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ABSTRACT

This handbook describes the Family Connections program, which consists of 2 sets of guides developed to help families help their young children learn. One set is intended for preschool or kindergarten children, and one set for parents and caregivers. Each set contains 30 four-page guides. The guides are designed to be distributed to parents and children on a weekly basis during the school year to encourage parents to take an active role in their child's education and to provide children with developmentally appropriate activities that they can take part in at home. This handbook provides educators with instructions and suggestions on how to use the Family Connections guides, how to work with parents, and how to promote the program. Sample news releases, parent reaction forms, and review sheets, as well as parent handouts and stationary suitable for photocopying, are also included. (MDM)

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ED 367 442

Family Connections

Handbook

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The ***Family Connections*** guides and handbook were produced by the Rural Excel Program at Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. (AEL), Charleston, West Virginia.

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Handbook Revised August 1993

AEL works with educators in ongoing R & D-based efforts to improve education and educational opportunity. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia and operates the Eisenhower Math/Science Consortium for these same four states. It also operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. AEL works to improve:

- professional quality,
- curriculum and instruction,
- community support, and
- opportunity for access to quality education by all children.

Information about AEL projects, programs, and services is available by writing or calling AEL, Post Office Box 1348, Charleston, West Virginia 25325; 800/624-9120 (toll-free), and 347-0400 (local); 304/347-0487 (FAX number).

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WARNING!

This Handbook is LOADED—

with good ideas

with help for teachers

with fun for families

Read *The Handbook* **BEFORE**
you start using **Family Connections**.

One teacher said this:

*"Everything you need to know about **Family Connections** is in The Handbook. It's easy to read and full of useful ideas. You don't need any training to use **Family Connections**. All you need to do is **READ THE HANDBOOK.**"*

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Acknowledgments

Family Connections owes a debt of gratitude to a number of people for their work on the project:

To Beth Sattes, without whom *Family Connections I* would never have been;

To Carol Perroncel, who reacted to *Family Connections 2* helpfully and pragmatically;

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Barbara Redman, principal/field test site coordinator, Charleston, West Virginia
Lee Robinson, teacher/field test site coordinator, Wartburg, Tennessee
Lorraine Singer, early childhood consultant, State Department of Education, Nashville, Tennessee
Lana Thomas, teacher/field test site coordinator, Middletown, Kentucky

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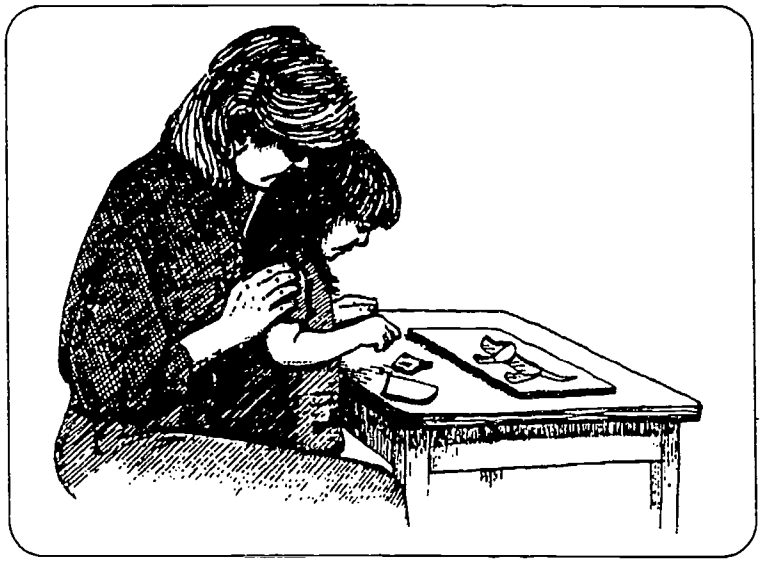
ERIC

Introduction



By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

As an early childhood educator, you are well aware of this, the first of six national educational goals announced in 1990. You want to do everything you can to help achieve the readiness goal. You want to be part of meeting the goal's objectives:

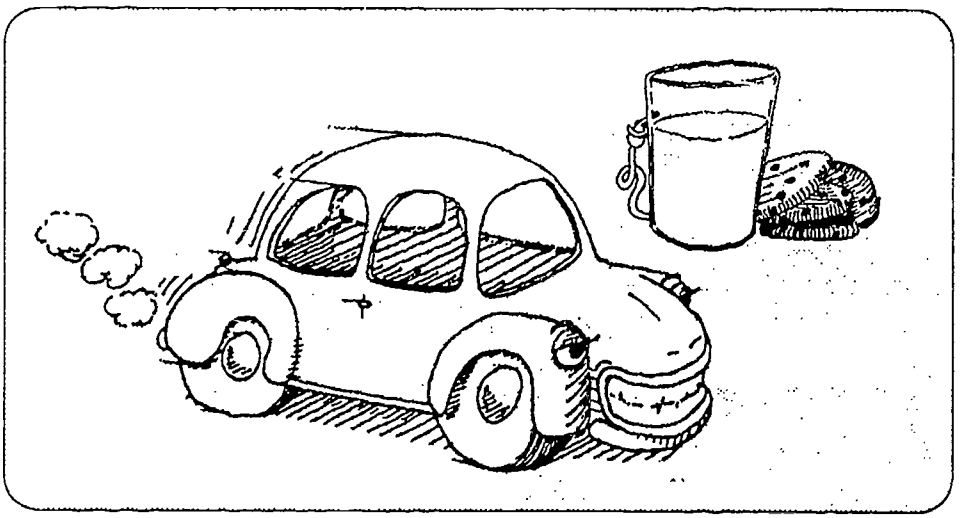
- All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.
- Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need.
- Children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and the number of low birthweight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.

A review of research on effective early childhood programs reveals one essential component: meaningful parent involvement. We now know that **what** children learn as preschoolers may not be as important as having parents involved in the process. Evidence that parents want what is best for their children, and want to help them learn, is clear and abundant. What many parents lack, as you have found out for yourself, is confidence. They think they don't know enough to be teachers for their children. What they often say is: "I don't know what to do to help my child learn."

You know what parents can do. They can read to their children. They can engage them in activities that are appropriate to their age and individuality. They can learn about how children grow and develop. But you and others who serve very young children are faced with so many tasks that providing needed resources to parents seems almost impossible.

Family Connections can help. It is a useful, reliable vehicle for you who work with families of preschool and early primary children. This handbook is your owner's manual. It will help you get the most from this new vehicle, which has been thoroughly road-tested. Many of the user's tips come from teachers who steered on the test drive. What they found may make your journey less bumpy, and more pleasant.

So, on your mark, get set, go.



What Is *Family Connections?*

Family Connections is two sets of 30 four-page guides that AEL developed to help families help their young children learn. The weekly publication is colorful and full of opportunities for parents and children to have fun doing things together that suit the children's stage of development.

Family Connections Volume I is suitable for preschool children and some kindergarten children who have little or no preschool experience. **Family Connections 2** is for the parents and other caregivers of children in kindergarten and the early primary grades.

When the guides are used in mixed-age classes, children understand that they get the guides for only one year.

Both volumes of the guides include:

A message to parents, covering such topics as the importance of reading aloud, effective discipline, using the public library, and how children learn through play.

The messages, like everything else in *Family Connections*, are written at fifth-grade or lower reading level, so virtually everyone can read them with understanding.

One or more read-aloud selections, such as simple nursery rhymes and original verses intended to stimulate imagination and make language fun.

We know that not all homes have books and magazines at hand, so we have something in every issue to read aloud.

Developmentally appropriate activities for parents and other family members to do with their young children.

The activities use materials commonly found in homes, and require little preparation by parents. They are meant to be easy to do, and parents tell us they are. Original art and illustrations add interest for parents and children alike.

A Sunshine Gram in every fourth issue.

The Sunshine Gram gives you an opportunity to have a positive communication with each family on a regular basis. We all know that if you say something nice about my child, I'm your friend for life. For more about Sunshine Grams, see page 15.

What Makes *Family Connections* Special?

***Family Connections* Is Research-Based.**

The research on which the guides are based goes back more than two decades, to AEL's Home Oriented Preschool Education Program (HOPE). HOPE identified a base of 59 competencies that are part of physical, emotional, social and cognitive development in children.

A panel of 34 early childhood practitioners created guidelines to be used in preparing parent-child activities to develop those competencies. All were successfully tried with children in Head Start and other preschool programs, and in kindergarten. Teachers from 14 states tested the original activities, which use materials relevant to children's own life experiences. *Family Connections* staff revised and updated many of those original activities for the first volume of these guides, which were pilot tested in 1992 in 10 schools in five Kentucky districts. AEL field tested Family Connections 2 with more than 800 families of kindergarten and early-primary children in schools in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

***Family Connections* Can Be Personalized.**

Each issue has a space for the child's name so the guides can be personalized. As teachers and other users put a name on each guide, they can

Family Involvement Is Important—

We now know that families can do a great deal more if we see parent involvement as a two-way street. When school and home form a partnership, with each recognizing and responding to the other's problems and concerns, everyone gains.

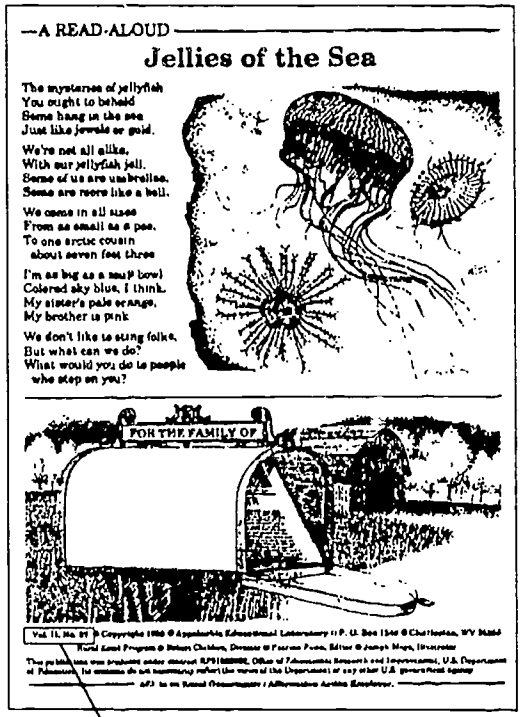
think of how something in that issue might be helpful to a particular child. We know that it's very hard for busy educators to design in-home activities for children's special needs. They can identify activities in ***Family Connections*** that might be suitable and call the parent's attention to them or to an especially helpful message.

The Sunshine Gram is another way of making the guides personal. Whether a gram is directed to "Justin's Mom and Dad" or is to Justin himself, that issue becomes Justin's own.

Family Connections Is Flexible.

The guides are not necessarily sequential. They are numbered on the back page for your convenience, but after Number 1 the guides can be used in varying order. For example, you may decide on a sequence to complement your curriculum. We do urge that you use Number 1 first, because it includes a brief description of the guides and a message to parents about their being first and most important teachers of their children. You may find that a particular issue fits with a unit you are planning for your classroom. You might want to send that issue home the week you are doing the unit, or the following week, to reinforce learning.

You can create your own inserts to send home in *Family Connections*. For example, if you're having a parent meeting, put an announcement about it in the guide. For more on creating inserts, see page 19.



—A READ-ALOUD—

Jellies of the Sea

The mysteries of jellyfish
You ought to behold
Some hang in the sea
Just like jewels or gold.

We're not all alike,
With our jellyfish jell.
Some of us are umbrellas,
Some are more like a bell.

We come in all sizes
From as small as a pea,
To one arctic cousin
about seven feet three

I'm as big as a soup bowl
Colored sky blue, I think.
My sister's pale orange,
My brother is pink

We don't like to sting folks,
But what can we do?
What would you do to people
who step on you?

FOR THE FAMILY OF

Vol. II No. 27

Vol. II No. 27

Family Connections Is Developmentally Appropriate.

Family Connections is designed to reinforce both dimensions of developmental appropriateness: age appropriateness and individual differences. We based activities in the belief that what children learn during the early years should help them make sense of their own experiences.

