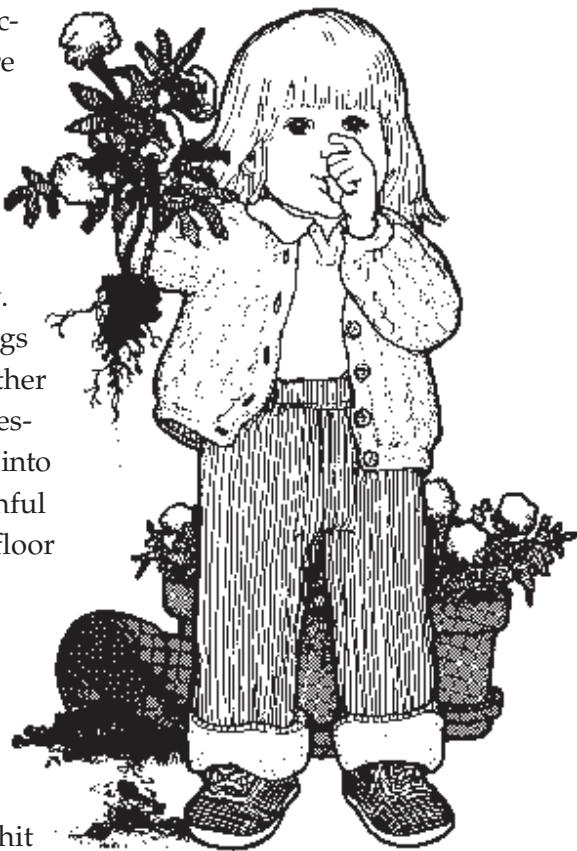
#### Toddlers can try your patience

Sometimes, toddlers do things that drive parents crazy. They reach out and grab things (like eyeglasses). They are rather clumsy and awkward with gestures; a loving pat often turns into an accidental whack. A spoonful of peas may wind up on the floor rather than in the mouth.

#### Toddlers cannot share

Toddlers are also very possessive. "No," and "Mine," are favorite words and they are quite willing to hit

or bite to get (or keep) a favorite toy. In fact, toddlers may spend as much time carrying around and protecting toys as they do playing with them.



## Toddlers cannot plan their own day

Toddlers are always "on the go" and often play until they "run out of gas." They have very little skill at pacing themselves and can be happy one minute and cranky the next. Much of this behavior depends on the new skills they are developing. The same toddler who screams for an unreachable cookie may lead or drag you to the jar and point at another time. Learning to do things in a socially acceptable way is a big step for a toddler.

## ■ How parents can help

### Set up a safe environment

One of the most important things a parent can do is to establish a safe environment. "Toddler-proof" your home by locking up dangerous chemicals and medicines, covering electrical outlets, and storing breakable objects up high, especially if your toddler is a climber!

You also may want to take a close look at toys and how your toddler uses them. Getting hit accidentally on the head with a foam block is no big deal, but a "bonk" on the head with a hard wooden block is more serious. A safe place to play and appropriate toys to play with will save you from saying "No" and make your job as parent much easier.

## Establish a routine

Toddlers need naps and reasonable bedtimes. Small stomachs need nutritious snacks and meals frequently. Growing bodies need time to run, jump, and play every day. Riding around all day in a car seat, sleeping in a stroller, and eating fast food is OK once in a while, but if it's happening often you may want to rethink your schedule. Taking care of basic needs can go a long way in preventing a cranky, whiny child.

## Remove or isolate

When a child is running out into the street or about to get into the household bleach, there is no time for negotiation. Parents MUST remove a child from a dangerous situation. Picking up, holding, or putting a child in the crib for a few minutes until things can be made safe is perfectly OK. Your child may protest loudly, but your primary responsibility is to keep him or her safe.

## Distract

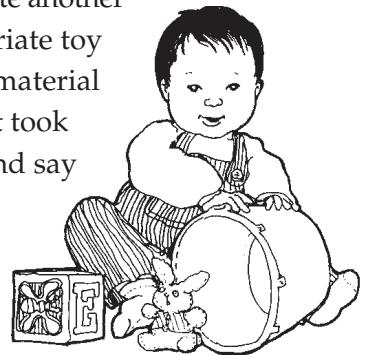
This works especially well with very young children.

When a child is doing something unacceptable, try to call attention to another activity—perhaps playing with another toy or reading a book together. The goal is to temporarily distract the child from the current problem. For example, if a child wants to play with break-

able knickknacks at a friend's home, perhaps you can distract him or her with a stuffed toy. Since young children's attention spans are so short, distraction is often effective.

## Redirect

If your toddler is throwing blocks, hammering on tables, or drawing on books, remove the materials while saying something like "Blocks are for building, not throwing." At the same time substitute another appropriate toy for the material you just took away and say "If you want to throw something,



throw the bean bag into the basket." By redirecting the activity into a more acceptable situation, you let children know you accept them and their play, and you channel a problem activity into a more acceptable activity.

## Ignore

The goal in this strategy is to have the child stop the undesirable behavior by not paying attention to it. This can be effective in some situations with older toddlers. Withhold all attention, praise, and support. Without the desired attention, children eventually quit whatever they're doing. This takes patience.



## Use natural or logical consequences

Natural consequences are results that naturally happen after a child's behavior. For example, the natural result of refusing to eat is hunger. The natural consequence of dropping a cookie in the bathtub is that it becomes soggy.



Natural consequences can be very effective for teaching children what happens when they do certain things.

Logical consequences should be used whenever natural consequences are dangerous or unpractical. For example, it would be dangerous for a child to experience the natural consequence of running in to the street and being hit by a car! Logical consequences should be logically connected to a child's behavior and should teach responsible behavior.

For example, if a child persistently flings peas across the kitchen or spills milk over the edge of the table, you may want to use logical consequences. First remove the peas or milk until they can be used in an appropriate manner. Second, provide an opportunity for your toddler to "clean-up." Peas that are dropped must be picked up; milk that is spilled must be wiped up. Using

logical consequences teaches toddlers to help with the cleaning and to understand that cleaning up our mess is a part of growing up.

## Set a good example

Toddlers love to imitate their parents. If you want your toddler to treat the dog kindly or have good eating habits, be sure to demonstrate how to do it. Remember also to talk about what you do. Even though toddlers may not fully understand everything you say, they will begin to understand that there are reasons for doing things a certain way.

## Help your toddler understand "sharing"

As was mentioned earlier, sharing is not something that toddlers do very well. They aren't able to understand the process yet. Toddlers do enjoy playing next to other children, but are not very good at playing with other children.

If you have several young children, it is better (and easier) to provide several similar toys than to require sharing. Two toy telephones can prevent many squabbles and may even encourage children to cooperate and communicate better.

Toddlers usually find it difficult to share because they don't really understand what ownership means. They may think sharing a toy is the same as giving it away.

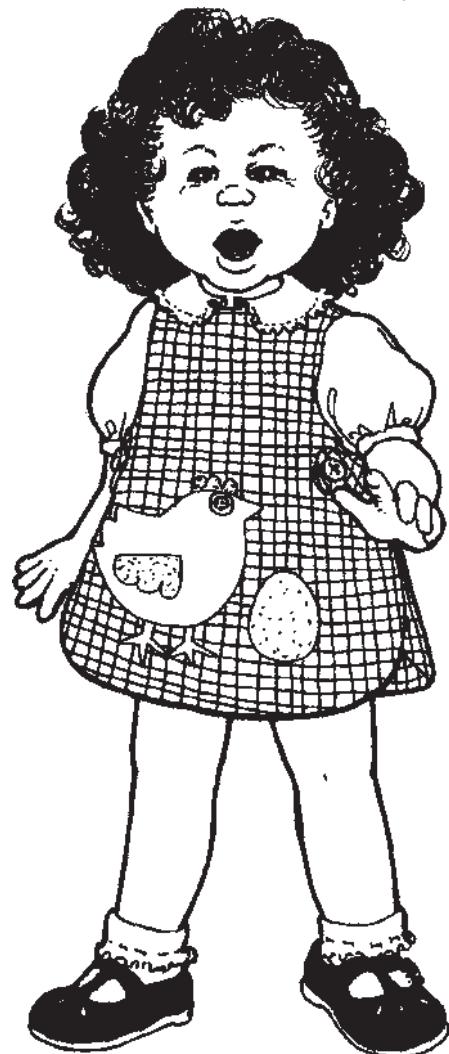
It is very common for a toddler to give someone a toy, but expect it to be given right back. Older

brothers and sisters sometimes have trouble understanding this. Sometimes it helps to explain that your toddler is just "showing" her brother the toy. If your toddler does share, give praise, but respect the need to protect treasures.

## Is it ever OK to spank?

Toddlers often respond well to physical action when you need to discipline them. Touching them on the arm, taking them by the hand, picking them up, holding, or restraining them are all good ways to get their attention.

Spanking will also get their attention, but doesn't do a very



good job of teaching them how to behave. In fact, it generally distresses children so much that they can't pay attention to your explanations or directions. It's hard to reason with a screaming, crying child.

Some parents who frequently slap a toddler's hand are dismayed to find their toddler slapping back. Or worse yet, slapping and hitting others.

Spanking and slapping can quickly get out-of-hand for both parents and children. Most reported cases of abuse involve loving, well-meaning parents who just lost control. Studies show that children who experience or witness a great deal of spanking, slapping, or hitting are much more likely to become physically aggressive themselves.

Toddlers love to imitate. Most parents find it more successful to teach a child *what to do* rather than *what not to do*. It may help to think of behavior problems as opportunities to teach your child new skills. After all, the word discipline comes from the word disciple, which means "to teach."

