

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Cal State L.A.



## KID BITS

### My accomplishments

Children with good self-esteem tend to have an easier time building relationships and solving problems. Boost your little one's confidence by showcasing her accomplishments. When she sees her art on the refrigerator or her framed certificate stating that she learned to swim, she'll feel proud.

### Communicate with the teacher

Share information about your youngster with his teacher. You might send a note letting her know that he enjoys the building-block center or has seasonal allergies. Information like this helps the teacher get to know him better and keeps the lines of communication open.

### It's okay to be messy

Let your child wear clothes to school or for play that she won't mind getting dirty. Avoid scolding her if she comes home a little scruffy—that means she played and worked hard! Children are more likely to explore and experiment if they aren't worried about staying clean.

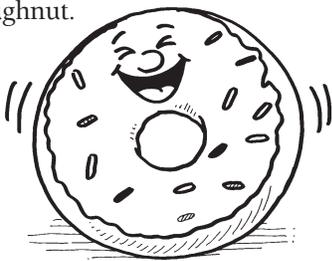
### Worth quoting

"Imagination is the highest kite one can fly." *Lauren Bacall*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has no beginning, no end, and nothing in the middle?

**A:** A doughnut.



## Excited about school

Starting a new school year is exciting, but it also brings a little uncertainty for young children. A few simple strategies can make your youngster eager to head to class and comfortable once he's there.

### Cheerful goodbyes

It's normal for your little one (and you!) to have some separation anxiety. Set a positive tone for his day with an upbeat goodbye routine. For instance, invent a secret handshake that ends with a hug. Or give him a high five, and say, "See you later, alligator." He responds, "After a while, crocodile." You could even make up your own rhyme using different animals.

### The friendship factor

Having friends to play and work with helps children look forward to school. Pretend to be your youngster's classmate, and role-play getting to know each other. He might say, "Hi, my name's Max. What's yours?" You could reply, "Hi, I'm Mary.



Do you like soccer?" Then, foster his developing friendships by arranging get-togethers outside of school.

### After-school chats

Your attitude about school is contagious. If you're excited to hear about your child's day, he'll view school as an adventure to share with you. In the car or during dinner, prompt him with questions that need more than a yes or no answer. *Examples:* "What was the best part of school today?" or "What story did your teacher read?"♥

## What to expect

Youngsters feel more secure and react better if they are prepared in advance for changes. Help your child with these tips:

- Tell your youngster about a schedule change ahead of time. You might say, "Tomorrow, Aunt Anna is picking you up from day care because I'm working late." Give plenty of reminders. For instance, mention the plan at breakfast and again when you drop her off at school.
- For challenging situations, such as a dental visit or a new sibling, knowing what to expect will smooth the way. Let your child play dentist with a stuffed animal "patient," or read a library book about welcoming a new baby.♥



# Managing emotions

Expressing feelings appropriately is a skill that takes time for little ones to learn. This family activity shows your child how others handle emotions and gives her practice controlling hers.

**1. Make emotion cards.** Together, write 10 emotions (happiness, anger, fear) on separate index cards. Let your youngster design an emoji for each (say, a red frowny face for anger). Then, talk about ways to deal with the emotions.



If she's angry, she might take deep breaths or ask a grownup for help. She can draw the examples on the backs of the cards.

**2. Play charades.**

Stack the cards face-down, and take turns drawing one. Pretend to feel the emotion on your card, and act it out while everyone else tries to guess how you feel. If

your child draws "fear," she could open her eyes wide and cover them with her hands. The first person to identify the emotion goes next.♥



## Q & A Rested and ready

**Q:** I know that kids who get enough sleep do better in school. How much sleep does my son need, and how can I help him get it?

**A:** It's true that children who are well-rested find it easier to stay focused and



remember new things. Experts say that children ages 3–5 need 10–13 hours of sleep a night.

Try involving your son in figuring out his bedtime. Together, use a clock and count backward from the time he needs to wake up. For instance, counting back 10 hours from 7 a.m. makes bedtime 9 p.m.

Then, keep nighttime rituals consistent. *Example:* Take a bath, brush teeth, listen to a story, get tucked in. Regular habits send cues that make it easier for your son to fall asleep.

*Tip:* If your child still seems tired in the morning, adjust his bedtime (perhaps moving it back 10 minutes each night) until you find a time that works.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Play listening games

When my son's teacher told me that Alejandro needed to practice listening in class, she explained that the best way for him to learn was through play. She suggested games for us to try at home.

In one game, the first person whispers a word or phrase into another player's ear, and that person "passes it on." If everyone doesn't listen carefully, *elephants* might turn into *smelly pants!*

We also play a game where I clap a rhythm and Alejandro listens. Afterward, he copies what I did. If he's right, he claps a new rhythm for me to copy.

The singing game is our favorite. One of us sings a song and randomly stops ("Twinkle, twinkle..."). The other jumps in and sings the next part ("...little star. How I..."). We go back and forth, trying to keep the song going as smoothly as possible.

Alejandro's listening skills have definitely improved. I never knew that getting my son to listen would be so much fun!♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Things that go

Zip! Zoom!  
Vroom-vroom!  
Toy vehicles are fun to play with. Rev up your little one's transportation knowledge with these ideas.

● **Have a parade.** First, ask your youngster to sort her vehicles according to type (land, air, water). Then, let her roll, fly, or sail the vehicles across the room. *Idea:* Brainstorm other vehicles of

each type that she doesn't have on hand, such as a subway (land), helicopter (air), and canoe (water).

● **Hold a contest.** Explore force and motion by "driving" toy vehicles. Each of you should choose one that has wheels. Push your vehicles across the floor, and see whose travels farthest. Play again, and try to make them go farther. Your child will see that pushing with more force is the key.♥



**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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