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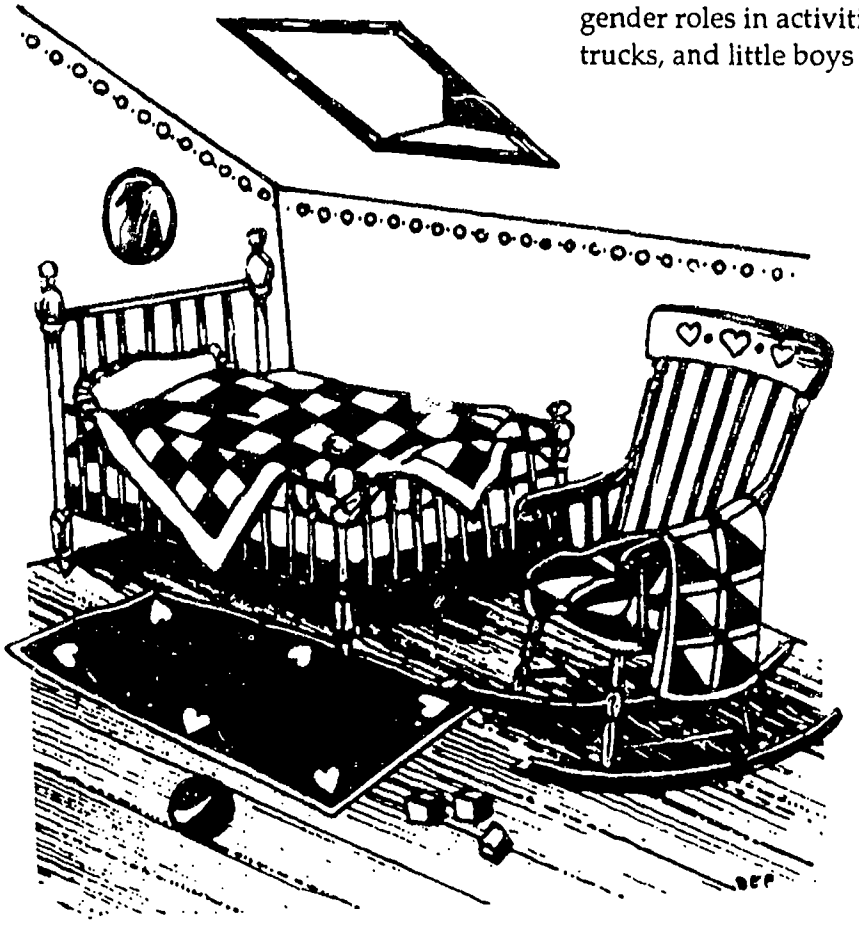
Family Connections **Is Aware of Family Differences.**

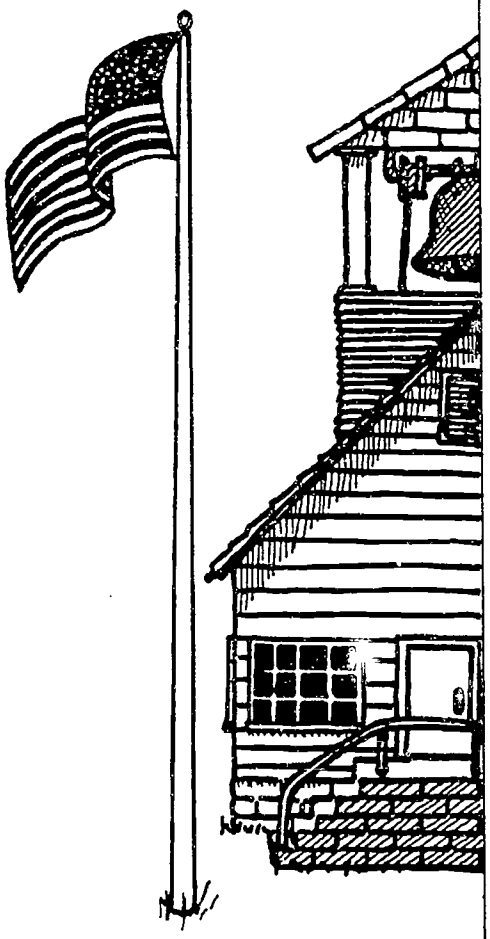
We recognize that family members are individuals, too. We know that families come in all shapes and sizes. Some families have a single parent. Sometimes the "parent" is Grandma or Auntie. All kinds of families make connections. We realize that not every parent will do everything in an issue every week, so we vary activities to have something in each issue to appeal to different tastes and interests.

Family Connections **Is Equity-Sensitive.**

With both our words and our illustrations, we strive to make families aware of the rich cultural diversity in this country. We also try to be even-handed with gender. We use "she" and "he" about equally, and think non-traditionally about gender roles in activities. Little girls do play with trucks, and little boys do work in the kitchen.



How Do You Get Started with *Family Connections*?

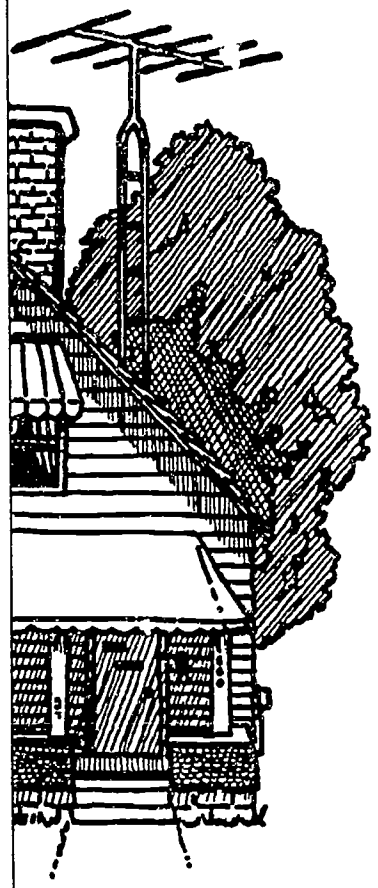


During the *Family Connections* field tests, we posed many questions with teachers and aides. Together, we answered them, posed still more, and discovered many things. Most of the discoveries are incorporated throughout the Handbook. The test drivers' suggestions are often imaginative and almost always practical. You will find them helpful.

In preparing to use *Family Connections,* we considered what might get in the way of parents using the guides. Parents are busy people. Single parents especially have more than enough to do. Some parents are intimidated by schools and teachers. Others think that schools should do the teaching. A few parents can't read, or read poorly.

But parents want what is good for their children. They are eager to help when they know what to do. Our field test experience was that most families eagerly welcomed *Family Connections*. You just need to take steps to create and maintain interest. Parents should be encouraged to follow their children's interests in using the guides. They don't need to do every activity in every issue in an attempt to "finish" them; Family Connections can be kept and used during vacations and on bad-weather days. Children like to repeat their favorite activities.

We have left space for your notes, as you prepare to use *Family Connections.*



Creating Interest

Step 1: Make the community aware of *Family Connections*.

Let the community know about your new parent involvement vehicle. Working with your principal, early childhood coordinator, or other administrator, send out a news release to local media: newspapers, television and radio stations. AEL provided a news release for pilot test sites that could easily be localized, and schools got good coverage. Samples for both volumes of **Family Connections** are included in this Handbook for your use. See pages 23-24.

You will notice that the stories includes information about how children learn and about the importance of families in early childhood learning. Everyone needs to understand, not just parents. Keep in touch with your media folks; they are glad to have positive stories about education.

A13 The Jackson Times, Thursday, February 20, 1992

LBJ will participate in pilot program

L.B.J. Elementary has been chosen to participate in Family Connections, a special project of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Superintendent Hargus Rogers announced today. L.B.J. is one of only 10 schools that will use special materials AEL produced for Kentucky's new programs for four-year-old children.

Participating schools are in five districts: Nicholas County, Floyd County, Breathitt County, Russell Independent and Paris Independent.

One of the national goals for education is: "By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn." Family connections will help schools involve the parents of young children in their children's education.

Research over the past two decades has shown that when parents are involved with their children's schools, the children are more successful in school, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to become productive adults in society, according to Dr. Robert Childers, AEL program director.

"The research evidence is so strong and convincing that federal, state and local governments are mandating that schools make greater efforts to involve parents in their children's education," Childers said.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children calls parents their children's first and most important teachers. The Family Connections project will provide a weekly family guide for teachers to send home with the children in their program.

Each guide includes a message for parents, activities they can do with their children, and read-aloud selections. All materials are research products that are appropriate to the developmental levels of four-year-old children.

The project will also provide videotapes that teachers can use with parents in groups or that parents can use individually. The tapes feature experts in child growth and development on subjects that interest parents.

Staff from the Laboratory will meet monthly until the end of the school year with teachers and other personnel in the selected schools. The project experts increase family involvement with schools as one outcome. Parents are encouraged to look for this valuable material coming home with your preschool child. Parents are to remember that your child needs and wants your involvement. For more information call Edith Griffith and Anna Clemons, preschool teachers, or David Hubbard, preschool coordinator.

Step 2: Prepare the families.

Some ways you can get parents interested follow; you might use them singly or in combinations.

- Send an announcement home the week before the first guides. We included in this Handbook a version you can revise for your own use. It is similar to the one pilot teachers used successfully.
- Build suspense for parents with a series of teasers: "It's coming—something special for you." "Only three days to wait. . ." "Don't forget to ask your child for the big surprise." Some teachers made necklaces of teasers for children to wear home, one a day for a week.

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ANNOUNCING...

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

We are happy to tell you that we have something new for the families of our children, something that will help you in your important job of first teacher to your child.

Family Connections is a colorful four-page publication especially for parents of preschool children. Appalachia Educational Laboratory developed these guides to provide families with materials to help them have enjoyable early learning experiences with their children.

Research shows that when parents are involved with their children's learning, the children are more likely to be successful in school. We want to make a strong connection between home and school.

These colorful four-page guides are for use at home. You will get a new issue each week. Each one will have a message about something of interest to you. Each will have something for you to read aloud with your child. And each will have simple, inexpensive activities for you to do with your child.

You are your child's first and most important teacher. *Family Connections 2* will give you ideas and ways to have fun with your youngster. The time you spend together means more than anything else you can give.

We are interested in what you think of *Family Connections 2* and how much you use it. We will ask your opinion about it from time to time.

Thank you. Enjoy your *Family Connections.*

ANNOUNCING...

FAMILY CONNECTIONS 2

We are happy to tell you that we have something new for the families of our children, something that will help you in your important job of first teacher to your child.

Family Connections 2 is a colorful four-page publication especially for parents of children in kindergarten and early primary grades. Appalachia Educational Laboratory developed these guides to provide families with materials to help them have enjoyable early learning experiences with their children.

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We are interested in what you think of *Family Connections 2* and how much you use it. We will ask your opinion about it from time to time.

Thank you. Enjoy your *Family Connections.*

- Have a meeting for families to discuss Parent Involvement. Introduce ***Family Connections*** as a way for parents to be effective first teachers.

  Make home visits or telephone calls to parents who are unable to attend the meeting, or who seem reluctant to come to the school.

  Parent meetings are a significant component in meaningful family involvement. ***Family Connections*** and get-togethers with families go hand in hand. We included some information on planning parent meetings; see page __.

- Introduce ***Family Connections*** during your first home visit. Some of the pilot teachers used home visits to introduce the guides. They found that ***Family Connections*** made the visit easier for them and the family.

Step 3. Prepare the Children.

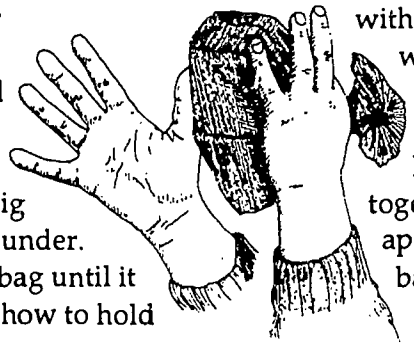
- Talk about the guides in Circle Time the day you send the first issue home.

- Encourage the children to tell their parents about ***Family Connections***. Tell them: "This is something special for your family. There are things in here for you and your family to do together."

What Makes Thunder

Thunderstorms scare some children. Others find thunder and lightning exciting. However your child feels about thunder, it offers a good learning opportunity.