## ■ A final note

Disciplining toddlers is not easy. And you won't always feel good about how you handled a situation. It's important to recognize that you are human. After all, it's hard to be calm when your toddler tries to drown the cat with orange juice or smack you in the face with a banana. You can respond quickly when your

toddler needs guidance if you understand the reasons for his or her behavior and know your options. Good luck!

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about children and families contact your county extension office and ask for the following.

*Is Your Baby Safe At Home,*

PM 954a-d

*Understanding Children: Temper tantrums*, PM 1529j

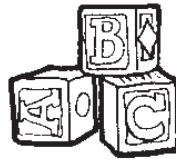
*Understanding Children: Toilet Teaching*, PM 1529k

*Understanding Children: Biting*, PM 1529a

*Understanding Children: Fears*, PM 1529d

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

File: Family life 8



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# Understanding Children

## Fears



To many parents, children's fears make no sense at all. Nevertheless, to children, monsters lurking in the dark or scary noises coming from the attic are quite real.

Around your child's second birthday, he or she may become frightened by things that did not cause fear before—the neighbor's dog, the dark, the bathtub drain, and loud noises.

Several factors contribute to a child developing fears by age 2. Children between the ages of 2 and 6 have experienced real fear or pain from being lost, injured, or bitten. They also have vivid imaginations and struggle with the idea of cause and effect. A toddler knows something about size and shape, but not enough to be sure that he or she won't be sucked down into the bathtub drain or into a flushing toilet. Older children also are aware of dangers that they hear about or see on TV. It's hard to know what is real and what is not.

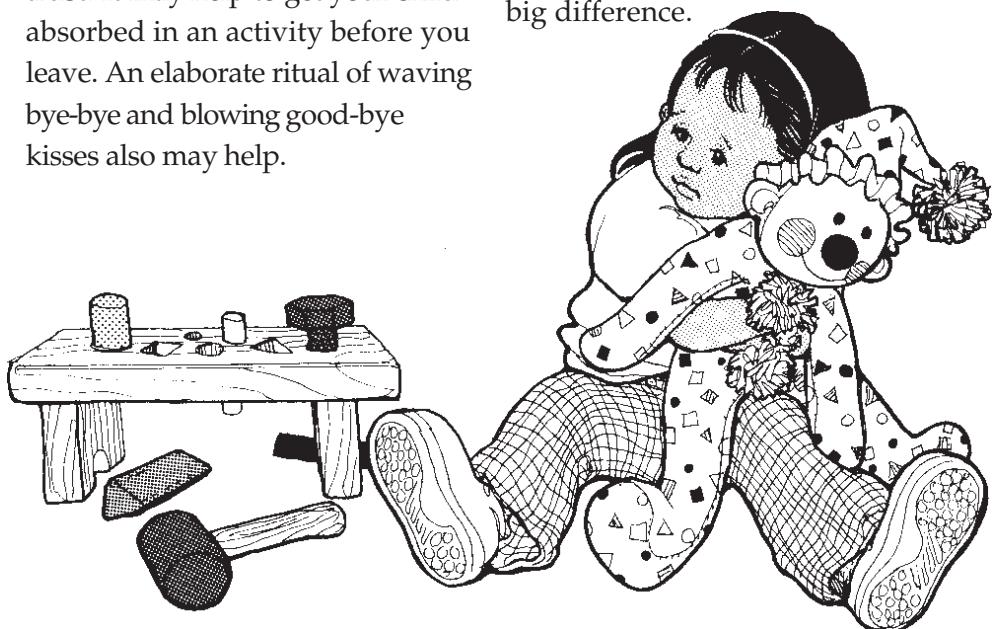
### Common fears

#### Fear of separation

Toddlers' anxiety about separation is an indication of growth. Before your toddler turned 2, he or she forgot you after you left, and settled down quickly. Now your child worries about and puzzles over your departure.

Always tell your child that you are leaving. Sneaking out decreases trust. It may help to get your child absorbed in an activity before you leave. An elaborate ritual of waving bye-bye and blowing good-bye kisses also may help.

Preschoolers are more self-assured than toddlers, but occasionally experience fears about being separated from a parent when starting a new school or child care arrangement, staying overnight with a relative, or moving to a new home. Ease into new situations gradually. Visiting the new school several times before the first day, or staying with your child for the first day or two can make a big difference.



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## **Fear of baths**

Many young children worry about going down the drain with the water. No amount of logical talk will change this. Avoid letting the water drain out while your child is still in the tub or even in the bathroom. If your child seems fearful of water, you might try letting him or her play first with a pan of water, then in the sink, and finally over the edge of the tub (don't leave a child alone in the bathroom).



## **Fear of dogs**

Dogs are often loud, fast moving, and unpredictable. Many children fear them. Respect your child's fear of strange dogs; a child's instincts may be right. If you wish to introduce your child to a friendly dog, first try sharing pictures of the dog with your child. Next watch the dog from a distance, and finally approach the dog together. You may want to demonstrate how to pet the dog, but don't force your child to pet the dog, too. If he or she refuses, you can try again later.

## **Fear of loud noises**

Although your toddler loves to pound on a toy drum, the loud noise from a vacuum cleaner or a hair dryer may be very frightening. Even preschoolers can develop fear of loud noises. Try letting your child look at and eventually touch things in your home before you turn them on. If the fear seems intense, save "loud noise jobs" for times when your child is rested and in a good mood, or better yet, when he or she is not around.

## **Fear of the dark**

Parents often sheepishly admit that their child sleeps with a night light (or the room light) on. Children can sleep with lights on without damaging their health. Many children sleep with a night light well into the school-age years.

Fear of the dark is usually one of the last childhood fears to be conquered. Younger

children fear monsters and snakes that lurk in the bedroom shadows. Older children may fear burglars and thieves. It is not at all uncommon for children who are 10 and 11 to still use a night light. A gradual reduction of light works for many families, while some children decide on their own to turn lights off. It is important not to rush your child.

## **School-age children have fears too**

During the school-age years, imaginary monsters disappear, but other fears begin to surface. School-age children often have to deal with bullies, the fear of rejection or embarrassment, and sometimes the reality of being home alone after school. School-agers also are aware of TV and news events that showcase murder, drug abuse, kidnappings, and burglaries.

About one-third of school-age children experience fears that re-occur. Often these children develop strategies that help them cope. One common strategy children use is to turn the TV on when they arrive home so they don't hear scary noises. Other strategies include hiding under beds or in closets, turning all the lights on in the house, and using the phone for comfort and companionship. Older kids often feel embarrassed about feeling afraid and are reluctant to share their feelings. Asking specific questions like "Do you have a special hiding place? Do you walk home a certain way? When you come home do

you check the doors?" will help parents identify concerns that their children might have. A very elaborate plan for self protection may indicate that the child is feeling threatened and very afraid.

## ■ How parents can help

Your child's fears depend on his or her level of anxiety, past experience, and imagination. If any fears persist, give your child more time and try to avoid events and situations that can trigger them. Your child may be better equipped emotionally to deal with his or her fears in a few months.

- Avoid lectures. It is not helpful to ridicule, coerce, ignore, or use logic. Think back to your own childhood. How often did you hear phrases like: "There is no such thing as a monster," "Don't be such a baby," "There are no lions or bears for miles and miles from here," or "Pet the nice doggie, he won't hurt you." Did statements such as these really make you feel any better?



- Accept your child's fears as valid. Support your child any time he or she is frightened. Use a matter-of-fact attitude and some reassuring words. It's OK to explain that monsters don't really live under the bed, but don't expect your child to believe it. Remember that some fear is good. Children should have a healthy sense of caution. Strange dogs and strange people can be dangerous. As children grow older, they begin to have a better understanding of cause and effect, and reality versus fantasy. They also may gain some first-hand experience with the object of their fear and discover ways to control potentially dangerous situations. Eventually, most fears will be overcome or at least brought under control.

- Show your child how to cope. Young children can learn some coping skills that will help them feel like they have more control of their fear. Learning how to take deep breaths, using their imagination to turn a scary monster into a funny monster, or keeping a flashlight by the bed after lights are turned off are all good examples of coping skills. Reading children's books about scary situations such as going to bed in the dark or having an operation in the hospital also can



be helpful. It is best not to force a child into fearful situations all at once. Often the "shock" method will backfire and intensify the fear. A small dose at a time is the best way to help a child overcome fear.

## ■ A note about nightmares and night terrors

One out of every four children between the ages of 3 and 8 experiences either **night terrors** or **nightmares**. Both of these situations can be unnerving, but are generally short-lived.

**Night terrors** generally occur within an hour of falling asleep. The child awakens suddenly from a state of deep sleep in a state of panic. He or she may scream, sit up in bed, breathe quickly, and stare "glassy eyed." The child also may seem confused, disoriented, and incoherent. Each episode can last from 5 to 30 minutes. A child who experiences night terrors is not aware of any scary thoughts

or dreams and is usually able to go back to sleep quickly. In the morning, the child usually doesn't remember waking at all. Night terrors may occur for several years. Generally they go away with time and are not an indication of any underlying emotional problems.

*Nightmares* generally occur in the early morning hours. Children who experience nightmares can often recall the vivid details of their scary dream and may have difficulty going back to sleep. Nightmares will often center on a specific problem or life event that is troubling the child.

Parents can help by remaining calm. Hold your child close and talk in a soft, soothing voice. Comfort and reassure your child. If possible, stay close by until he or she falls asleep. Calm, consistent handling of nightmares or terrors will help your child feel safe and secure.

## ■ Books for children

*Are You My Mother?* P. Eastman

*How Many Kisses Goodnight?* Jean Monrad

*The Runaway Bunny*, Margaret Wise Brown

*Goodnight Moon*, Margaret Wise Brown

*Bedtime for Francis*, Lilian Hoban

*Ira Sleeps Over*, Bernard Waler

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about children and families contact your county extension office and ask for the following publications.

