

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



December 2017

Prince Edward County Elementary School
Dr. Julie Gilliam, Dir. of Instruction

Activities from games to art develop preschoolers' motor skills

Parents often focus on ways to develop their young child's academic skills. But research shows that children's motor skills (the way they use their bodies) also play a part in their performance in school.

One study links preschoolers' ability to control their large muscles (gross motor skills) with better social skills in the classroom. Greater control of small muscles (fine motor skills) is linked to an increased ability to control impulses, and organize thoughts and behavior.



To develop your child's motor skills, try these activities together:

- **Play active games.** If it's too cold to go outside, play Simon Says indoors and have your child jump up and down, hop or march in place.
- **Issue a challenge.** Ask your child to touch his right hand to his left knee while he's marching. Or if you are outdoors, have him kick a ball that's rolling toward him without stopping it first.
- **Do some art.** Cutting with safety scissors, painting and drawing all help your child build coordination in the small muscles of his hands.
- **Sew with shoelaces.** Threading laces through large beads or holes punched in cards can lead to beautiful designs—and fine motor skills.

Source: M.P. Dharshini, "Kids With Better Fine And Gross Motor Skills Do Better At School, Study Shows," Medical Daily, niswc.com/motor.



Try teacher-tested discipline strategies

Do you find yourself raising your voice to your child more than you'd like? Are you relying on one approach to discipline even when it isn't working well? Consider these discipline strategies preschool teachers use:

- **Pay more attention** to appropriate behavior than misbehavior. Sometimes kids misbehave just to get noticed. So, focus on what your child does right and follow up with a big hug. She'll realize she gets more attention for acting right than acting up.
- **Change the scene.** Teachers sometimes move students to another room to help them calm down. A brief walk outside with you might do more to improve your child's behavior than a scolding would.
- **Offer timely reminders.** You may have told your child many times not to wipe her dirty hands on the kitchen dish towel, but she still does it. She needs you step in before she gets to the towel, not afterward. Say, "You have peanut butter on your fingers. Please wash it off in the sink."

Play High Card/Low Card

Play a simple card game to help your child learn more about numbers: Divide the number cards from a deck of cards between you. Each of you turn the first card from your pile face up. Can your child say which card shows the bigger number?



Leave room for discovery

Preschoolers need opportunities to learn by discovering things for themselves. To guide your child to learning:

- **Ask, don't tell.** "Where can we race these cars so they will go really fast?"
- **Model interest.** "Wow, did you know we can make this cool picture with this puzzle? Shall we put some pieces together?"
- **Show excitement** when your child figures something out on his own.



Source: D.S. Weisberg and others, "Guided Play: Principles and Practices," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Association for Psychological Science, niswc.com/guideplay.

Go 'ice fishing' for science

For some wintry science fun, gather ice cubes, a bowl of water, a "fishing rod" made from a stick with yarn tied to one end, and some salt. Help your child:

1. **Put the ice cubes** in the bowl of water.
2. **Dangle the yarn** in the water, then move it so its end lies across an ice cube.
3. **Sprinkle salt** on the ice cube and yarn.
4. **Count to 15 slowly.** Hold the rod steady so the yarn stays across the ice.
5. **Lift the rod carefully.** Did your child "catch" the ice?

The salt melts a little of the ice. When it refreezes, it traps the yarn in the ice.

Source: "Ice Fishing," Science Fun for Everyone! niswc.com/ice.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD

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How do I teach my child to make the right choices?

Q: My daughter's preschool class is learning about making choices. The teacher wants us to work on this at home, too. What types of choices are appropriate for me to offer a four-year-old?

A: Learning to make decisions helps kids gain self-control and independence. Letting your child make decisions for herself may also reduce arguments between you.

This doesn't mean she gets to do whatever she wants, though. You are in charge of keeping her safe. Ask yourself, "Is this something my child can decide?" Your answer will often be *no*. But with your guidance, she could choose such things as:

- **Which outfit to wear.** Give her a choice of two.
- **What to eat for lunch,** from a list of choices you approve.
- **Which to do first** before going to bed, brush her teeth or her hair.
- **What activity to do** next when a friend visits. First the guest gets a choice, then your child does, and so on.

Your child will also have to learn to live with her choices. Help her understand that when she makes mistakes, she learns what not to do next time.



Parent Quiz

Are you building reading readiness?