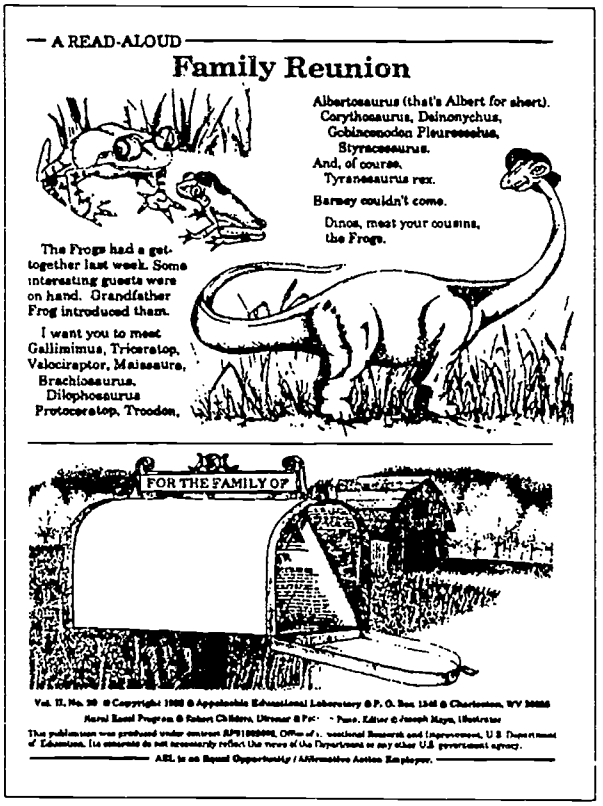
With a paper bag, your child can make a big bang and learn about thunder. Have her blow into the bag until it fills with air. Show her how to hold the bag's neck tightly so the air can't escape. When she hits the bag with her other hand, the bag will break with a loud crack.



Tell her that air makes a loud noise when it rushes together. Lightning forces air apart, and when it rushes back together, thunder is the result.

Getting The Guides Into The Home

Strategies for getting *Family Connections* into homes are numerous.



— A READ-ALOUD —

Family Reunion

Albertosaurus (that's Albert for short).
Corythosaurus, Deinonychus,
Gobiceratops Pleurocoelus,
Styracosaurus.
And, of course,
Tyrannosaurus rex.

Barney couldn't come.

Dinos, meet your cousins,
the Frogs.

The Frogs had a get-together last week. Some interesting guests were on hand. Grandfather Frog introduced them.

I want you to meet
Gallimimus, Triceratops,
Velociraptor, Maiasaura,
Brachiosaurus,
Dilophosaurus
Protoceratops, Troodon,

FOR THE FAMILY OF

- By Way of Children: Sending them home with the children is the most common. Many preschoolers have backpacks, which are a great transport device. Some of the pilot teachers used the old pin-it-on-the-kid's-shirt method.

  Making special folders just for *Family Connections* calls attention to them. Some of the pilot teachers used photos of the children on the cover. Some had the children draw pictures on their folders. Many teachers had the folders laminated.

  Many used pocket folders, and expected them to come back empty to get next week's guide. Instead, several parents chose to shift the guide to the other pocket, keeping previous issues together for easy retrieval. Some parents had the guides laminated. Some had them three-hole punched and put them into notebooks.

  Some teachers sent the guides home in zip-lock plastic bags and enclosed a coupon for the parent to sign. When children brought the bag back to school with signed coupons, they got stickers for their bags.

- By Way of the Mail: *Family Connections* guides do not have to go into homes through schools. One innovative coordinator of family programs introduced the guides at parent workshops. Parents who wanted to use them with their children signed a request form. The guides are mailed to them. You will see that

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the guides can be folded. An address label fits on the barn roof, just under "For the Family Of. . ." CAUTION: If you mail the guides, be sure to use your own return address. If you don't, undelivered ones come back to AEL. We don't want you to miss getting **Family Connections** to one of your children's homes.

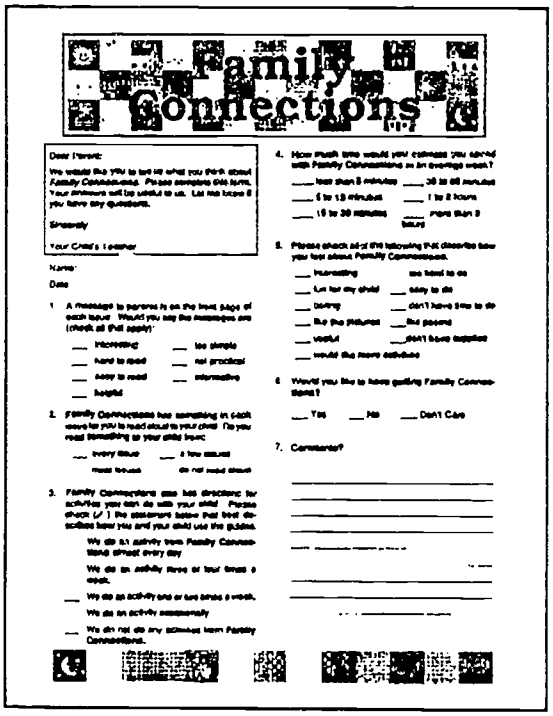
- **By Way of a Third Party:** A home visitor can take the guides into homes. In some Head Start programs, family educators are using ***Family Connections*** with parents and children together. Some family educators provide materials for activities; for example, one program bought inexpensive magnifying glasses for the children to use.

Parent Involvement Is Important—

Not all parents can be actively involved at school, but most will spend time helping their children at home if their child's teacher or someone involved in early childhood education asks them to and tells them how.

Sustaining Interest

Establish patterns. Build rituals. That's what the pilot teachers did.


Family Connections

Dear Parent:

We would like you to let us know what you think about Family Connections. Please complete this form. Your answers will be useful to us. Let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely

Your Child's Teacher

Name

Date

1. A message to parents is on the back page of each lesson. Would you say the messages are (check all that apply):

___ interesting ___ too simple
___ hard to read ___ not practical
___ easy to read ___ informative
___ helpful

2. Family Connections has something in each wave for you to read about to your child. Do you read something to your child from:

___ every wave ___ a few waves
___ most waves ___ do not read waves

3. Family Connections also has directions for activities you can do with your child. Please check (✓) the statement below that best describes how you and your child use the guides.

___ We do an activity from Family Connections almost every day
___ We do an activity three or four times a week.
___ We do an activity one or two times a week.
___ We do an activity occasionally
___ We do not do any activities from Family Connections.

4. How much time would you estimate you spend with Family Connections on an average week?

___ less than 5 minutes ___ 30 to 60 minutes
___ 5 to 15 minutes ___ 1 to 2 hours
___ 15 to 30 minutes ___ more than 2 hours

5. Please check all of the following that describe how you feel about Family Connections.

___ interesting ___ too hard to do
___ fun for my child ___ easy to do
___ boring ___ don't have time to do
___ like the pictures ___ like poems
___ useful ___ don't have supplies
___ would like more activities

6. Would you like to have getting Family Connections?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Don't Care

7. Comments?

___

___

___

■ **Promote *Family Connections* in your classroom.**

Use *Family Connections* activities and read-alouds in the classroom. Try including something from the guides in your plans on the day you send *Family Connections* home. Do an activity from the guide a day or so later. You may find it a good check on how many parents are using the guide with their children. You will probably hear such comments as: "I know this poem. Daddy read it to me last night." "We did opposites when I got home yesterday."

You will have other ideas to try. Let us know about what works for you. We will share your successes with others.

— A READ-ALOUD

Treasured Tooth

Timothy had a tooth in his pocket
To keep it safe from harm.
Annette put a tooth in a teacup,
Which her grandfather viewed with alarm.

That night, they put teeth under pillows,
Where teeth go to be taken away.
But the tooth fairy must have been busy.
Both teeth were still there the next day.

"Don't worry," Annette said to Timothy,
As she re-stored her tooth in the cup.
"The tooth fairy will feel bad he forgot us,
And his sorrow will drive the price up."

Sure enough, on the following morning,
Both teeth under pillows no more,
Ann and Tim found their assets improving,
With two dollars to put in their store.

How Do You Prepare Sunshine Grams?

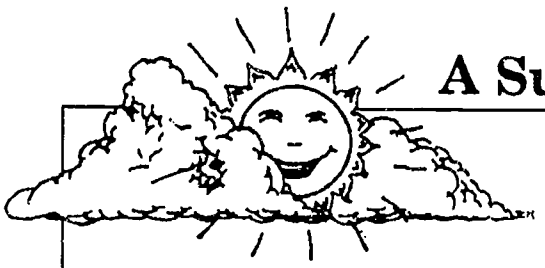
Every fourth issue contains a **Sunshine Gram.** We conceived it as a positive way to communicat with parents. Writing the Grams gives you, as teacher or family educator or whatever you may be, a regular opportunity to send a short message to the family of a particular child.

■ **A Sunshine Gram is:**
- a motivator
- a personalizer
- an encourager
- a self-esteem builder

It has basically one reason for being: TO MAKE SOMEONE HAPPY!

What's really nice about a **Sunshine Gram** is that it usually makes several people happy. The writer of it feels good for having done it. The receiver feels good getting it. And the subject of the message in it—a child—loves it.

■ **A Sunshine Gram is not:**
- a reward for good behavior
- an evaluation
- a progress report
- a problem-fixer



A Sunshine Gram

■ **Some characteristics of good Sunshine Grams**

They are:

- brief (one idea only)
- specific
- non-judgmental
- sincere
- believable
- positive

During the pilot test, we had a work group one day to examine how we were doing with **Sunshine Grams**. We settled on these criteria and did some critiquing. We were all surprised at how hard it can be to keep the grams simple and not evaluative.

■ **Some examples:**

- "Justin was a good helper today. He helped Lisa clean up the house area."
- "Amanda built a beautiful car in the block center Tuesday."
- "George is able to name all of his colors now."
- "Shonda has a beautiful smile. I'm so glad she uses it a lot in class."

The examples above meet the criteria, our pilot teachers judged. The next examples don't

A useful tip from the group:

When a sunshine message about a particular child occurs to you, stop and write it down, right that minute—or as quickly as you can. Be sure to put a date or day on it. Writing **Sunshine Grams** for a whole class at one time can be tedious, and the messages are likely to be less specific than you would like. Write them as they happen!

quite pass muster. We've bracketed some critiquing comments from teachers and aides.

- "Walter has really improved. [*That's at least implicitly negative. It's certainly evaluative.*] He's not as shy anymore. He really works well with others and shares too!" [*Three ideas—or more—in one Gram. That's a no-no.*]
- "Martin is terrific! I'm always amazed at the ideas he has for classroom improvement. He is one of the best listeners in our class." [*This is not specific and has too many messages. How about giving one of Martin's ideas for improving the classroom?*]

A teacher in the **Family Connections 2** field test had her students write the last **Sunshine Gram** of the year to their parents. The children loved doing it and their parents were thrilled to get it.

There's probably no such thing as a bad **Sunshine Gram**, the group concluded. What parent wouldn't relish getting any of these messages? And won't it make a positive difference to have families expecting good news from school at least some of the time?

Parent Involvement Is Important—

There's a bonus in parent involvement that goes beyond student achievement: teachers and parents think more highly of each other when teachers actively encourage parental involvement. Parents rate teachers higher in ability and interpersonal skills. Teachers rate parents higher in helpfulness and willingness to work with their children.

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Other Tips on Working With Families

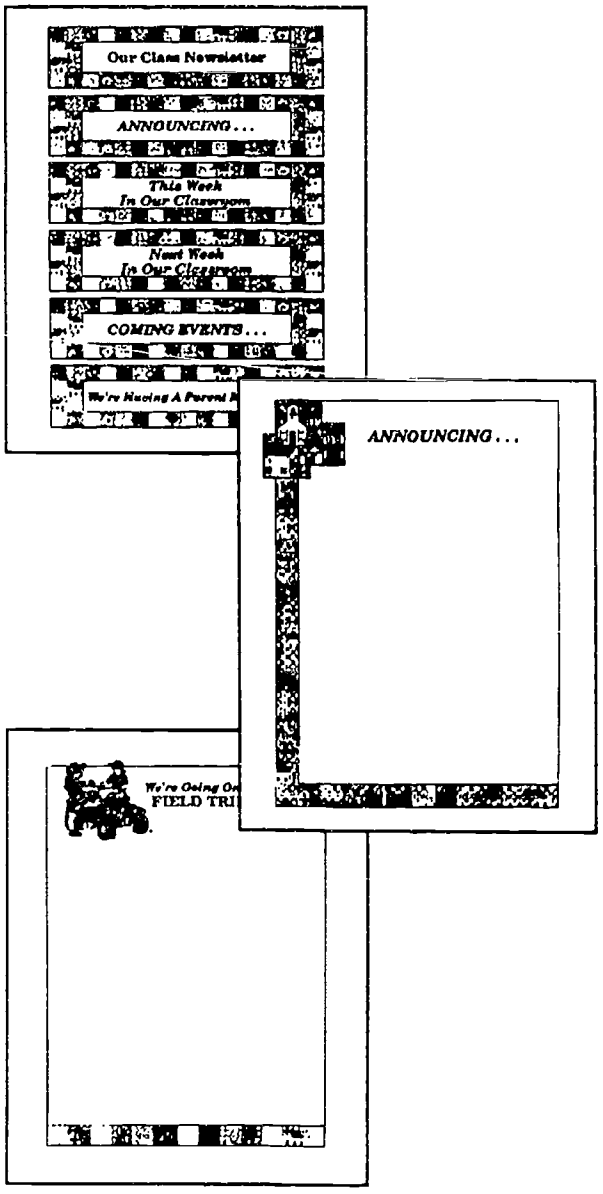
Working with parents and others who are significant in the lives of young children is both challenging and rewarding. Two particularly important ways of being in touch with families are written communications and parent meetings. You may find the following information useful. We have also included a list of just a few readings and resources that have been helpful to us.