*Zero to One* ( a newsletter series for the first year of life), Pm-984

*1-2-3 Grow* ( a newsletter series for toddler years), Pm-1071 (cost)

*So Alive—Three to Five*, ( a newsletter series for preschool years), Pm-1431 (cost)

*Understanding Children: Disciplining your toddler*, Pm-1529c

*Understanding Children: Disciplining your preschooler*, Pm-1529b

*Understanding Children: Self-esteem*, Pm-1529h

*Growing into Middle Childhood: 5- to 8-year-olds*, Pm-1174 (cost)

File: Family life 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Some material adapted from *1-2-3 Grow* by Pauline Davey Zeece and Randy Wiegel. Edited by Muktha Jost. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

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10/99



# Understanding Children

## *Self-esteem*



Do you sometimes wish you could slip your child a dose of healthy self-esteem that would last a life time? A great idea, but hard to do!

The development of self-esteem is a lifelong task. From our first breath to the last, we are all developing, refining, and changing our sense of self-worth and identity.

Self-esteem involves developing a sense of self-worth by feeling lovable and capable. Children tackle this task differently at different developmental ages.

### ■ Ages and stages

#### Infants

Self-esteem for infants is nourished by attending to basic needs and building a sense of trust. When infants cry, they are telling you that they are hungry, sleepy, cold, wet, or lonely. The way you respond to those needs tells your baby a lot. Babies need to be held and cuddled. They need adults to

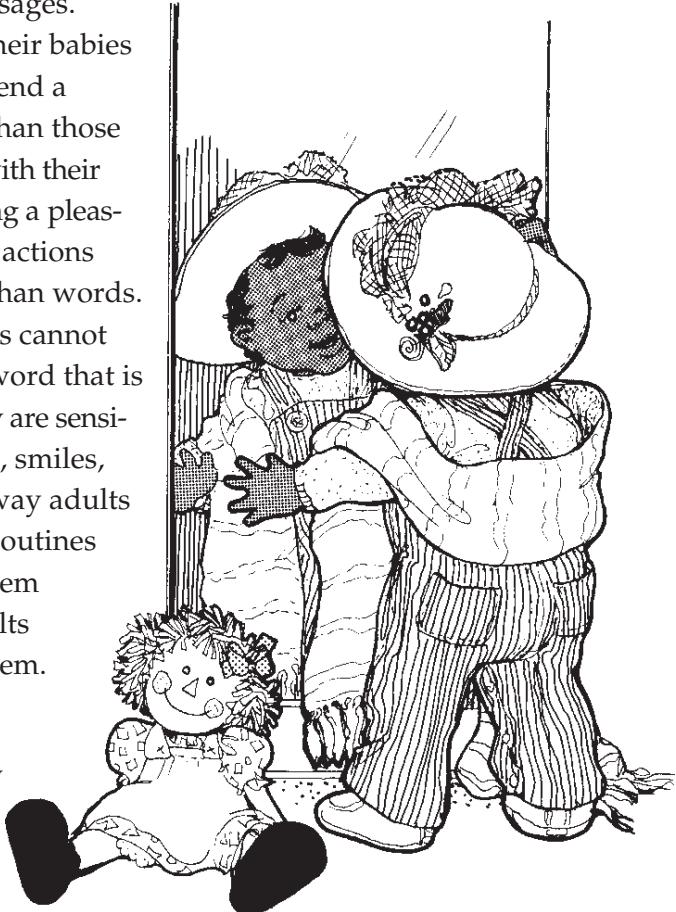
talk, sing, and play with them. When basic needs are met, babies develop a strong sense of trust and security.

The manner in which needs are met also sends messages. Parents who feed their babies just to quiet them send a different message than those who also interact with their babies to make eating a pleasant experience. Our actions often speak louder than words. Even though infants cannot understand every word that is spoken to them, they are sensitive to tone of voice, smiles, and laughter. The way adults conduct everyday routines with infants tells them whether or not adults enjoy being with them.

#### Toddlers

The first step away from babyhood is a step toward independence.

Toddlers establish a sense of self by learning to do things for themselves and by touching, tasting, and feeling everything in sight (even when it is forbidden).



At times this new-found independence can make a toddler seem a bit bossy. "No," "Mine," and "Me do it," are favorite words.

Creating a safe environment and letting a toddler explore fosters this sense of independence. When Billy's parents encourage him to help by pulling off socks or wiping the table (even if it takes longer), they are letting him develop important skills and a stronger sense of self.

## Preschoolers

Preschoolers sometimes seem grown-up. They can feed and dress themselves, they love to imitate adults, and they are eager to please. Self-esteem is tied significantly with learning new skills. As they develop from an energetic 3-year-old into a more

competent 5-year-old, they begin to develop an awareness of their own personal interests and skills.

For example, most 3-year-olds are not critical of their art projects. They are more process oriented than product oriented. When they use play dough, they care more about the experience of squeezing, pounding, rolling, and squishing than what they actually produce.

On the other hand, 5-year-olds are much more aware of details and pay more attention to the work of other children. They learn by comparing their work to the world around them. As they strive to polish their drawing skills, it is not uncommon to hear them express a great deal of dissatisfaction. They want their drawing to look like a "real bird" or "real truck." This dissatisfaction doesn't necessarily mean that

they have poor self-esteem. It just means that they are beginning to learn more about themselves and their personal skills.

## School-agers

As children enter school-age they are very optimistic about their abilities. Often, they also have very high expectations about doing well in school. Such a positive attitude is wonderful. It is helpful, however, to remember that young children have not had

many opportunities to discover their strengths and weaknesses in an academic setting.

It is not uncommon for school-age children to set standards that are frustratingly high or low. Children this age have not had much experience in setting and achieving goals. Also, they do not have the capacity to measure their own strengths and weaknesses.

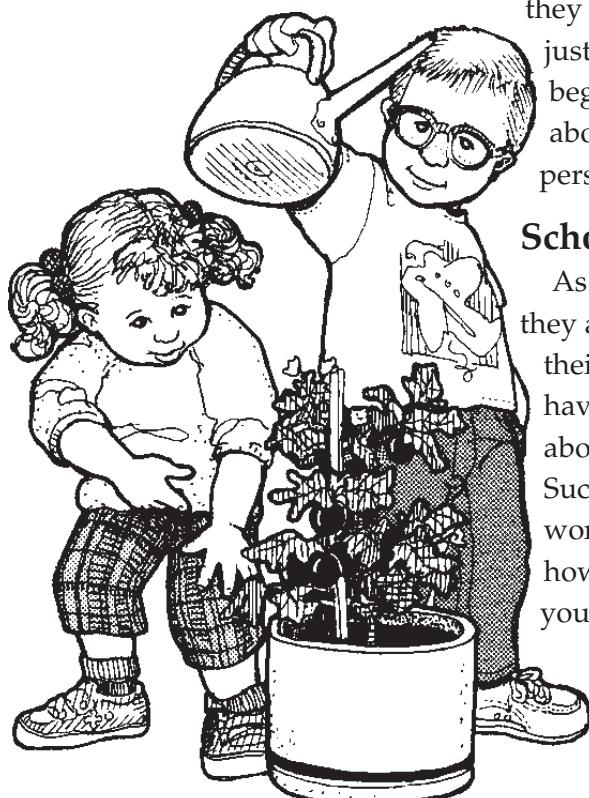
Adults can help by providing experiences that are challenging, yet achievable. Progressively learning new skills and becoming competent in those skills are sure ways to achieve a strong sense of identity and self-worth.

## ■ Tips for parents

### Help your child feel lovable and capable

The two key ingredients of self-esteem are feeling loved and capable. Billy's parents can foster this in many little ways every day. It is important to Billy that they listen, take his feelings seriously, and spend time alone with him. You also can show your respect and support by allowing your child to make decisions, respecting your child's possessions, and expressing love with words and hugs.

As children grow older, they begin to discover that they have special talents and interests. Parents can help by providing opportunities for children to



experiment with different activities. Children who enjoy sports might be encouraged to try out a variety of activities such as soccer, basketball, softball, or swimming. An interest in music might lead to piano lessons or church choir. A nature buff might wish to join Scouts or 4-H. Remember, the focus is to explore a variety of interests. Try not to push or overdo any one thing at a particular time. Childhood should be a relaxed, stress-free time for discovery and experimentation.

### **One of your most important roles is as a teacher**

Billy's parents take time every day to teach him a new skill. Everyday life skills are so important. Billy learns how to set the table, to cook with Mom and Dad in the kitchen, and to spray and wash the car windows. Look carefully for your child's hidden talents and abilities and nurture them.

### **Be a coach more than a cheerleader**

A cheerleader just cheers. A coach uses praise to foster behavioral growth and to instill self-worth.

Happygrams, stickers, ribbons, and behavioral charts with smiley faces are fun to receive, but they often give children an incomplete message. A better approach would

be to use specific praise. For example, when your child sets the table, you might say "You did such a good job! You put the spoons and forks in the right place and remembered the napkins!" When you notice your child reading to a younger sister you might say, "When you growled you sounded just like a bear! It must be nice for Sara to have a brother who is such a good storyteller." Specific praise means more to a child than a brief "You are great" or a smiley face sticker.

### **Low self-esteem can be good sometimes**

It's OK for children to feel badly about themselves at times, especially when their actions make them feel ashamed or guilty. For example, if Billy steals a piece of candy from a store it is usually healthy for him to feel bad about himself. Feeling guilty can stimulate a child to make

amends. Confessing, returning the candy, paying for the candy, and resolving never to steal again can help bring Billy's feelings of self-worth back into balance.