Reading aloud with your preschooler every day develops his vocabulary, builds his knowledge and helps him get ready to read himself. Are you making reading together an enriching experience? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you read** different kinds of books together, including fiction, nonfiction and poetry?
- ___ **2. Do you take** your child to the library often to find new books and participate in activities?
- ___ **3. Do you reread** books your child likes, even if you are tired of them?
- ___ **4. Do you point out** common words to your child as you read, such as *the*, *is* and *go*?
- ___ **5. Do you pause** and ask your child questions as you read,

and give him time to ask you questions, too?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are putting your child on a path to reading success. For each no, try that idea.

"Books are the plane and the train and the road. They are the destination, and the journey. They are home."
—Anna Quindlen

Helping out at home builds skills and confidence

Asking your preschooler to help you do tasks at home is a great way to teach responsibility. Your child could help set the table. Or you could ask her to count the cans of soup in the cupboard so you know how many to put on the shopping list. Activities like these help your child:

- **Learn to listen** to directions and remember what she hears.
- **Learn new skills** and improve with practice.
- **Realize that she** is an important part of the family.

Be sure to thank your child for her help!

Get creative with winter decorations



Whether you are celebrating a holiday this month or just enjoying winter, make some decorations with your child. Help him:

- **Cut seasonal shapes** out of paper—candy canes, stars, mittens—and thread them on a piece of yarn for a garland.
- **Create snowmen** by gluing different sizes of paper plates together.
- **Make snowflakes** by arranging and gluing cotton swabs to paper.

When you read to your child, talk about writing

Use the time you spend reading aloud to your child to build her interest in writing, too. Tell her the books she loves were written by real people who love stories, just as she does. Read the "About the Author" pages out loud. Then, ask your child, "If you wrote a book, what would it be about?" Have her draw a picture for the cover and help her write her name at the top!

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Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas parents can use to help children
prepare for school*

Prince Edward County Elementary School
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THE
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December • January • February

2017-2018

December 2017

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Children Prepare for School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Teach your child a new song with a holiday or winter theme.
- 2. Ask your child to draw something that lives in water.
- 3. Let your child see you finish a task you have been putting off. Help her to do the same.
- 4. Use paper strips to make a chain. Have your child remove one link every night to count down to a special day.
- 5. Give your child a piece of plain paper and a piece of sandpaper. Which is *smooth*? Which is *rough*?
- 6. Take a family photo. Give your child a copy.
- 7. Mix up several pairs of your child's socks in a pile. Have him sort the socks into pairs.
- 8. Use glue to write your child's name on a sheet of paper. Let her stick dried beans or small pieces of cereal on the wet glue.
- 9. Visit the library with your child and check out books about winter.
- 10. When serving food, talk with your child about how you divide it. "There are two of us and one apple. I'll cut it into halves."
- 11. Let your child have a friend over. Have him greet his friend at the door and walk him out when he leaves.
- 12. Make eye contact with your child when you speak to her. Ask her to do the same in return.
- 13. Ask your child questions while shopping: "Why do babies ride in strollers?" "Why can't we buy everything we want?"
- 14. Help your child experiment with mixing colors. Use medicine droppers and water colored with food coloring.
- 15. Fill glasses with different levels of water. Help your child tap gently on each glass with a spoon. Create a tune together.
- 16. Find a book about holidays in other cultures to read together.
- 17. Have your child dictate a letter to a family member. Let him decorate it and then mail it together.
- 18. Cut holes for eyes in a paper plate to create a mask. Have your child decorate the mask.
- 19. Say a word, such as *ball*. Then, ask your child to name another word that begins with the B sound.
- 20. Give your child a gift certificate good for one special activity with you.
- 21. Hug your child for no reason other than loving her!
- 22. Have your child close his eyes. Make a sound such as jingling keys. Ask him to guess what you are doing.
- 23. Teach your child how to recycle something today.
- 24. Help your child form letters with cooled, cooked spaghetti.
- 25. Have your child try to act out something she wants to tell you, instead of using words.
- 26. Help your child think about what he's learned recently.
- 27. With your child, look for patterns in fabric or wallpaper.
- 28. Discuss favorite things you each remember from the past year.
- 29. On bad weather days, get some indoor exercise with your child.
- 30. Hide pennies around the house. How many can your child find?
- 31. Plan a family trip to a museum.