Writing to Parents

Family Connections guides are written at fifth-grade reading level or lower. Just about everyone can read them with understanding. Make all your written communication with families easy to read.

Follow these tips.

1. Write short sentences. Fewer than 15 words is a safe guideline.
2. Use short, familiar words.
3. Keep paragraphs short.
4. Get straight to the point.
5. Write in logical order. The journalistic formula—"who, what, when, where, why, and how"—is useful.
6. Adopt a friendly, informal tone.
7. Speak directly to the reader. "You can reach me by telephone at 555-1234" rather than "I can be reached by parents. . ."
8. Put the subject at the beginning of the sentence, instead of the verb. "Please sign the consent slip" rather than "The enclosed consent slip must be signed." "We will meet in Room 1 at the school" rather than "The meeting will be held in. . . ."
9. Don't use all capital letters. They are hard to read. If you have a choice, use large type. (You are reading 11-point type.)
10. Write as if you were talking. Be yourself. Remember, what you want to do is convey a message.



Doing Inserts

Family Connections is an ideal carrier for other written communications you want to send home. We have included with this handbook some materials that could make your work easier. Some are just for teachers; others can be used by non-school programs. The materials are:

- A two-way note from you to the parent with a return "To My Child's Teacher;"
- An illustrated "We're Going On A Field Trip" form that you can use to provide the family with information they need;
- A page of headings with the *Family Connections* borders, including:
  - Our Class Newsletter—If you do a newsletter regularly this could be a nameplate for it.
  - Announcing. . .—This one can be used for several purposes.
  - This Week In Our Classroom—for sending parents a schedule at the beginning of the week.
  - Next Week In Our Classroom—for sending a schedule at the end of the week for next week.
  - Coming Events—for anything coming up, including a performance by the children.
  - We're Having A Parent Meeting—to tell parents about upcoming meetings.
- A page of the headings listed above that you can cut to use on bordered pages, either whole (two designs) or half sheets, depending on your needs.

This camera-ready copy is separately packaged. It is on white paper, and is not three-hole punched. You can reproduce in whatever quantities and on any color you want.

Planning Parent Meetings

Parent meetings are useful for a great many purposes, but it is not always easy to get good turnouts. Here are some suggestions from Follow Through programs in a number of communities for planning parent meetings to increase attendance.

1. Schedule meetings at times that are convenient for parents, or have meetings at two different times. One daytime and one evening meeting should meet most needs.
2. Provide transportation to the meetings for parents. Some communities used school buses. In other communities, parents and school personnel gave rides to parents who were without transportation. A parent volunteer might organize car pools for parent meetings.
3. Contact parents the day before a meeting to remind them of meeting time and place. Check to see that they have transportation.
4. Plan thoughtfully for the meeting. Have an agenda to be sure items are handled that need to be taken care of. You might include some parents in the planning. Distribute copies of the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. (If you can, include an agenda with the invitation.)

Family Involvement Is Important—

"Parents encouragement, activities, interest at home, and participation at school affect their children's achievement, even after student ability and family SES are taken into account." —Joyce Epstein

5. Hold meetings in other locations than the school, at least some of them. Good alternatives are a neighborhood center or a church meeting room.
6. Provide child care during the meeting, on site, but in a separate room.
7. Have a program after the meeting and serve refreshments. Children performing songs or skits pleases parents, and they are more apt to attend a meeting if their children are involved.

Patricia P. Olmsted, Follow Through director from 1979 through 1986, wrote about the program for the January 1991 issue of *The Elementary School Journal.* "Parent Involvement in Elementary Education: Findings and Suggestions from the Follow Through Program" appears in volume 91, number 3.

Family Involvement is Important—

"Everyone benefits when parents are involved in their children's education. . . .And parent involvement works better when parents have a variety of roles to play." —Anne Henderson

More About Parent Involvement and Young Children

Derman-Sparks, Louise, and the A.B.C. Task Force, *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, DC, 1989.

Epstein, Joyce L., "Effects on Student Achievement of Teachers' Practices of Parental Involvement" in *Literacy Through Family, Community and School Interaction*, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, 1987.

Henderson, Anne T., *The Evidence Continues to Grow*, National Committee for Citizens in Education, Columbia, MD, 1987.

Families in School, State Strategies and Policies to Improve Family Involvement in Education, Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington, DC, 1991.

Katz, Lillian G., "Readiness: Children and Their Schools," The Eric Review, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 1992, pp 2-11.

Krupp, Judy-Arin, and Robert Pauker, *When Parents Face the Schools*, Adult Development and Learning, Manchester, CT, 1984.

Liontos, Lynn Balster, *At-Risk Families & Schools: Becoming Partners*, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, OR, 1992.

Parent Involvement in the Schools, Hot Topics Series, Center on Evaluation,, Development, Research, Phi Delta Kappa, Bloomington, IN, 1990.

Riley, Sue Spayth, *How to Generate Values in Young Children*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, DC, 1984.

Rogers, Cosby S., and Janet K. Sawyers, *Play in the Lives of Children*, NAEYC, 1988.

Sugarman, Jule M., *Building Early Childhood Systems: A Resource Handbook*, Child Welfare League of America, Washington, DC, 1991.

**Teacher/Parent Partnerships Handbook*, Written by teachers, for teachers, 1989.

**Teachers Catalog of Creative Program Ideas*, 1986.

*Both are available from **IMPACT II, THE TEACHERS NETWORK**, P. O. Box 577, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013-0577.

Family Involvement is Important—

"When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools." —Anne Henderson

You can easily make this sample news release work for you. Just substitute the name of your school or program in the first sentence, and use the name of your superintendent, principal, or other official. The quotation from your spokesperson is just a suggestion. Substitute whatever words you wish to use.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
For more information, contact:
Name:
Telephone:

[The Sunshine School on Maple Street] is providing parents with a new publication designed to help them be involved in the early learning of their young children, [Principal Nancy J. Armstrong] announced today.

Family Connections is a weekly four-page guide developed by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory to enhance efforts to achieve the first of six national education goals: "By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn."

The National Association for the Education of Young Children calls parents their children's first and most important teacher. "Research tells us that parents want to be involved in their children's early learning, but many aren't sure what they should do," [Armstrong said]. "These colorful guides give them simple hands-on learning activities that are fun to do and don't take a great deal of time. We know how busy parents are."

Each issue of ***Family Connections*** includes a message to parents about such issues as discipline, how children grow and develop, and the importance of reading aloud with them. At least one read-aloud selection appears in every issue. The contents are based in research and have been field tested. Dr. Lillian Katz at the University of Illinois says that one of the most important influences on children's social development is experience within the family. "What young children require is adult help in making sense of their experience and giving meaning and order to the stimulation that surrounds them," according to Katz. "The available evidence indicates that helping families with their children's social development should be put high on the list of strategies to address the readiness goal."

[The Sunshine School] believes that using ***Family Connections*** will help parents become involved in their children's education in a meaningful way, [Armstrong] concluded.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Name:
Telephone:

[The Sunnyside Avenue Elementary School] is providing families with a new publication designed to help them be involved in the early learning of their children in kindergarten and the early primary grades, Principal Barbara Andrews announced this week.

Family Connections 2 is a weekly four-page guide developed by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory to enhance family efforts to show their young children the importance of education. "Research tells us that parents want to be involved, but many aren't sure what they should do," [Andrews said]. "These colorful guides give them simple hands-on learning activities that are fun to do and don't take a great deal of time. We know how busy parents are."

Each issue of **Family Connections 2** includes a message to parents about such issues as the importance of reading to and with children, of helping them develop competence and self-confidence, and of how much children learn in play. At least one read-aloud selection appears in every issue. The contents are based in research and have been field-tested.

Melitta J. Cutright, author of "The National PTA Talks to Parents," points out that parents don't have to be well educated to help their children learn. They don't have to invest a great deal of time, either. "Half an hour a day reading and talking to your child will make a difference," according to Dr. Cutright.

"Using **Family Connections 2** will make it easy for parents to spend time and have fun with their children," Andrews said. "We believe using the guides will help parents become involved in their children's education in a meaningful way."

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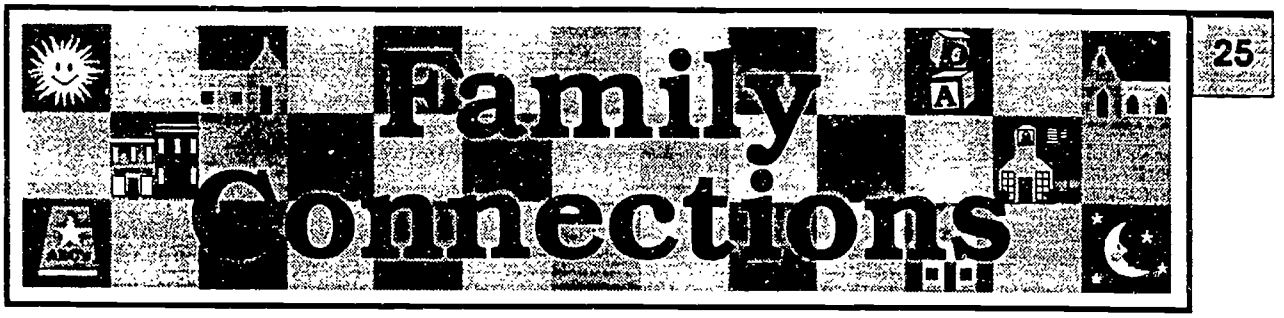
SAMPLE



Dear Parent:

We would like you to tell us what you think about ***Family Connections***. Please complete this form. Your answers will be useful to us. Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Your Child's Teacher

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. A message to parents is on the front page of each issue. Would you say the messages are (check all that apply):

   ___ interesting ___ too simple
   ___ hard to read ___ not practical
   ___ easy to read ___ informative
   ___ helpful ___ not helpful

2. **Family Connections** has something in each issue for you to read aloud to your child. Do you read something to your child from:

   ___ every issue ___ a few issues
   ___ most issues ___ do not read aloud

3. **Family Connections** also has directions for activities you can do with your child. Please check (✓) the statement below that best describes how you and your child use the guides.

   ___ We do an activity from **Family Connections** almost every day.
   ___ We do an activity three or four times a week.
   ___ We do an activity one or two times a week.
   ___ We do an activity occasionally.
   ___ We do not do any activities from **Family Connections**.

4. How much time would you estimate you spend with **Family Connections** in an average week?

   ____ less than 5 minutes ____ 30 to 59 minutes
   ____ 5 to 14 minutes ____ 1 to 2 hours
   ____ 15 to 29 minutes ____ more than 2 hours

5. Please check all of the following that describe how you feel about **Family Connections**.

   ___ interesting ___ too hard to do
   ___ fun for my child ___ easy to do
   ___ boring ___ don't have time to do
   ___ like the pictures ___like poems
   ___ useful ___don't have supplies
   ___ would like more activities

6. Would you like to keep getting **Family Connections?**

   ___ Yes ___ No ___ Don't Care

7. Comments?_____

Teacher Review Sheet

AEL is interested in your reactions to ***Family Connections.*** Please rate each item with 1 being the least favorable and 5 the most favorable.

I. To what extent do you see the guide as being:

Developmentally appropriate for four-year-olds?

1 2 3 4 5

Interesting to parents?

1 2 3 4 5

Informative to parents?

1 2 3 4 5

Reinforcing of school?

1 2 3 4 5

Appropriately illustrated?

1 2 3 4 5

Understandable by most parents?

1 2 3 4 5

Usable by most parents?

1 2 3 4 5

Please express yourself freely and candidly to the following questions.

II. What is your favorite thing in the guides?

_____

_____

_____

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

III. What do you like least in the guides?

_____

_____

_____

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

IV. What would you like to add to the guides?

_____

_____

_____

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please return to:

Family Connections, Appalachia Educational Laboratory, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325

Camera-ready copy in packet.