### **Set a good example**

Taking responsibility for your own self-esteem is important too. Children learn so much by watching and imitating their parents. Talk out loud about your feelings and the ways that you cope with life's problems. For example, a comment such as, "I'm feeling sad today because someone at work said some mean things. I think I'll take a walk after dinner to feel better," shows a child that individuals can have control over how they feel and think about themselves.



## ■ A final note

Positive self-esteem is possible for everyone, but it doesn't happen overnight. True self-worth is developed over a lifetime and most of us will experience many highs and lows as we journey through life. A parent's role is to help children feel loved and to teach them the skills they need to feel capable when faced with life's many challenges.



Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Carol Ouveron and Muktha Jost. Illustrated by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

## ■ Children's books

*The Important Book*, Margaret Wise Brown  
*I Know What I Like*, N. Simon.  
*Harold and the Purple Crayon*, David Johnson Liesk  
*Just the Thing for Geraldine*, Ellen Conford  
*Howie Helps Himself*, Joan Fassler  
*Ira Sleeps Over*, Bernard Waber  
*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Judith Viorst

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about children and families contact your county extension office and request the following.  
*Ages and Stages*, PM-1530a-g  
*Understanding Children: Disciplining your preschooler*, PM-1529b  
*Understanding Children: Disciplining your toddler*, PM-1529d  
*Growing up Fit: Preschoolers in motion*, PM-1359a (cost)  
*Growing into Middle Childhood: 5- to 8-year-olds*, PM-1174a

File: Family life 8

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# Understanding Children

## *Moving to a new home*



Although moving has become a common event for American families, it is a "moving" experience in more ways than one. No matter how often families change residence, moving brings with it a variety of emotions and situations.

One out of five American families moves each year, and most of those moves are within the same community or to a neighboring state.

Moving can be an exciting adventure for families as they look forward to new places, friends, and neighbors. Many families find that the experience of moving often brings them closer.

The general sense of confusion and disorder can make moving both physically and emotionally stressful. While packing, moving, dusting, and sorting take a toll on energy and attention, short tempers and chaos drain the emotions.

There is also an element of grief. No matter how eager you are to

move there will be places, things, and people you will miss. When moving is brought about by a death, divorce, or job loss, the sense of loss and sadness is more acute.

Sometimes, a combination of the exciting prospect of moving and the sense of loss that the same change could bring produces a seesaw of emotions. Many family members experience emotional ups and downs.

Moving is a challenging and difficult experience for a family, especially for children. It is natural, therefore, for parents to be concerned about the effect of the move. Parents often wish to help ease the transition for their children and make moving a positive experience.

When faced with a move, it is important to remember that reactions from children will vary depending on their personality and developmental age.

The personality of the child is important because it influences the time a child may take to adjust to the move. Some children are naturally outgoing and will be able to make friends immediately while some other children may take months.

Some aspects of the child's personality may tend to get more pronounced. For instance, if your child tends to worry and get nervous, you are likely to see more of this behavior until the child begins to feel more comfortable in the new surroundings. Roller coaster emotions are not uncommon. One day your child may be



thrilled and excited, then blue and depressed the next.

## ■ Ages and stages

### Moving and your infant or toddler

Generally, infants and toddlers make the transition quite well. They may, however, pick up on your anxiety and stress level, and seem particularly fussy and demanding in the few weeks before and immediately after your move. If your child is being cared for by a caregiver other than yourself, he or she may go through a sense of loss and not be well able to express it. Older toddlers who have just begun to

understand a few basic household rules like "Don't climb on the counter tops or scribble on the wall" may need to relearn the rules all over again in the new house.

#### *What you can do*

Your time and attention are especially important now. Remember to take a break during the rush to hold or play with your child. Be sure to keep any security objects such as a favorite teddy bear or blanket close by. Keep your routine as normal as possible. Regular eating and nap times are important.

### Moving and your preschooler

Often, preschoolers will express a great deal of excitement over a move, but may not really understand everything that is going on. The details of moving inevitably frustrate parents, and preschoolers tend to think that the chaos and frustration may somehow be their fault.

Preschoolers also find it hard to understand what will go with them and what will stay behind. They may not realize that you are taking furniture and toys with you, and often develop great fears for their personal belongings and

toys. Also, they may not realize that close friends and neighbors will not make the move.

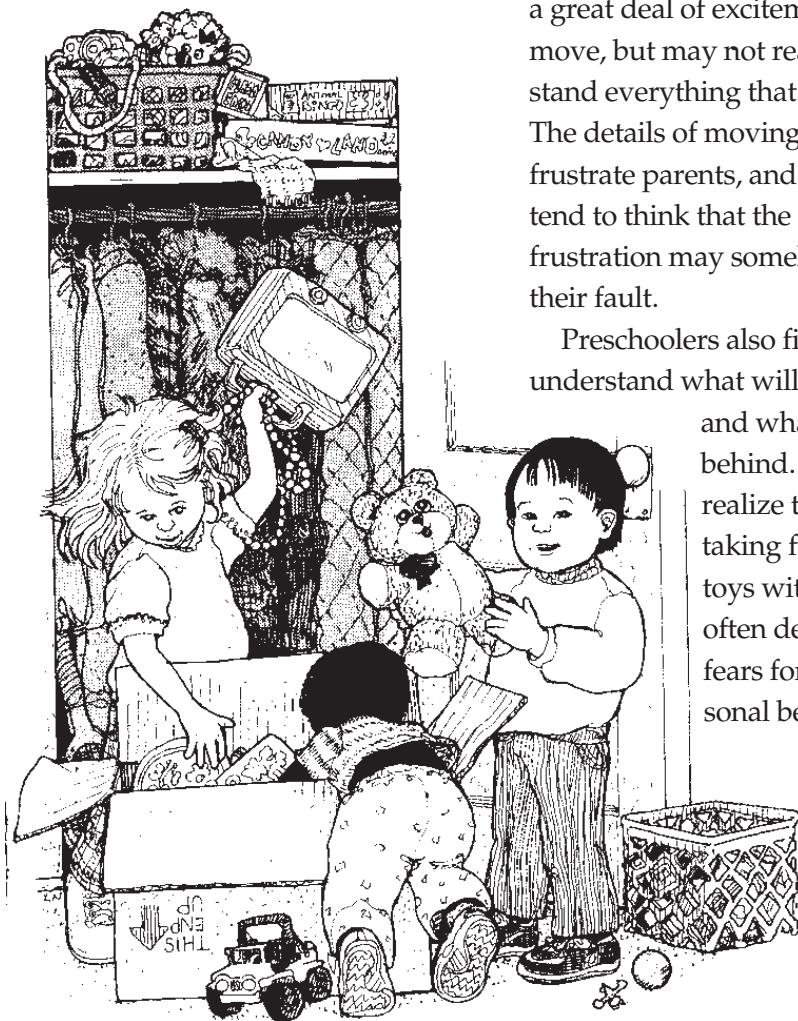
#### *What you can do*

Try to pack children's things last and include your preschooler in on the packing process. Do not assume that your child understands the process of moving. Explain the move to your child and give reasons for the way you are doing things. Children's books on moving are listed in this publication. Take the time to read aloud one or two to help your child understand the moving process. As with infants and toddlers, keep your routine as normal and predictable as possible.

### Moving and your school-age child

School-age children often are quite excited about a family move and love to become involved in the planning process. School-age children love to develop lists and are very project oriented. Use their enthusiasm and energy to help you get some of your moving tasks done.

Relationships with peers are very important for school-agers, and they can understand the effect of the move on their relationships with friends and neighbors. Although they can understand the separation from friends and neighbors that is about to happen, they may not have the maturity to deal with their emotions.



Most school-agers are quite positive before and even immediately after the move. A month or so after the move, however, they may become quite angry about the move, especially if they have not had much success forming a group of friends. School-agers still have a very active imagination and may have imagined that the move would somehow make their lives wonderful. When reality sets in, therefore, they may experience a great deal of confusion, frustration, and anger.

#### ***What you can do***

Scope out the neighborhood before you move. Are there other children your child can play with? If not, where can your child go to meet friends? Is there a community center or club such as 4-H, Scouts, or Campfire nearby?

Arrange to visit the school before enrolling your child. Be sure to point out familiar places like the school cafeteria, library, and restrooms. Kids worry about being able to find their way around.

Take pictures of your child, new home, and community and encourage your child to share them with others. A farewell party is also a good idea. A farewell party can help ease the pain of goodbyes, make the move a concrete event, and help the child accept reality.

#### **Moving and your teenager**

No doubt about it, moving is difficult for most adolescents.

Teenagers are generally very involved in social relationships. Your teen is focused on learning how to develop more long-term relationships. Most teens feel that friendships and romantic relationships are unnecessarily interrupted by a move. Although teenagers have the maturity to understand reasons for moving, they may not be prepared emotionally.

#### ***What you can do***

Parents need to give teens time and space when preparing for a move. Many parents postpone telling kids about the move, hoping that it will make things easier. Generally it is best to tell them right away. The "grief work" of breaking relationships and saying goodbyes takes time, and is best done before the move.

Even though teens seem much more advanced in their social skills, they may worry a lot about making friends and fitting in. Be sure to visit their school and check out local activities and employment opportunities for young people.

Communities have their own culture and way of doing things, and this is often reflected in the way teens dress. How they look is very important to teens. Before spending money on a new school wardrobe you and your teen may want to do some quiet observation or visiting with neighbors to see what is "in." Purchasing a "special" outfit can often help a teen feel more comfortable.

Parents also can help teens by paying sincere attention to their feelings. Accept your teen's feelings without getting defensive or lecturing. If a teen can express feelings openly and work through the "sense of loss" with parental support, he or she will be much less likely to express anger and depression in a harmful manner.