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TIPS FAMILIES CAN USE TO HELP CHILDREN DO BETTER IN SCHOOL

January 2018

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Children Prepare for School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Give your child a new job, such as watering a plant or feeding a pet.
- 2. Let your child see you control your temper when you are angry. Talk about how you feel instead of yelling.
- 3. Demonstrate how you clean up after finishing a task. Encourage your child to do the same.
- 4. Tell your child stories about herself when she was younger.
- 5. Ask your child what kinds of work grown-ups do. See how many different jobs he can name.
- 6. Ask your child to tell you the three best things about herself.
- 7. Show your child a nickel, a dime and a quarter. See if he can identify each one. Help him if he can't.
- 8. With your child, look through newspapers, magazines and catalogs to find pictures of different forms of transportation.
- 9. Let your child overhear you saying something nice about her.
- 10. Have your child draw a picture of an animal that lives in the jungle and one that lives on a farm.
- 11. Help your child make a simple bird feeder. Spread peanut butter on a cardboard tube and roll it in birdseed. Hang it outside.
- 12. Walk together in different ways—slowly, quickly, lightly, heavily, on tiptoes—to different kinds of music.
- 13. Let your child help you organize something, like toys on a shelf.
- 14. Ask your child to draw a picture of himself today. Was he feeling happy, sad, confused, angry?
- 15. Teach your child to say "Hello, how are you?" and shake hands.
- 16. Play a board game as a family this evening.

- 17. Think of a task you have always helped your child with. Give her a chance to try to do it by herself.
- 18. Have a pretend phone call with your child. Talk about what he did yesterday and what he wants to do tomorrow.
- 19. Do a puzzle with your child.
- 20. Have your child draw or paint a picture of the place where you live.
- 21. If possible, eat all three meals together as a family today.
- 22. Let your child pick a color. Search for things that are that color.
- 23. Help your child count her fingers and toes.
- 24. Look through a calendar together and point out special days, such as your child's birthday.
- 25. Ask a question that helps your child learn to solve problems: "If we were outside and got cold, what could we do?"
- 26. Ask your child to stand on one foot. Count how long he can balance. Then have him try the other foot.
- 27. Cut three or four strips of a paper to different lengths. See if your child can arrange them from shortest to longest.
- 28. Ask your child, "What if your favorite animal lived in your room?"
- 29. Open a fruit that has seeds. Explain that fruit grows from seeds.
- 30. Pretend you have a magic carpet. Where would your child like to go?
- 31. With your child, draw and color a picture of birds.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD
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February 2018

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Children Prepare for School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Encourage your child to describe a song on the radio. Is it fast or slow? Happy or sad? Is it a man or a woman singing?
- 2. Have a jump rope contest today. See how many jumps your child can do in a row.
- 3. This is the third of the month. With your child, look everywhere for the number 3 today.
- 4. Gather some floating and sinking objects. Supervise as your child tests which will float or sink in water.
- 5. Ask your child to name five foods that help us grow and two foods that taste good but do not help us grow.
- 6. When coming home from an errand, give your child responsibility for carrying something into the house.
- 7. Look outside together. Each of you draw a picture of today's weather.
- 8. Let your child draw on paper with a white candle. His picture will magically appear when he paints over it with watercolors.
- 9. Ask your child unusual questions: "What if your hair were made of spaghetti?"
- 10. Give your child an empty plastic bucket and a wooden spoon. Let her tap the beat to music on her "drum."
- 11. Cut part of a picture out of a magazine. Paste it on a blank sheet of paper. Ask your child to complete the picture.
- 12. Start a made-up story. "A boy went down the road and he met a ... " Let your child finish the story.
- 13. Have your child look in a mirror and name the features on her face (eyes, nose, etc.).
- 14. Show and tell family members that you love them today.

- 15. Point out a police car, fire truck or ambulance. Explain to your child that people who drive these vehicles are going to help someone.
- 16. Spring begins next month. Talk about the changes your child will see.
- 17. Check out a library book with pictures of faraway places. Look at it with your child.
- 18. Make your child laugh! Tell a joke, read a funny story or poem, sing a silly song or draw a cartoon.
- 19. Put uncooked rice or paper clips into plastic containers. Tightly seal, and let your child shake. Do different items make different sounds?
- 20. Model good table manners for your child. Say "Please pass the ..." and "Thank you very much."
- 21. Have your child count to five. If this is easy, keep going to 10 or 20.
- 22. Talk with your child about something he has done well today.
- 23. Show your child how to "sew" by stringing yarn through holes punched in cardboard.
- 24. Will your child start kindergarten in the fall? Find out when to register.
- 25. Read three poems or rhymes with your child today.
- 26. Talk about what your child can do "all by myself!"
- 27. Expect your child to pick up toys after play time. Turn on some "clean up time" music!
- 28. Have a No-TV Night. Read or play games as a family.

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