Family Connections Volume I

#1 YOUNG CHILDREN: PLAY IS THEIR WORK
What is "Family Connections"?
Time with your Child
Wishing Together
I can be a Car
You are Somebody Special
Letter to Parents

#2 READING ALOUD IS IMPORTANT
Home-made Finger Paint
The Mirror Song
Opposite Words
Library Card
Sunshine Gram
Five Little Ducks

#3 TELL ME WHY
Nursery Rhymes
Riddles and Questions
Pouring
What would you do if...

#4 YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DRAWINGS
Sandy Letters
Playing with Magnets
Collages
What Sounds Like This
Poem: Myrtle Turtle

#5 HOP, SKIP AND JUMP FOR DEVELOPMENT
Taking Turns
Let's Pretend
Most Four-Year-Olds Can Do These Things
Move Like the Animals

#6 CHILDREN DO AS YOU DO
Blowing Bubbles
Sunshine Gram
Bake Your Own Alphabet
Kitchen Time
Poem: Old King Cole

#7 DISCIPLINE LEADS TO SELF-CONTROL
Taking Care of Belongings
A Special Rock
Thumb Pies
Punching Bag
Poem: Little Jack Horner

#8 THE SENSE OF TOUCH
Exercise Time
A Different Touch
Following Directions
Play with Pennies
Poem: At My House

#9 PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY AGAIN?
Good Choices from the Library
Cinnamon Toast
Stay in Shape
Poem: She Shall Have Music

#10 LEARNING TO USE SMALL MUSCLES
Home-Made Play Dough
Fork Foods
Clipping with Clothespins
Sunshine Gram
Poem: A Visit from Grandma

#11 HEARING AND LISTENING TO LEARN
Loud and Soft
Find that Sound
Tell Me What You Hear
Breakfast: The Power Meal
Poem: The Grandfather Clock

#12 DON'T LITTER - DO RECYCLE
Helping Hands
Basic Food Groups
Read Aloud: Where is Thumbkin
Simon Says

#13 WAITING CAN BE USEFUL TIME
Acting Out
Doing Dishes
Nursery Rhymes
The Perfect Gift

#14 LEARNING BY SEEING
Leaf Walk
String Paintings
Looking Forward
Sunshine Gram
Poem: As I Grow

#15 SPENDING TIME
Wordless Books
Talking Puppet
Find me a Penny
Poem: You Can Make a Rhyme

#16 ABOUT READING ALOUD
Making a Little Book
Watch it Grow
Set Our Table
Poem: The Dinner Party

#17 CHILDREN AND TELEVISION
The Lid Game
Finish the Face
Remembering Directions
Right Hand, Left Hand
Poem: Make a Rainbow

Family Connections Volume I (continued)

#18 DEALING WITH FEELINGS
Hot or Cold?
Tips for Healthy Eating
At Home with Numbers
Sunshine Gram
Poem: Animal Clouds

#19 WORDLESS MESSAGES
Make a Puzzle
Red Celery
Menu Planning with Pictures
A Silly Riddle
Rebus Read Aloud

#20 RESOLVING CONFLICTS
The Polar Bears' Picnic
Sing your Telephone Number

#21 HELPING YOUR CHILD PAY ATTENTION
Mixing Juice
Cardboard Climbers
Making a Mural
Grocery Shopping
Poem: Song of Sixpence

#22 BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM IS IMPORTANT
Learning to Concentrate
Tops and Lids
Sunshine Gram
Another Rebus Read Aloud

#23 THE WONDER OF IT ALL
The Copy Game
Shaped Play
Some Special Time Together
Eat-A-Boat
Poem: Engleberry Wilson

#24 LEARNING TO SHOW NEGATIVE FEELINGS
Peanut Butter Special
My Own Book
Ant House
Poem: Parade of Pets

#25 CHANCES TO CHOOSE
Sorting Things
Toothy Toothbrush
Poor Humpty Dumpty
Poem: Wildflower Naptime

#26 ARE PARENTS INVOLVED ENOUGH IN SCHOOL?
Popcorn Pictures
Crayon Machine
Ring Toss
Sunshine Gram
Poem: This Little Froggie

#27 HOW CHILDREN LEARN LANGUAGE
Practice Rhyming
Tell Me A Story
Activity: Run and Say

#28 DON'T FORGET: CHILDREN LEARN BY PLAYING
See What I Mean?
What a Reaction!
Water Play
Sing the Week Days
Poem: Pink Pickles

#29 YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD RESIST BIAS
Crunchy Bananas
Get Ready to Cook
More Choices from the Library
Poem: Reflections of Me

#30 A SUNSHINE GRAM FOR ALL PARENTS-AS-TEACHERS
Getting the Job Done
Toothpick Patterns
Happy Unbirthday
Puppy's Lost Bone
Poem: Dreaming Past Midnight

Family Connections Volume II

#1 PARENTS ARE TEACHERS, TOO
Count Potatoes
Cook Potatoes
Turn Potatoes Into Art
Grow a Potato
Read-Aloud: One Potato or Two?

#2 ASK A GOOD QUESTION EVERY DAY
Sink or Float
Sort and Count
Fruit Treats
Library Time
Read-Aloud: Movement in Nature

#3 SUCCEEDING IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CHILD
Look Carefully
Try Touching
Count for Nutrition
Read-Aloud: A Pesky Puppy

#4 READ, READ, READ
Books to Enjoy Together
Sunshine Gram
Veggie-Dip Snack
Put a Name On It
Read-Aloud: Blue Tuesdays for Belinda

#5 BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE
A Safety Snack
Beans In A Carton
Listen, Please
About *Family Connections* Activities
Read-Aloud: The Sounds of the Zoo

#6 SHOW ME HOW YOU FEEL
Valuable Letters
Recipes for Learning
Tell Your Own Story
Read-Aloud: When I Learn to Read

#7 CHILDREN LEARN AS THEY PLAY
Can Corn Hear You?
Up and Down
Largest and Smallest
Smiling Crackers
Read-Aloud: An Apple Surprise

#8 WORDS CAN BREAK THE SPIRIT
Your Friend the Toothbrush
Sunshine Gram
Two Riddles
Your Moving Parts
Read-Aloud: Another Czar Nicholas

#9 HOW WAS SCHOOL TODAY?
A Place for Everything
More Books to Read Together
These Little Piggies
Read-Aloud: Think About This

#10 NEVER TOO OLD FOR HUGS
Look for a Letter
Big and Small Voices
Quick-and-Easy Pizza
If Your Happy
Read-Aloud: Silly Somethings

#11 WHAT CHILDREN NEED EVERY DAY
A Fill-the-blanks Story
Summer Snowflakes
Bake a Puddle Cake
Read-Aloud: Those Perfectly Wonderful Pandas

#12 WHEN THEY GROW UP
One Little, Two Little
Sunshine Gram
Shopping for Shapes and Sizes
Buttons in the Box
Read-Aloud: About Being Tall

#13 THE APPLE OF YOUR EYE
Fun with Numbers
Apple-of-my-eye Book
Beary Good Soup
What Makes Thunder
Read-Aloud: True or False?

#14 ASK YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER
Rhyming with Numbers
You Decide
You Can Make a Rainbow
Read-Aloud: Some Curious Things

#15 TEACH RESPECT BY RESPECTING
Soap and Pepper
Colors That You Eat
Clip the Numbers
Take Turns with Opposites
Read-Aloud: I'd Like to Know

#16 BUILDERS ARE LEARNERS
What is Gravity?
A Sunshine Gram
Devil Some Eggs
Sprouting Popcorn
Read-Aloud: Me and My Mirror

Family Connections Volume II (continued)

#17 REWARDS FOR LEARNING
Nest Eggs
Celebrate New Skills
My Family's Favorite Colors
Put Your Child in a Story
Read-Aloud: A Tail of Tails

#18 SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT EARLY LEARNING
Books to Read with Your Family
Napkin Rings from Kitchen Things
Make a Rhythm Band
Read-Aloud: What Boys and Girls are Made Of

#19 DEALING WITH ANGER
Our Family History
Zipping Things Up
You Can Draw a Pig
Read-Aloud: How Big is a Raindrop?

#20 THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE AREN'T THINGS
Freeza Banana
A Sunshine Gram
Estimate, Estimate
Tire Art
Read-Aloud: Arrangements

#21 GOOD MANNERS MEANS BEING KIND
Am I Like You?
Detergent Power
The Paper Stretch
Read-Aloud: The Weather Report

#22 HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN TO PLAN
An Important Message
Bottle a Little Ocean
Good Junk Creations
Move to Music
Read-Aloud: All I want To Do Is Play My Cello

#23 TV CAN BE SCARY FOR CHILDREN
See How I Grow
More Riddles
Pound a Pattern
Fun Dough
Read-Aloud: Twelve Friends for Toast

#24 CHOOSE WORDS CAREFULLY
Weighing In
Sunshine Gram
Measuring Time
What Happens When
Read-Aloud: New-Fashioned Time

#25 HAVE A GENUINE ENCOUNTER
Words that Make Pictures
Forever Blowing Bubbles
Name Some Tunes
Ice Cream in a Bag
Read-Aloud: What Shall I Do?

#26 STAY INVOLVED WITH LEARNING
Interview an Oldster
Books Starring Older Folks
TV Imagination
Shape Up Some Sandwiches
Read-Aloud: I'd Rather Be Older

#27 STRAIGHT TALK WITH YOUR CHILD
Make A Magnifier
Cook Some Welsh Rarebit
A One-Foot Walk
Read-Aloud: Jellies of the Sea

#28 PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS MATTER MOST
Songs at Bedtime
A Sunshine Gram
Words I Know
A Softening Experiment
Read-Aloud: Treasured Tooth

#29 OPEN-MINDED CHILDREN WILL HELP US GET ALONG
Have Some Oobleck
Added Oobleck Fun
Talking in Pictures
Search for Shapes
Read-Aloud: Family Reunion

#30 AS A PARENT, I PROMISE...
A Letter to Someone
Milk Jug Scoop
Figure With This
Toothpick Time
Read-Aloud: That's About the Size of It

ANNOUNCING . . .

FAMILY CONNECTIONS 2

We are happy to tell you that we have something new for the families of our children, something that will help you in your important job of first teacher to your child.

Family Connections 2 is a colorful four-page publication especially for parents of children in kindergarten and early primary grades. Appalachia Educational Laboratory developed these guides to provide families with materials to help them have enjoyable early learning experiences with their children.

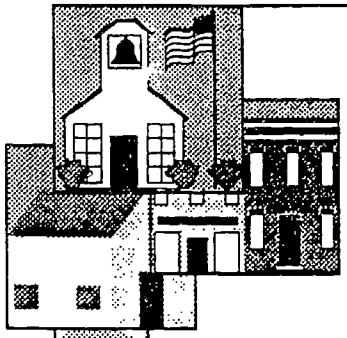
Research shows that when parents are involved with their children's learning, the children are more likely to be successful in school. We want to make a strong connection between home and school.

These colorful four-page guides are for use at home. You will get a new issue each week. Each one will have a message about something of interest to you. Each will have something for you to read aloud with your child. And each will have simple, inexpensive activities for you to do with your child.

You are your child's first and most important teacher. *Family Connections* 2 will give you ideas and ways to have fun with your youngster. The time you spend together means more than anything else you can give.

We are interested in what you think of *Family Connections* 2 and how much you use it. We will ask your opinion about it from time to time.

Thank you. Enjoy your *Family Connections*.



ANNOUNCING...

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

We are happy to tell you that we have something new for the families of our children, something that will help you in your important job of first teacher to your child.

Family Connections is a colorful four-page publication especially for parents of preschool children. Appalachia Educational Laboratory developed these guides to help families have enjoyable early learning experiences with their children.

Research shows that when parents are involved with their children's learning, the children are more likely to be successful in school. We want to make a strong connection between home and school.

These colorful four-page guides are for use at home. You will get a new issue each week. Each one will have a message about something of interest to you. Each will have something for you to read aloud with your child. And each will have simple, inexpensive activities for you to do with your child.