### **■ How long will your child take to adjust to the move?**

Researchers tell us that adults and children need time to adjust—often as long as 16 months. For some families, the most stressful time is two weeks before and two weeks after the move. For many families, however, the time of the move is one when everyone pitches in and works together as a team. It



is only a month or so after the move that the reality of friends and places left behind begins to sink in. Frustration, anger, and confusion are common emotions at this time. Moving is stressful for adults and is particularly stressful for children as they have limited coping skills.

Other events associated with the move effect how children cope with a move. Financial problems, a death, or divorce can sometimes make the problem worse and children's coping skills are stretched to the limit. Parents may then wish to seek short-term counseling for their children.

## Strategies to help children adjust to moving.

- **Be understanding.** Acknowledge both positive and negative feelings. Let children know that it's OK and normal to feel anxiety. Watch out for verbal and nonverbal communication.
- **Provide continuity.** Much of the stress associated with moving comes from the "newness" and "difference" of things. Try to keep routines and other daily living habits as normal as possible. This is *not* the time to make a lot of major changes in your family life.
- **Be patient.** New adjustments take time. Individuals handle things differently. Some children will ease into a new situation,

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Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Illustration by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

some will dive in head first. Allow for personality differences.

- **Be a good model.** Children need to see and hear adults express their feelings and work through problems. A parent who feels comfortable with saying "Gee, sometimes I sure feel lonely," or "Today I told myself that I was going to meet at least one new person!" can provide a lot of support for children.

- **Promote peer interaction.** Hook into the community quickly. Ask a neighbor if he or she will introduce your child to neighborhood children. Link up with familiar organizations such as Scouts, Campfire, 4-H, and church youth groups.
- **Use children's literature.** Books can help children prepare for and understand difficult situations. Story characters who model successful coping strategies are an excellent resource for children.

## ■ Children's books about moving

- Dear Phoebe*, S. Alexander  
*We Are Best Friends*, Aliki  
*It's Your Move: Picking up, packing up and settling in*, L. Bourke  
*I Don't Live Here!*, P. Conrad  
*I'm Moving*, M. W. Hickman  
*My Friend William Moved Away*, M. W. Hickman

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*Moving Molly*, S. Hughes  
*I'm Not Moving!*, P. Jones  
*Maggie and the Goodbye Gift*,

S. Milord & J. Milord  
*A New Boy in Kindergarten*, J.B. Moncure  
*Mitchell is Moving*, M. W. Sharmat,  
*The Monster in the Third Dresser*  
*Drawer and Other Stories About Adam Joshua*, J. I. Smith  
*Moving Day*, T. Tobias  
*Moving*, W. Watson

## ■ Read more about it!

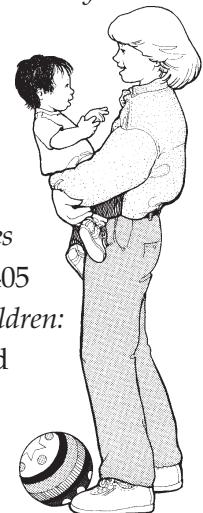
For more information about children and families contact your county extension office and ask for the following.

*Zero to One* (a newsletter for the first year of life), Pm-984  
*1-2-3 Grow* (a newsletter for the toddler years), Pm-1071 (cost)  
*So Alive—Three to Five* (a newsletter for the preschool years), Pm-1431 (cost)

*Simple Snacks for Kids*, Pm-1264

*Balancing Work and Family*:

*Coming home, making the transition*, Pm-1404f



*Grandparenting: More than cookies and milk*, Pm-1405

*Understanding Children: Fears*, Pm-1529d

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# Understanding Children

## Temper tantrums



Temper tantrums—just the thought of one is enough to make you cringe. Most parents agree that there is nothing quite like dealing with a kicking, screaming child. It can bring out the worst in all of us and it is always difficult to handle.

Temper tantrums are a normal part of growing up. All children have them. Often they happen for different reasons at different ages. Sometimes they take you by surprise and sometimes they are predictable. There are no magic cures, but there are some successful techniques that can help.

### ■ Ages and stages Infants

Infants may cry a lot, but they don't really have tantrums. They cry because they are wet, hungry, cold, or lonely. Crying is their only way of letting adults know that they need something. Sometimes infants have colic. They seem to cry endlessly for no

apparent reason. Studies show that infants who have their needs met quickly and who are held and comforted when they cry, develop a strong sense of security and well-being and may actually cry much less later on.

### Toddlers

Toddlers throw tantrums for many reasons—some big, some small. A square block won't fit in a round hole. Shoes feel funny and socks don't seem to come off right. To make matters worse, you won't let them climb on top of the kitchen table. Toddlers have tantrums because they get frustrated very easily. Most toddlers still do not talk much. They have trouble asking for things and expressing their feelings. Toddlers also have very few problem-solving skills. Tantrums are most likely to happen when toddlers are hungry, exhausted, or overexcited.

### Preschoolers

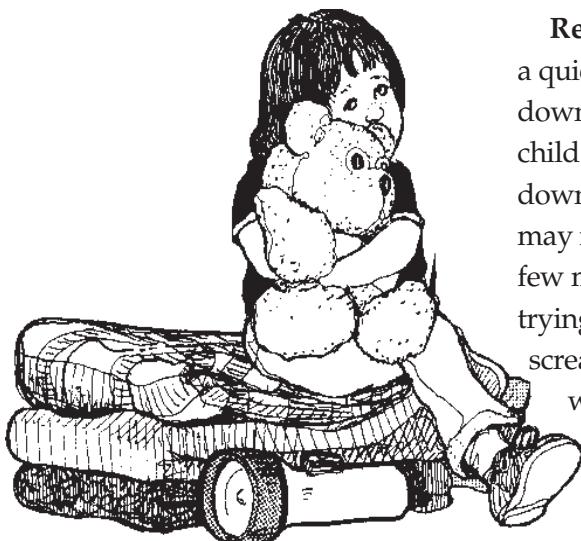
Preschoolers are less likely to throw tantrums. They have developed more coping skills and are able to communicate better. Still, when dinner is late or when



things get frustrating, your preschooler may begin to behave more like a 2-year-old! Some children learn at this age that tantrums can be used to get something they want. If parents give in to demands, tantrums may begin to occur with greater frequency.

## School-agers

Older children are typically more tolerant of frustrating situations, but they too get overly tired, hungry, and irritable. Although school-age children have developed stronger problem-solving skills, they are faced with increasingly complex social situations, and need to refine their problem-solving skills. Learning to get along with friends, work as part of a team, or compete in a sport requires skills that many older kids haven't fully developed yet. Kids who have limited problem-solving skills or difficulty expressing themselves with words are more likely to have temper tantrums or fits of anger.



Older children *can* learn to recognize when they are feeling upset or frustrated. Also, they can learn acceptable ways to deal with their anger.

## ■ How to handle a tantrum

1. Try to remain calm. Shaking, spanking, or screaming at your child tends to make the tantrum worse instead of better. Set a positive example for your child by remaining in control of yourself and your emotions.

2. Pause before you act. Take at least 30 seconds to decide how you will handle the tantrum. Four possible ways to deal with a tantrum include:

**Distract**—Try to get your child's attention focused on something else. If your child screams when you take away something unsafe (like mommy's purse) offer something else to play with. This technique works well with toddlers.

**Remove**—Take your child to a quiet, private place to calm down. At home this may be the child's room or a special "cooling down" place. Out in public it may mean sitting outside for a few minutes or in the car. Avoid trying to talk or reason with a screaming child. It doesn't work! Stay nearby until your child calms down. Then you can talk and return to whatever you were doing.

**Ignore**—Older children will sometimes throw tantrums to get attention. Try ignoring the tantrum and go about your business as usual. If staying in the same room with a screaming child makes you uncomfortable, leave the room. If necessary, turn on the radio and lock yourself in the bathroom for a few minutes.

**Hold**—Physically restrain children if they are "out of control" (may harm themselves and others). You also might say something like: "I can see you are angry right now and I am going to hold you until you calm down. I won't let you hurt me or anyone else." Often this approach can be comforting to a child. Children don't like to be out of control. It scares them. An adult who is able to take charge of the situation, remain calm and in control, can be very reassuring.

3. Wait until your child calms down before talking about the situation. It's difficult to reason with a screaming child. Insist on a cooling down period and follow-up with a discussion about behavior. Use this opportunity to teach your child acceptable ways to handle anger and difficult situations. With practice, preschoolers and school-agers can learn:
- How to ask for help,
  - When to go somewhere to cool down,
  - How to try a more successful way of doing something, and

- How to express their feelings and emotions in words (rather than hitting, kicking, or screaming).
4. Comfort and reassure your child. Tantrums scare most kids. They often are not able to understand the reason for their anger and generally feel shaken when it is all over. They need to know that you do not approve of their behavior, but that you still love them.

## ■ An ounce of prevention

Tantrums are a normal part of growing up. All children will have them sometime. If tantrums seem to be happening often, you might consider the following suggestions.

- Study your child's tantrums. When and where do they occur? Who is generally involved? What happens before, after, and during a tantrum? Often, looking for patterns can give you clues about conditions or situations that bring out the tantrum in your child.
- Set realistic limits and help children stick to a regular routine. Predictable mealtimes and bedtimes are particularly important.

- Offer real choices. Don't say, "Would you like to take your nap?" unless you are prepared to honor your child's choice not to nap. Instead try, "It's nap time now."
- Choose your battles carefully. Say "No" to things that are *really* important. Avoid fighting over little things.
- Give your child a few minutes warning before you end an activity. Saying "We are going to leave the park and go home in a few minutes," or "I wonder what we can cook for supper when we get home," helps your child get ready for change.
- Help children not to "get in over their heads." Children need challenging activities, but not so challenging that they experience overwhelming frustration and failure.