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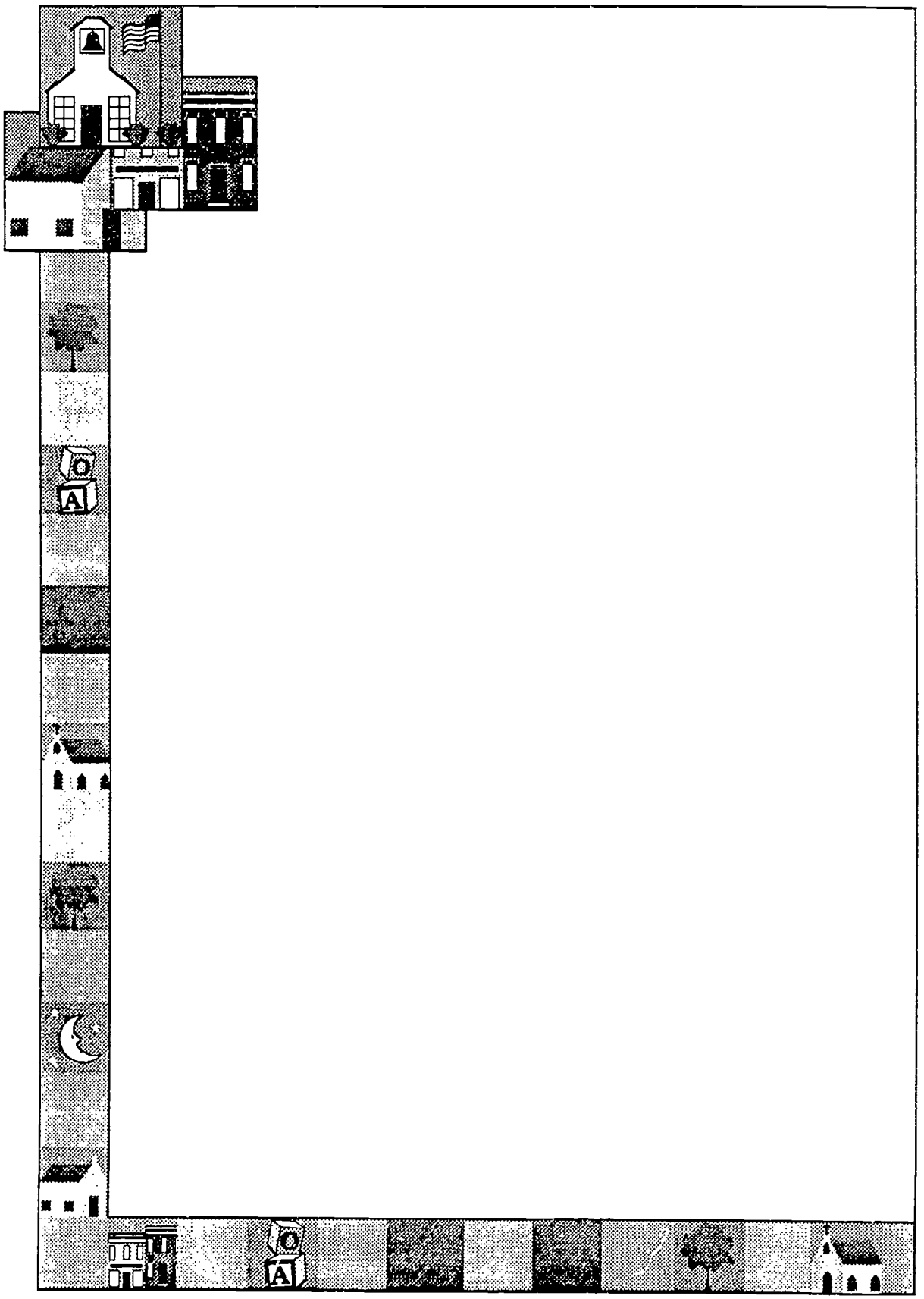
Thank you. Enjoy your *Family Connections*.

We're Going On A
FIELD TRIP

A Note . . .

From Your Child's Teacher . . .

To My Child's Teacher . . .



Our Class Newsletter

ANNOUNCING . . .

THIS WEEK
IN OUR CLASSROOM

NEXT WEEK
IN OUR CLASSROOM

COMING EVENTS . . .

WE'RE HAVING
A PARENT MEETING

We're Going On A
FIELD TRIP

ERIC

Our Class Newsletter

ANNOUNCING . . .

This Week In Our Classroom

Next Week In Our Classroom

COMING EVENTS . . .

We're Having A Parent Meeting

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Family Connections

Dear Parent:

We would like you to tell us what you think about ***Family Connections***. Please complete this form. Your answers will be useful to us. Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Your Child's Teacher

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. A message to parents is on the front page of each issue. Would you say the messages are (check all that apply):

   ___ interesting ___ too simple
   ___ hard to read ___ not practical
   ___ easy to read ___ informative
   ___ helpful

2. **Family Connections** has something in each issue for you to read aloud to your child. Do you read something to your child from:

   ___ every issue ___ a few issues
   ___ most issues ___ do not read aloud

3. **Family Connections** also has directions for activities you can do with your child. Please check (✓) the statement below that best describes how you and your child use the guides.

   ___ We do an activity from **Family Connections** almost every day.
   ___ We do an activity three or four times a week.
   ___ We do an activity one or two times a week.
   ___ We do an activity occasionally.
   ___ We do not do any activities from **Family Connections**.

4. How much time would you estimate you spend with **Family Connections** in an average week?

   ____ less than 5 minutes ____ 30 to 60 minutes
   ____ 5 to 15 minutes ____ 1 to 2 hours
   ____ 15 to 30 minutes ____ more than 2 hours

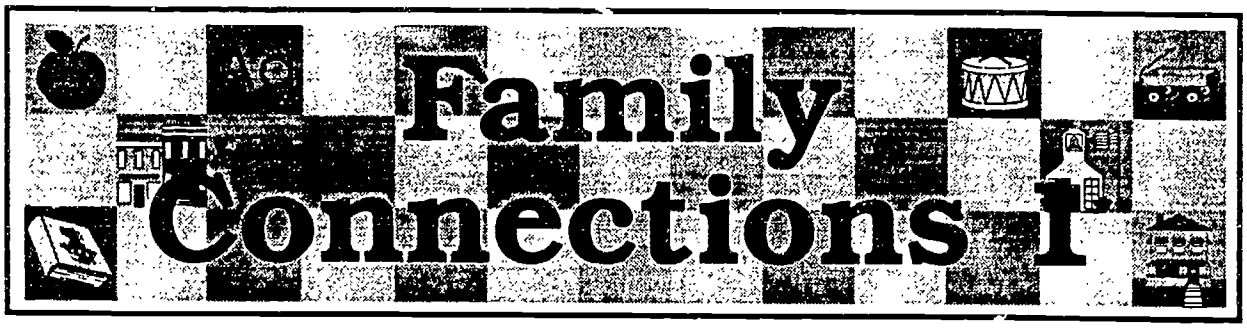
5. Please check all of the following that describe how you feel about **Family Connections**.

   ___ interesting ___ too hard to do
   ___ fun for my child ___ easy to do
   ___ boring ___ don't have time to do
   ___ like the pictures ___ like poems
   ___ useful ___ don't have supplies
   ___ would like more activities

6. Would you like to keep getting **Family Connections**?

   ___ Yes ___ No ___ Don't Care

7. Comments? _____



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

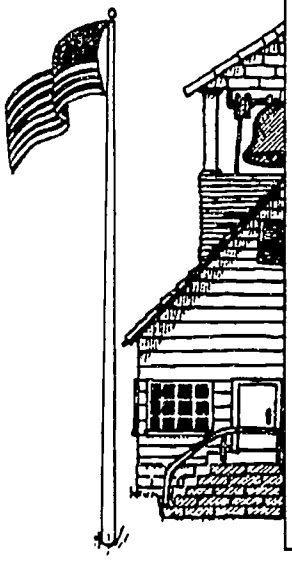
Young Children: Play Is Their Work

Children learn best through discovery. In their early years, they explore using all their senses: touching, smelling, tasting, looking and listening. Using materials such as blocks, they learn about sizes, shapes, and colors. They notice how things are related to each other. And they pretend. A stick becomes a horse that they ride. An empty cardboard box is a TV set.

As children play, they learn. Play is the very foundation for academic learning. Play is their work, their time for exploring, their opportunity to develop small muscle skills.

Sometimes parents worry that their children's early school experience doesn't look serious. They wonder where the workbooks are, and why their children aren't being prepared for first grade. Researchers have found that memorization and drill, rather than preparing young children for elementary school, may cause them to miss important steps in development.

So don't worry if your youngster's experience in preschool looks too easy. Play is their work — and it is some of the most important work they will ever do.

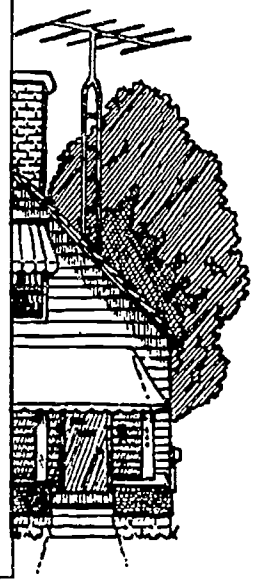


What is "Family Connections"?

We know from research that children do best in school when families and teachers work as partners. **Family Connections**, the publication you are reading now, is intended to help strengthen that partnership.

Your child will bring a new issue home from school every week. Each will have messages for you about things that are important to your child's early education. You will also find activities to enjoy with your child, things to read aloud, answers to questions that many parents ask, and other items of interest to your family.

Communicate often with your child's teacher. Ask questions. Share information. Volunteer to help. Everyone will benefit from the partnership—especially your child.



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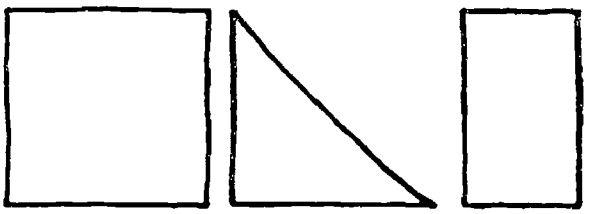
Time With Your Child

The time you spend with your child offers many opportunities for learning. He or she likes to be with you, and likes to help you in your daily activities.

It may actually take longer to do something when your child is "helping," but important learning takes place. And your child feels valued when you devote the time and offer praise for the accomplishment.

The Activity:

Setting the table for dinner is one example. A napkin, cloth or paper, is a square. The child can fold a napkin for each place at the table. One fold can make the napkin into a triangle. A different fold creates a rectangle. You can demonstrate how to fold the napkin and say the word triangle or rectangle.



What's Happening:

The child is beginning to learn shapes, an important concept in mathematics. If you show him how to put a napkin on the left side of each place at the table and a spoon on the right, he begins to see left to right, a component of learning to read.

The most important thing about such learning opportunities is that they occur naturally and are enjoyable to you and your child. Your time and attention are what make a real difference to your child's development.

Wishing Together

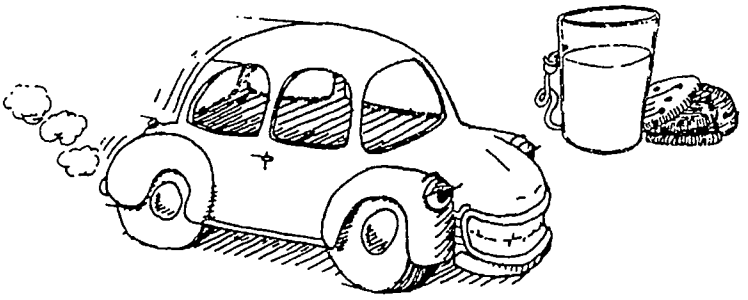
This is a nice activity at bedtime. It will help develop your child's imagination, and remind you of some of the magic of childhood. It will also help you and your child get to know each other better.

You say: "Do you know what I would wish for if I had one magic wish? I would wish for, _____"

"What would you wish for if you had one magic wish?"

I Can Be A Car

Children love to pretend. Read "I Can Be A Car" aloud. Put your child's name before "says." Then have your child follow the directions as you read the poem again, pausing to allow time for the "car" to start, stop, turn and follow the other directions. You can add more things to do if you want to. Take turns with your child. You be the car and let your child drive you!



I can be a car, _____ says.

You may drive me
If you're careful.

Tell me when to start
When to stop
When to turn, and which way.

I can back up
and turn around.

I can go pretty fast

And verrrry slow.

Cookies and milk
Will keep my engine going.

You Are Somebody Special

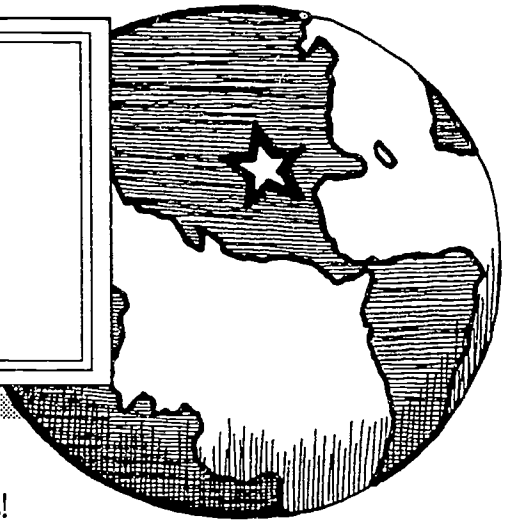
Do you know who you are?