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information on helping children deal with anger and learn self-control see extension publications:

*Getting Along series*, PM 1650 - 1653

*Understanding Children: Disciplining preschoolers*, PM 1529b

*Understanding Children: Disciplining your toddler*, PM 1529c

*Growing into Middle Childhood: 5- to 8-year-olds*, PM 1174a (cost)

*Growing out of Middle Childhood: 9- to 12-year-olds*, PM 1174b (cost)

*Balancing Work and Family: Avoiding the morning rush*, PM 404a

*Balancing Work and Family: Coming home and making the transition*, PM 1404f

*Ages and Stages: 2-year-olds*, PM 1530d



# Tantrums—A Plan of Action

When do tantrums occur?

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Where do tantrums happen?

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Who is generally included?

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What happens before, after, and during a tantrum?

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Things I can do to prevent a tantrum from occurring.

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Ways that I can handle the tantrum when it occurs.

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Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

File: Family life 8

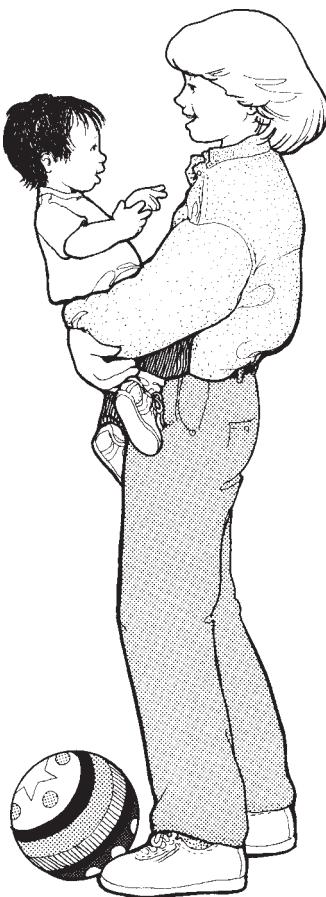
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# Understanding Children

## *Bitting*



You've just discovered that you have a pint-sized biter on your hands.

Isn't it amazing how those tiny teeth that once caused so much excitement and celebration can now cause so much fear and frustration?

Biting, however, is quite common among young children. It happens for different reasons with different children and under different circumstances. Understanding the reason for your child's biting is the first step to changing his or her behavior.

### ■ Why children bite

#### Exploration

Infants and toddlers learn by touching, smelling, hearing, and tasting. If an infant is given a toy, one of the first places the infant puts it in the mouth. Tasting or "mouthing" things is something that all children do. Children this

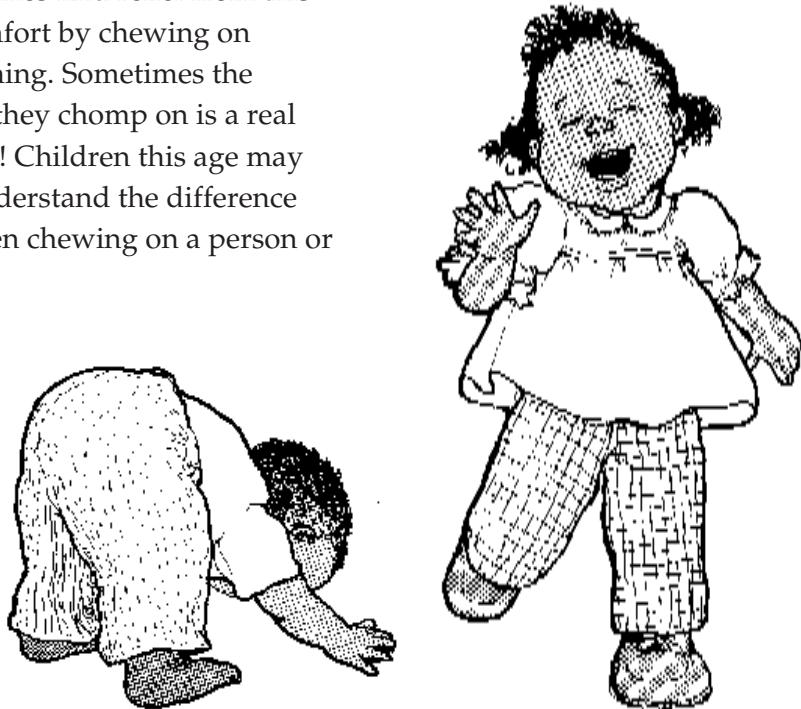
age do not always understand the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting someone.

#### Teething

Children generally begin teething about age 4 to 7 months. Swelling gums can be tender and can cause a great deal of discomfort. Infants sometimes find relief from this discomfort by chewing on something. Sometimes the object they chomp on is a real person! Children this age may not understand the difference between chewing on a person or a toy.

#### Cause and effect

About age 12 months infants become interested in finding out what happens when they do something. When they bang a spoon on the table, they discover that it makes a loud sound. When they drop a toy from their crib, they discover



that it falls. They also may discover that when they bite someone, they get a loud scream of protest!

## Attention

Older toddlers may bite to get attention. When children are in situations in which they do not receive enough positive attention and daily interaction, they often find a way to make others sit up and take notice. Being ignored is not fun. Biting

is a quick way to become the center of attention, even if it is negative attention.

## Imitation

Older toddlers love to imitate others and find it a great way to learn new things. Sometimes children see others bite and decide to try it themselves. When an adult bites a child back in punishment, it generally does not stop the biting, but rather teaches the child that biting is OK.

## Independence

Toddlers are trying hard to be independent. "Mine" and "Me do it" are favorite words. Learning to do things without help, making choices, and needing control over a situation are part of growing up. Biting is a powerful way to control others. If you want a toy or want a playmate to leave you alone or move out of your way, biting helps you get what you want.



## Biting—What's really happening?

1st Incident

2nd Incident

3rd Incident

Where did the biting incident happen?			
Who was involved?			
When did the biting happen?			
What happened before the biting incident?			
What happened after? How was the situation handled?			
Why do you think the biting might be happening? (You may want to review ideas in this publication.)			
What will be your plan of action? Prevention ideas:			
Teaching new behavior:			

Try your action plan for at least a few weeks. Good luck!

## Frustration

Young children often experience frustration. Growing up is a real struggle. Drinking from a cup is great, yet nursing or sucking from a bottle is also wonderful. Sometimes it would be nice to remain a baby. Toddlers don't have good control over their bodies yet. A loving pat sometimes turns into a push or a whack. Toddlers also don't talk well yet. They have trouble asking for things or requesting help. They haven't learned how to play with others. When you don't have words to express your feelings, sometimes you show others by hitting, pushing, or biting.

## Stress

A child's world can be stressful at times. A lack of daily routine, interesting things to do, or adult interaction are stressful situations for children. Events like death, divorce, or a move to a new home also cause stress for children. Biting is one way to express feelings and relieve tension.

## ■ What parents can do What is really happening?

Use the who, what, when, where, and how method to discover what is really happening. When does the biting occur? Who is involved? Where does it happen? What happens before or afterward? How was the situation handled?

### Try prevention

If you determine that the biting occurs as the result of exploration or teething, you may want to provide the child with a cloth or teething ring to gnaw on. If your child seems to bite when tired or hungry, you may want to look at your daily routine to be sure that he or she is getting enough sleep and nourishment.

If biting happens when two children fight over a toy telephone, you may want to purchase an extra toy telephone.

Trying to make very young children share simply does not work.

Toddlers don't have the skills or understanding to negotiate or understand another child's point of view.

If attention seems to be the main cause for biting, try to spend time with your child when he or she is doing more positive things. Snuggle up and read a book together or roll a ball back and forth. This is much more fun than giving or receiving a scolding.

If the child is experiencing a stressful situation, make life as supportive and normal as possible. Predictable meals and bedtimes, and extra time with a loving adult can help. Some activities can actually relieve tension. Examples are rolling, squishing, and pounding play



dough, or relaxing and splashing in the bathtub. It takes time and patience, however, for healing to occur in painful situations like divorce or death.

## Teach new behavior

When a child bites, use your voice and facial expressions to show that biting is unacceptable. Speak firmly and look directly into the child's eyes. For example, you might say "Sara, it's not OK to bite. It hurts Jon when you bite him. He's crying. If you need to bite, you can bite this (cloth, toy, food, etc.), but I won't let you bite Jon or another child." If the child is able to talk, you also might say, "You can tell Jon with your words that you need him to move instead of biting him. Say 'Move, Jon.'"

You also may want the biter to help wash, bandage, and comfort the victim. Making the biter a part of the comforting process is a good way to teach nurturing behavior.

Whenever the biter is out of control, you will need to restrain or isolate the child until he or she calms down. Insist on a "time out" or "cooling-off period." Wait a few minutes until the child is under control and then talk to the toddler about his or her behavior.

## ■ A final note

Biting is a difficult and uncomfortable issue to deal with for parents. If your child is the victim, you may feel angry and outraged. If your child is the biter, you may feel embarrassed and frustrated.

Take heart! Most toddlers who bite do so only a short while. Paying close attention to the reasons will help you come up with some useful solutions. Soon your toddler will have learned important new skills for communicating and getting along with others.

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about children and families ask for the following publications from your county extension office.

*1-2-3 Grow* (newsletter series for toddler years), PM 1071a-h (cost)

*Understanding Children: Disciplining your toddler*, PM 1529c

*Child's Play - Art*, PM 1770a (cost)

*Understanding Children: Language development*, PM 1529f

*Child's Play - Fingerplays Plus*, PM 1770b (cost)

*Ages and Stages*, PM 1530a-i

File: Family life 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

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# Understanding Children

## Toilet training



### ■ Ready or not?

Learning to use the toilet is a big event in a young child's life—a sure sign of growing up. Most children are eager about learning how to use the "potty" and are quite proud of their achievement.