You are somebody special

You're _____
(your child's name)

and

There's nobody else just like you.



Think of it!

Nobody else exactly like you in the whole, wide world.

—A READ-ALOUD

Dear Parent,

You are your child's first and most important teacher.

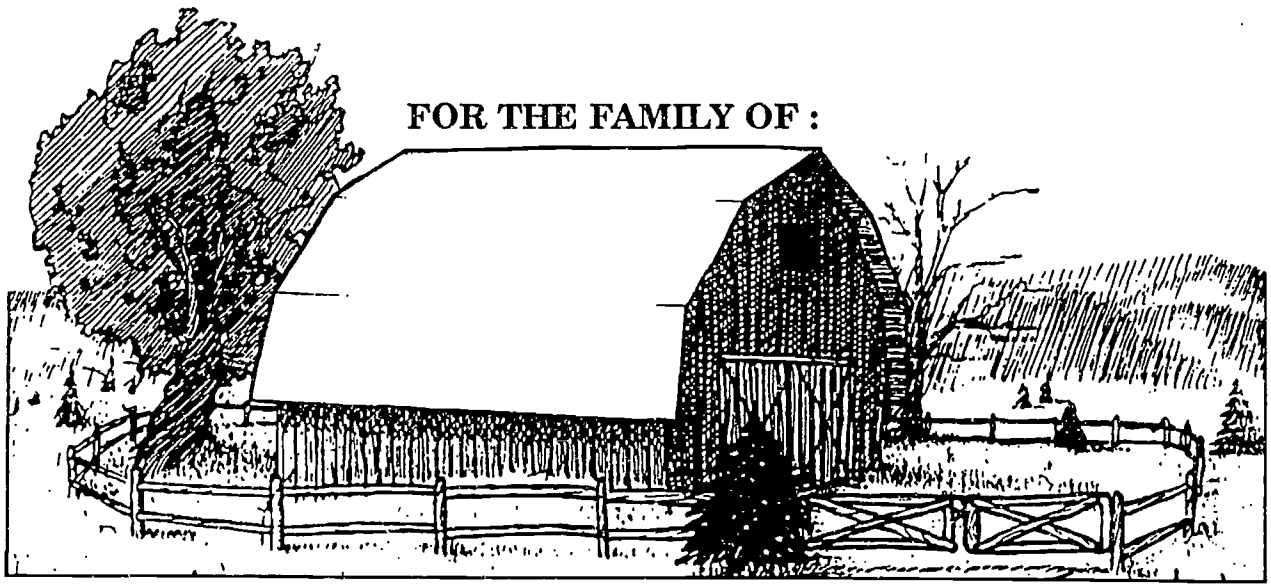
You know your children better than anyone else does. You are with them a lot. You have a special interest in their welfare. They are at ease with you. Like all parents, you want what is best for your children.

You are their first role model, the first person from whom they hear language, the first to feed and dress them. They come to you for comfort when they are hurt. They count on you to keep them warm and safe.

When your children start to school, they already know how to walk, how to talk, how to get many of the things they need by asking for them. They learned at home, eagerly and joyfully. Children naturally love to learn, because they want to make sense of their world.

They thrive on approval when they are learning. Remember when your child started to walk? Those first steps were pretty wobbly, and the path uncertain. But you didn't say "No, don't do it that way. That's wrong. You're going to fail." In fact, you smiled, and applauded, and generally carried on as if no child had ever before done this thing called walking nearly so well!

Children learn most and best in that kind of loving, supporting, approving environment, the kind you want to provide as you continue to be your child's first and most important teacher.



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Rural Excel Program ♦ Robert Childers, Director ♦ Patricia Penn, Editor ♦ Joseph Mays and Dawn Pauley, Illustrators

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Family Connections

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Reading Aloud is Important

One expert in education has said that if parents of preschoolers read aloud to their children just 15 minutes a day it would revolutionize the schools. The Commission on Reading said that the single most important activity to create success in reading is reading aloud to children.

When should you start reading to children? It's never too early, and NOW is a good time. Young children enjoy sitting on your lap when you read to them. It's also good practice to have them sit on your left side while you point to the words. This helps them learn that we read from left to right. The single most important thing about the reading is that it be a social event. Encourage questions and talk about what you are reading. Make it a time you and your child look forward to having together.

What should you read? Your child's teacher can offer suggestions. The librarian at your public library knows which books interest children at various ages. Let your child help choose books. Read books that appeal to you, too. Children like to have books read over and over again, so it helps to have books that hold your interest. Pay attention to the illustrations when you choose books to read aloud. Beautiful pictures add meaning to the best books.

Finally, let your child see you reading. Modeling is a powerful teacher. If your child sees you and other adults reading for pleasure as well as to gain information, reading becomes valuable to them.

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Home-made Finger Paint

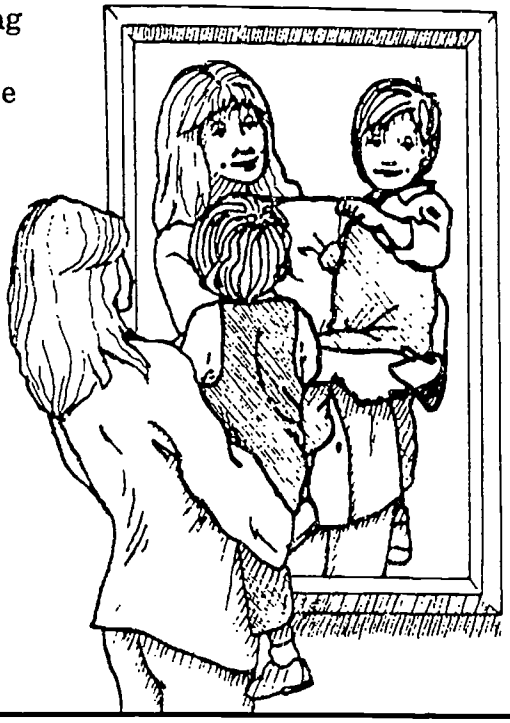
Your youngster will enjoy illustrating her own little book with finger paints. You can buy them, or you can make your own with this recipe.

Pour bottled liquid starch into small jars. Put a few drops of food color into each container. Let your child mix (with a finger) to get the desired color. Start with red, blue and yellow, and let the child discover the combinations: red and yellow for orange; blue and yellow for green; all three primary colors for brown.

> The more that you read, the more things you will know.
> The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.
>
> —*Dr. Seuss*

The Mirror Song

To build self-esteem, sing this song with your child as you look at yourselves together in a mirror. It's to the tune of "Frere Jacques." (Are you sleeping, Brother John?)



We are special.
We are special.

Take a look.
You can see.

We are very special.
We are really special.

You and me.
You and me.

Opposite Words

Tell your child that you are going to play a word game. You will say a word and he has to think of a word that is opposite. Use the words in a sentence at first, to demonstrate what opposite means:

Turn the light **on**, then turn it **off.**

If you throw the ball **down**, it will bounce back **up**.

After a while you can just say a word and he will give you an opposite.

Common opposites:

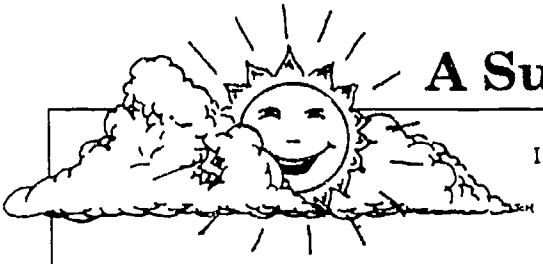
long - short	rough - smooth
big - little	wet - dry
fast - slow	on - off
day - night	over - under
dark - light	hot - cold
happy - sad	hard - soft
old - new	young - old
up - down	full - empty

Library Card

It's never too soon—or too late—to get a library card for your child and yourself.

If you haven't been to the library for a while, you may be in for a surprise. Today's public libraries are warm and welcoming. Most will let children have their own card as soon as they can print their name. Many have no restrictions on issuing cards to children in their own names with your signature.

Having a library card can change your child's life.

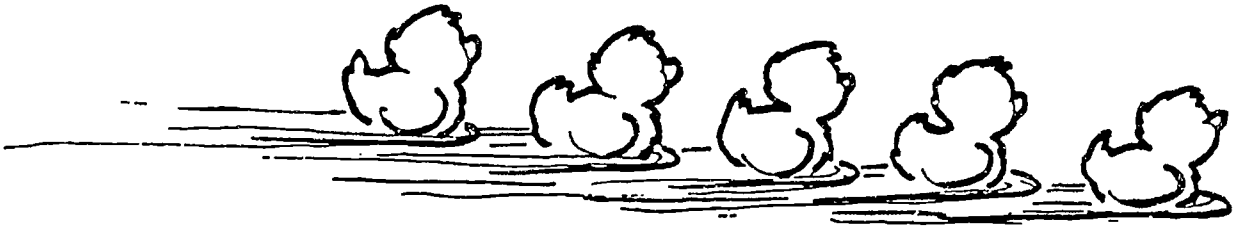


A Sunshine Gram

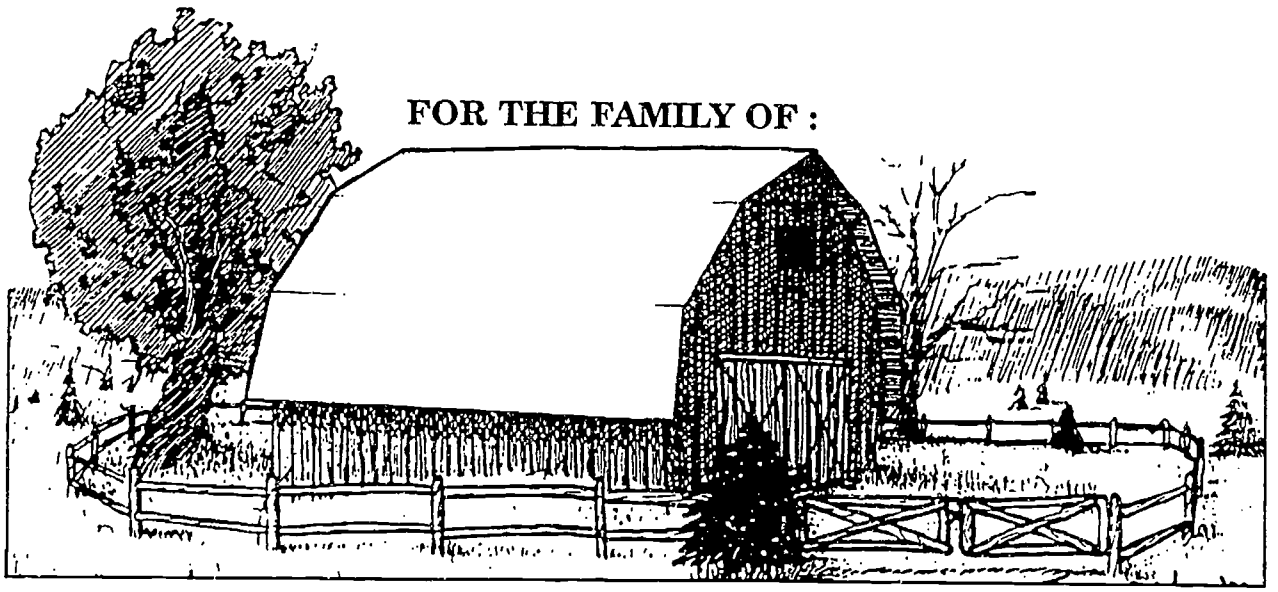
If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Five Little Ducks

A Read-Aloud Poem with Hand Play



Five little ducks
(Hold up five fingers.)
Swimming in the lake.
(Make swimming motions.)
The first duck said:
"Watch the waves I make."
(Make motions of waves.)
The second duck said:
"Swimming is great fun."
The third duck said:
"I'd rather sit in the sun."
The fourth duck said:
"Let's swim away."
The fifth duck said:
"Oh, no, let's stay."
Then along came a motor boat
POP, POP, POP!
(Clap hands three times.)
And five little ducks
Swam away from that spot.