Toilet teaching is easiest when children are physically and emotionally ready, which happens between the ages of 2 and 3 years. Girls usually gain physical control over their bowel and bladder muscles before boys do. On the average, most girls are potty-trained by age 2 ½ and most boys around the age of 3. But don't be alarmed if your child doesn't follow this pattern closely; individual children mature physically at different rates.

The secret to success is patience and timing. Emotional readiness is also important. Many bright, normal, and healthy 3-year-olds may not be

interested in learning to use the toilet. Learning new things is a full-time job for most toddlers and toilet learning may not be as important as learning to climb, jump, run, and talk. A toddler who resists toilet training now may be ready in 3 to 6 months, then often learns almost overnight.

### ■ How do you tell if your child is ready?

#### Ask yourself the following questions:

Can my child:

- follow simple directions?
- remain dry at least 2 hours at a time during the day?
- walk to and from the bathroom, pull down pants, pull pants up?

Does my child:

- remain dry during nap time?
- seem uncomfortable with soiled or wet diapers?

show interest in the toilet or potty chair?

Are bowel movements regular and predictable? (Some children move their bowels two to three times a day; others may go 2 to 3 days without a bowel movement.)

Has your toddler asked to wear grown-up underwear?

If you answered "yes" to most of the questions, you may want to introduce your child to toilet training. If you answered "no" to many questions, wait a while

longer. Rushing a child through toilet training will only result in tears and frustration. In fact, starting too soon may actually delay learning.



When a child is truly ready, toilet training will seem much easier.

## ■ Ten steps to toilet learning

### Step 1

**Relax!** A calm, easygoing approach to toilet training seems to work best. Remember that learning to use the toilet takes time and that each child is different. If you find that one of your children learns to use the toilet at age 2 and another learns at age 3 1/2, rest assured that you are not alone.

### Step 2

**Show children what they are to do in the bathroom.** Toddlers love to imitate adults or older children. Next time your toddler follows you into the bathroom, talk about what you do when you

use the toilet. If you are comfortable with the idea, it may be a good idea to let the child watch you use the toilet. Ideally, fathers should set an example for sons and mothers should set an example for daughters. Children also can learn about bathroom practices from older brothers, sisters, or relatives.

### Step 3

**Teach your toddler the words your family uses for body parts, urine, and bowel movements.** Make sure it's a word you feel comfortable with because others are sure to hear it. There is nothing quite like a toddler loudly announcing in the checkout lane of the grocery store that it's time to go "Poo Poo!"

### Step 4

**Help your child recognize when he or she is urinating or having a bowel movement.** Most children will grunt, squat, turn red in the face, or simply stop playing for a moment. Children need to be aware that they are urinating or having a bowel movement before they can do anything about it. For most children, bowel movements are generally easier to recognize.

### Step 5

**Borrow or purchase a potty chair or a potty attachment for the toilet.** If you purchase a potty attachment, be sure to get one with a footrest. This will allow your child to sit more comfortably

and make it easier for the child to "push" during a bowel movement. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that parents avoid urine deflectors because they can cut a child who is climbing on or off a potty chair. You may want to let your child practice sitting on the potty fully clothed just to get used to the idea.

### Step 6

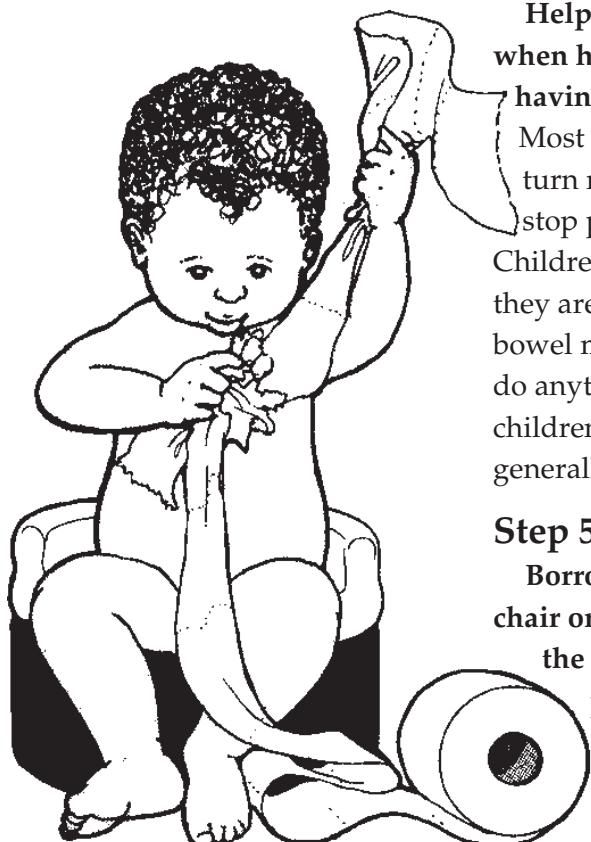
**Begin reading potty books to your child.** There are many wonderful books about learning to use the potty at your local library or bookstore. Reading a book together helps children understand the general process and that other children also learn to use the potty. Book suggestions are listed later on in this publication.

### Step 7

**Purchase training pants and easy-to-remove clothing.** Just getting to the potty on time is a major task for most children. You can help make the job easier by letting them wear pants that are easy to pull down, and by being around to assist. Avoid snaps, buttons, zippers, and belts. Some parents prefer to use diapers at first and then switch to training pants when their child is urinating in the potty several times a day.

### Step 8

**When your child tells you that he or she needs to use the potty, help with clothing and sit the child on the potty for a few minutes.** Stay with your child. It's a good idea to keep a few books



close by. Reading a book together makes the time go by easier and takes the pressure off for an immediate result.

## Step 9

**After 4 to 5 minutes, help your child off the potty.** Reward with hugs and praise if your child's efforts have been successful. Say that he or she can try again later if the child wasn't successful. Don't be surprised if your child has a bowel movement or urinates right after being taken off the toilet. This is not unusual. Accidents and near misses are generally not an act of stubbornness. It simply takes time to learn this new skill. If accidents seem to be frequent, it may be best to hold off and try toilet training a few months later.

## Step 10

**Wipe your child carefully.** Wipe girls from front to back to prevent infection. Teach your child to *always* wash hands with soap and water after using the potty.

## ■ More ideas

- If possible, plan to devote at least 3 to 4 days to begin toilet training. Maintaining the same routine for 3 to 4 weeks also helps.
- Some parents find it helpful to establish a routine by putting a child on the toilet for 3 to 4 minutes right after he or she gets up in the morning, before naps, after naps, after meals, and before bedtime. Realize however, that your child will not always use the potty.

- If you are anticipating a new baby, moving to a new home, or another major life event, you may want to wait a few months. Toilet training is easiest when both parent and child can give it their full attention.
- Remember that it's OK to keep your child in diapers or disposable training pants for sleeping. Nighttime control generally comes many months after daytime control.
- It may be helpful to use a plastic mattress cover, tablecloth, or shower curtain between the sheet and mattress until children gain nighttime control.
- Treat accidents casually. Avoid punishing, scolding, or shaming. Give your child support by keeping an upbeat, positive attitude.

## ■ Cleaning up

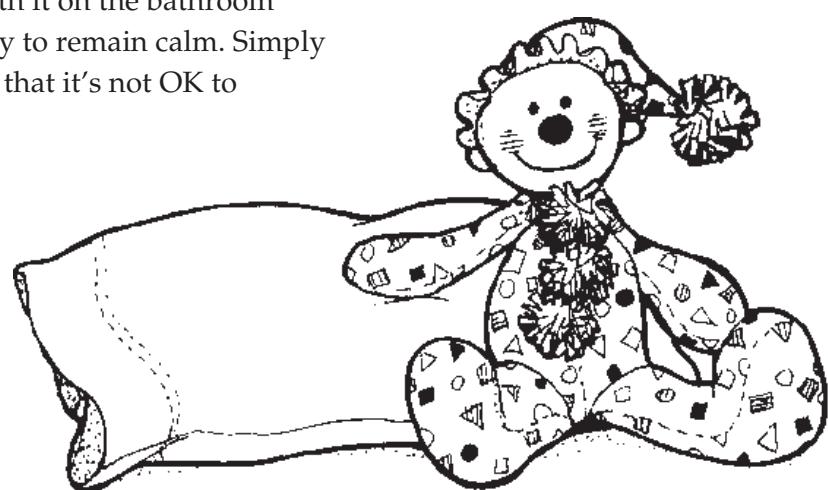
Children often are quite curious about bowel movements. If you find your child trying to remove fecal material from the toilet, or worse yet "finger painting" with it on the bathroom floor, try to remain calm. Simply explain that it's not OK to

play with feces or urine; help your child clean up the mess. Then you both can wash your hands with soap and water. It is generally a good idea to help with clean-up and flushing during much of the toilet training process.

## ■ The big flush

Children often have one of two reactions to flushing. Either they are fascinated by it (and would be willing to do it for hours) or they are quite fearful. Children who enjoy flushing will often delight in emptying the potty chair into the toilet, waving bye-bye, and watching everything "flush away."

Children who are fearful prefer that parents take charge of this process. Before flushing the toilet, make sure the child is off the potty attachment. Many children are not only fearful of the noise and swirling water, but also may think that they will be flushed down too. Reassure your child that only body wastes and toilet paper will be flushed away.



## ■ A note about bedwetting

Bedwetting is common in children under age 7. Remember that learning to control the bladder generally comes after bowel control. Many children who have mastered the toileting process during the day may not be able to stay dry at night for many months. Most children will achieve nighttime dryness by age 5, but one out of four children may continue to wet the bed for several more years.

Bedwetting appears to be related to the size of the bladder, the amount of liquid consumed before bedtime, and how soundly the child sleeps. Bedwetting also is more likely to occur when a child is ill, excited, or when a routine is upset.

For children who tend to wet the bed, it may help to wake them once during the night to use the toilet. An easy time to do this is just before parents go to bed. Persistent bedwetting, particularly after age 7, may be caused by an infection and a physician should be consulted.

## ■ Books for children

*No More Diapers*, J.G. Brooks—

A popular book with toddlers. Toilet training is illustrated through two stories. The first story is about Johnny and the second is about Susie. The text is simple and drawings are in black, white, and orange.

*Your New Potty*, Joanna Cole—

This book tells the story of two children, Ben and Steffie, who are learning to use their new potties. Illustrated by colorful photographs. Information for parents is included in the introduction. Uses adult terms for elimination.

*Once Upon a Potty*, Alona Frankel—Simple text with cartoon-like illustrations.

Available in both a boy's and girl's version as well as a book and toy package, complete with an anatomically correct doll and toy potty.

*All By Myself*, Anna Grossnickle Hines—One of the few books that talks about nighttime dryness. Josie, like most children, has successfully mastered daytime control, but at night still needs help from her mother to get to the bathroom.

In time she learns how to manage by herself.

*Going to the Potty*, Fred Rogers—

Part of the Mister Rogers Neighborhood First Experience series, this colorful book discusses toilet training. Photographs show children of all sizes, ages, and ethnic groups.

*KoKo Bear's New Potty*, Vicki Lansky—A "read together" book with cartoon bear illustrations. A useful companion to Vicki Lansky's *Practical Parenting: Toilet Training*.

## ■ Books for parents

*Parents Book of Toilet Teaching*,

Joanna Cole

*Practical Parenting: Toilet Training*,

Vicki Lansky

*Toilet Learning*, Alison Mack

## ■ Read more about it!

For more information about infants and toddlers, ask for these publications at your county extension office.

1-2-3 Grow (newsletter series for toddler years), Pm-1071a-h (cost)

*Understanding Children: Disciplining your toddler*, Pm-1529c

*A Parent's Guide to Children's Weight*, NCR-374

*Understanding Children: Fears*, Pm-1529d

*Ages and Stages*, Pm-1530

File: Family life 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Illustrations by Lonna Nachtigal. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

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# Children and Sleep

**C**hildren have amazing amounts of energy. They can play for hours and don't want to miss out on anything going on around them. In fact, if adults don't intervene, most children will bypass naps and put off bedtime for as long as possible.

However, regular rest and sleep are necessary. Just as food is needed for energy and growth, sleep allows the body to relax and refuel for the next burst of energy. Children who do not learn how to rest and relax at naptime often become overly tired and have trouble going to sleep at night.

Parents/caregivers also need a chance to relax and have some "down time." After a respite during naptime or a well-deserved night's sleep, adults will be better prepared to interact with children.

## Sleep Needs

Young children need lots of sleep. They can't get by on a few hours like adults tend to do. It is not realistic to expect children to operate on the same sleep schedule as adults.

Newborn babies will sleep about 16 hours a day at first. But remember each baby requires a different amount of sleep. Parents/caregivers will soon learn what is "normal" for a particular child. Babies don't know the difference between night and day and will sometimes get them mixed up, sleeping more during the day and less at night.

Place healthy babies on their backs when putting them down to sleep. Research indicates this action can reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Do not put babies to sleep on soft surfaces or

with pillows or stuffed toys. These could cover a child's airway.

Babies in the first year still sleep a lot. They need at least two naps a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, each lasting from one to three hours.

Toddlers between ages two and three may sleep 9 to 13 hours a day. Many toddlers will take one long nap around lunchtime. Or, they may take two shorter naps.

Preschoolers, ages four and five, need at least 10 to 12 hours of sleep each night. Some will take naps but others will resist going to sleep.

## Routines

Routines are important for children. Knowing what to expect helps them feel more secure. Routines help children develop self-control, independence, responsibility, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

Naptime and bedtime routines should be a positive time for both adults and children. A set sleeping routine can help lessen sleeping problems.

An important concept to consider is the difference between putting a child to bed and putting a child to sleep. It is the adult's responsibility to put a child to bed. Then the child has a choice to either rest or sleep. No one can make a child sleep.

There are several things a parent/caregiver can do to establish a calming naptime/bedtime routine. Although each child and family situation is unique, the following ideas may be helpful.

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- Give children some transition time. Say, “it’s naptime in 10 minutes” or “after I read you a story, it will be time to go to sleep.” It may help to use a timer or set the alarm on a clock so children will know when time is up.
- Set rules about number of stories, drinks of water, popping out of bed, etc.
- Plan a wind-down or calming activity. Read a story, turn down the lights, play quiet music, or just talk. TV, movies, roughhousing, or active games are not good choices prior to naptime or bedtime.
- Allow children to have some security – favorite stuffed animals, blankie, night light, the door open, flashlight by the bed.
- Talk about fears and anxieties. Do a “monster check” if that seems to be a concern.
- Avoid activities that compete with resting or going to sleep. Have adults and older children observe similar quiet time. This will encourage the little ones to go to sleep. Remember, they don’t want to miss out on anything exciting.
- Decide on a regular bedtime that is approximately 10 to 12 hours before the child needs to get up. If a child is getting up too early, he may be going to bed too soon. On the other hand, if a child is grumpy or drowsy, he may not be getting to bed early enough.
- Adjust daytime naps to support the bedtime schedule. Remember naptime is a time for rest and relaxing. Children may or may not actually sleep during naptime.

As children grow and develop, their sleep patterns and needs will probably change. Other situations also can cause a disruption. These include a new bed; a new room or sleeping arrangement; moving to a new home; disruption in family relationships (new baby, divorce, death, marriage); absence of a family member or pet; or a change in daytime schedule.

## Common Problems

Children often wake and call for a parent/caregiver while sleeping. When this happens, give the child some time to go back to sleep. If crying or calling persists, check on the child. Reassure the child that everything is all right and then leave. Sleeping with the child, giving treats, taking the child to parents’ bed, etc. will only reward the child and start habits that will be difficult to break.

Night terrors and nightmares are a fairly common occurrence in children. Children having night terrors will wake up suddenly soon after falling asleep. Children may scream, sit up in bed, breathe quickly, be glassy eyed, and also be confused. This can last up to 30 minutes. Children will fall back to sleep quickly and will wake in the morning not remembering anything.

Children having nightmares can remember the scary details and have trouble going back to sleep. Nightmares usually happen in the early morning hours. Nightmares are often the result of events, situations, or images that trouble a child. Children will have nightmares more often when anxious or under stress.

Parents/caregivers should remain calm when children have night terrors or nightmares. Hold the child and talk in a soothing voice. Stay with the child until he/she falls asleep because he/she needs to feel safe and secure.

***Learning how to rest and relax is a valuable skill.  
Balancing active and quiet times helps people stay well both physically and emotionally.***

Prepared by Donna K. Donald, Field Specialist/Family Life, Iowa State University Extension.

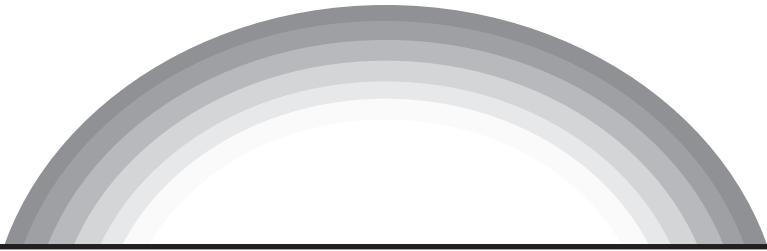
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# Disaster Recovery



## Childhood stress—what parents can do

All families experience stress or crisis at some time or another. Natural disasters, death, divorce, illness, and financial hardships sometimes are especially difficult to deal with when you have young children. The following suggestions may help.

### **Spend time each day with your child**

You have a tremendous influence on the growth and development of your child. Even if everything else is falling apart around you, find time to spend at least a few minutes each day with your child. A few loving words, a hug, and a kiss can work wonders.

### **Be consistent in what you ask your child to do**

Children have little control over life. They need to know that you are predictable and that they can depend on you. Children can settle down after a crisis more easily if you establish some daily routines as quickly as possible. Even though the routine is not the same as before, it's good to find a regular time for meals and bedtime.

### **Get to know your child's teacher or caregiver**

Share information about the family and daily routines with your child's teacher or caregiver. Let this person know what difficulties and problems your child is facing. This will help a teacher or caregiver know how to help your child in daily tasks and in learning new skills and behaviors.

### **Ease the transition from home to school**

Children will feel more comfortable and secure at care centers and schools if small reminders of their child care or school life are placed in the home. Perhaps you can hang some pictures your child drew at school. You might take some snapshots of your child's classmates and teachers and display them at home. Ask your child's teacher if he or she could bring a favorite toy or familiar object from home to school.

### **Take care of yourself**

Stressful times can bring major changes in life. Just when you most need to relax, you feel so many demands that you think you can't take the time. You may be so used to physical work and mental tension that you are unable to sleep. The key to successful relaxation is that it be enjoyable and easy. You also must feel that it's OK to relax. It is! In order for you to perform well under pressure, your mind and body must have time for renewal. Take 20 minutes a day for a restful activity—you might walk, lose yourself in a book, draw mental pictures, or just sit comfortably in uninterrupted quiet. When you feel fatigued, give in to the need to sleep. Even though you think you can't stop in the middle of work—you should stop. Forcing yourself to continue when the body needs to sleep can lead to insomnia.

### **Don't be afraid to ask for help**

Someone else may need your help later on. You'll be in a better position to offer help to them if you can reach out for help now. Most communities have resources to provide your family with food, clothing, shelter, counseling, job referral, and training. Friends and relatives can be a big support, if you let them know what you need. Children begin to relax and feel secure when they sense an easing of tension in their parents.

Prepared by extension specialists at Iowa State University.

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