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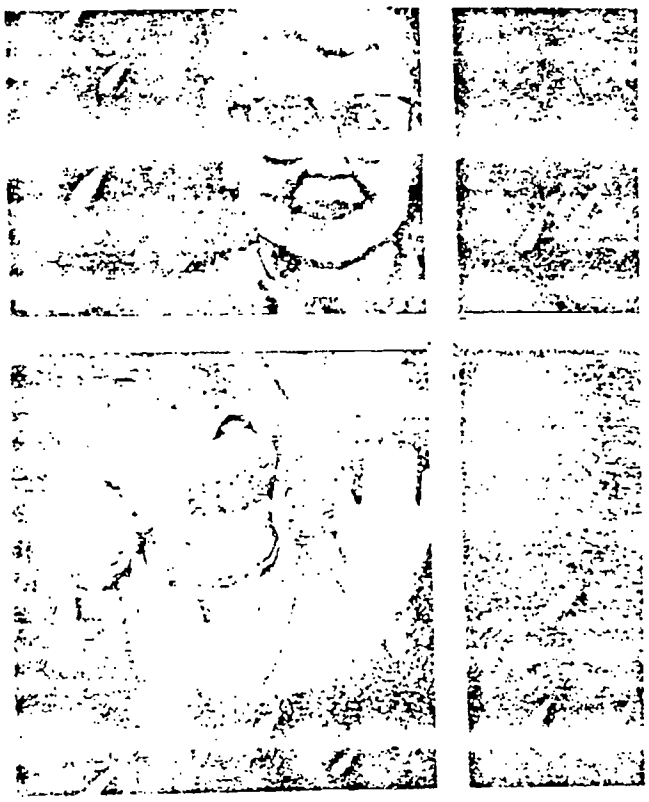
Family Connections 1

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Tell Me Why

You may wish sometimes that your child did not know the word "why." Young children seem to ask a question a minute, and most of them are "why" questions. Just think of how often things are not clear to us as adults, and you quickly see how many would puzzle a child.



One of the many important jobs you have as a parent is to respond to questions. You don't have to know all the answers. It's perfectly all right to say "I don't know" sometimes. Just do it with patience and respect.

Young children are interested in the purpose of things, rather than how they work. A child who asks "Why does it rain?" probably wants to know what the rain is for, not how it happens. The four-year-old will be quite satisfied with an answer like "It rains so the flowers will grow." The scientific explanation can come a little later.

How you handle questions is important because you want your child to keep looking for information. "Don't pester me with dumb questions" will stop his asking. It will also shut off one of the best ways children have to learn.

Value your child's questions. Try to give simple answers. When you don't know the answer, suggest a way that you might find the answer together. Let your child know that you are interested. "Why" can be a pesky word, but it will open your child's world.

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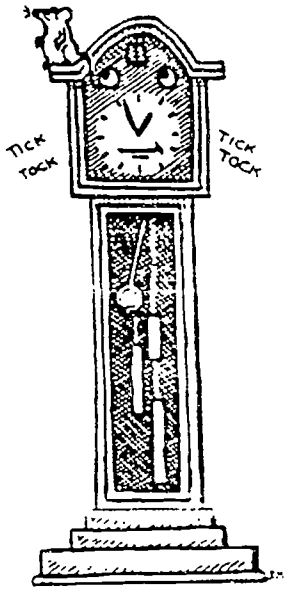
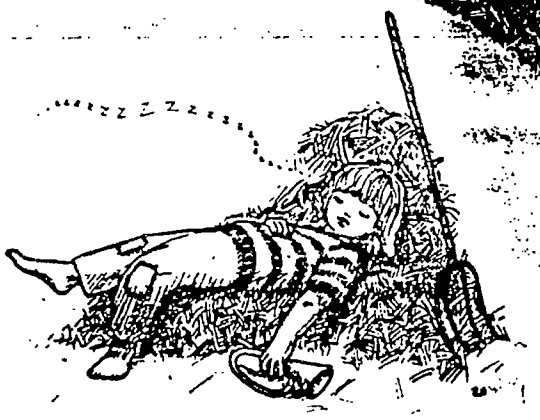
NURSERY RHYMES TO READ ALOUD



Hickory,
dickory,
dock.
The mouse ran
up the clock.
The clock
struck one,
The mouse
ran down.
Hickory,
dickory,
dock.



Little Boy Blue
Come blow your horn.
The sheep's in
the meadow,
The cow's in the corn.
Where is the little boy
who looks after
the sheep?
He's under the haystack
fast asleep.

Jack and Jill
Went up a hill
To fetch a pail
of water.
Jack fell down,
And broke his
crown,
And Jill came
tumbling after.

Riddles And Questions

Four-year-olds can become very good at guessing riddles. By the time they are five they may be able to make up their own. Riddles that relate to parts of the body attract young children. Try these:

- What has four legs and no feet? (A table)
- What has a head and a foot, but no face? (A bed)

You can also make up questions for the nursery rhymes that appear in this issue of Family Connections. Here are a few. You will think of many others as you and your child look at the pictures together while you read the verses. He will probably want you to read them over and over again. Soon he will want to read them to you.

- Who went up a hill to get water?
- Where is the little boy who looks after sheep?
- Who ran up the clock ?

Pouring

One skill that uses small muscles is pouring. For this activity you need a pitcher, small cups and some rice. A one-cup measuring pitcher works well. Follow these steps:

1. Point to the different objects and their parts: cup, pitcher, handle, spout and so on.
2. Fill the pitcher half-way with rice.
3. Have the child hold the pitcher by the handle.
4. Have him take the cup in the other hand.
5. Pour from the pitcher to the cup.

When he can pour rice without spilling, let him practice with water. Show him how to wipe up spills.

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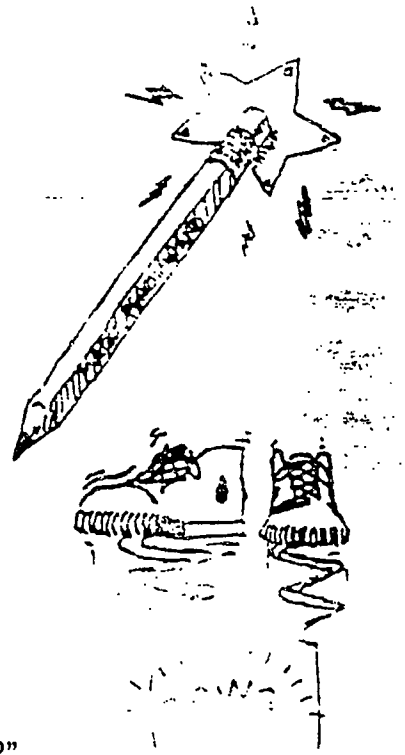
What Would You Do If . . .

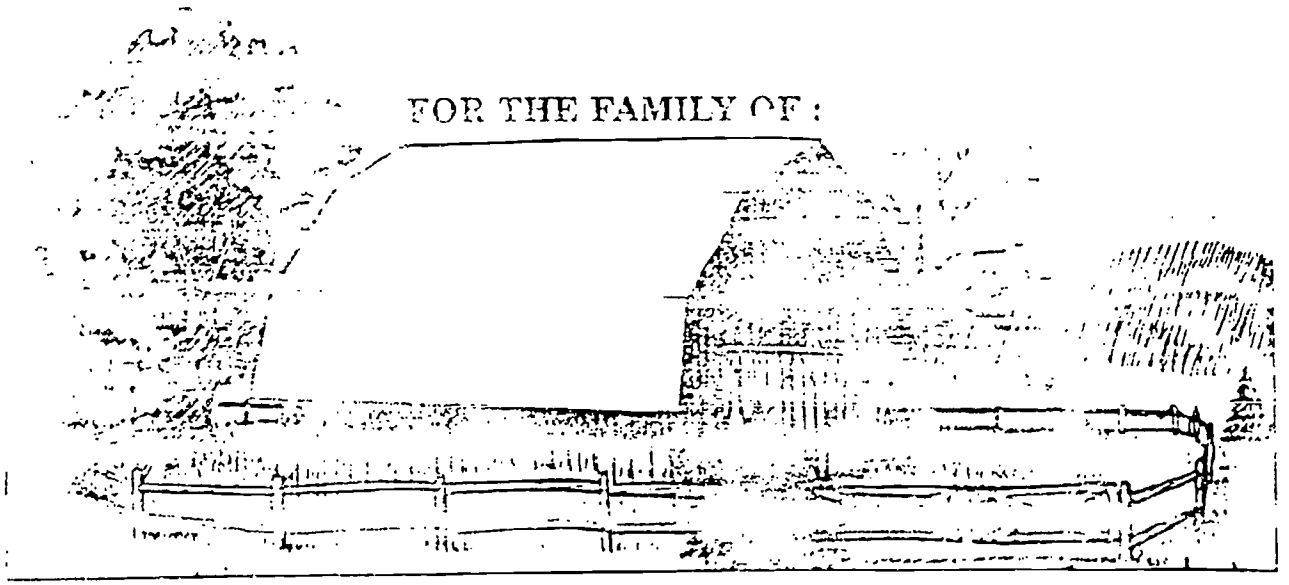


Ask your child to close his eyes and pretend to be in the land of make believe. You will ask some questions that call for magical answers. This activity helps your child learn to use words. It gives you and your child a chance to talk together.

The first questions could be: "What would you do if you had silver wings on your shoes?" Show him how the game works by telling him your answer: "If I had shoes with silver wings, I would fly to Alaska to see a polar bear."

Some other questions:

"What if your chair turned into a cloud?"
"What if your pencil became a magic wand?"
"What if your shoes could go a mile in one step?"
"What would you do if you had some magic seeds?"



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Family Connections

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Your Child's First Drawings

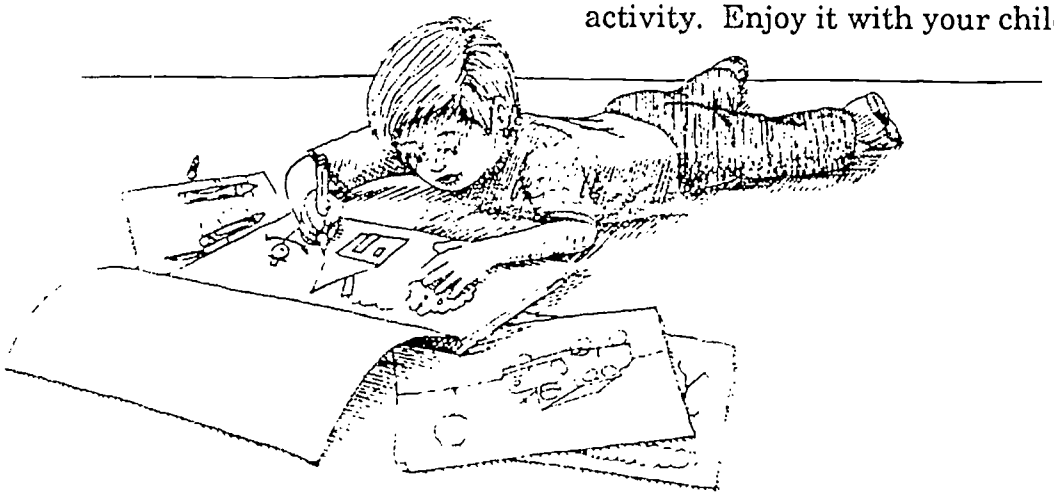
A child's first drawings are attempts to learn a new form of expression. When your child was learning to talk, you praised and encouraged. Do the same with your budding artist.

Give your child crayons and paper, and you will get pages of scribbles in return. These are first steps in learning to draw. Soon he will realize he can control the direction of the lines. He will learn that the lines turn and bend and go up and down and side to side.

Many children's first recognizable picture is of a person. There probably will not be a body, just arms, legs, head and maybe eyes or mouth. These are the parts most important to a child. Keep in mind that the drawings are of what a child knows and understands.

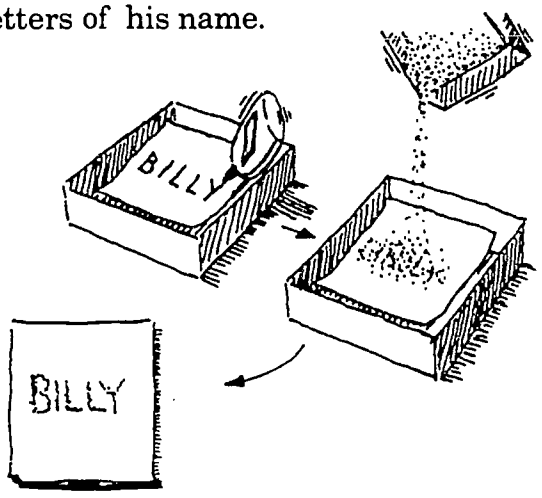
Praise the pictures. Write his name on them while he watches. Encourage him to tell you a story about a drawing. Write it down. Put pictures on the refrigerator door or hang them on the wall for others to see. Your child's self-esteem will grow.

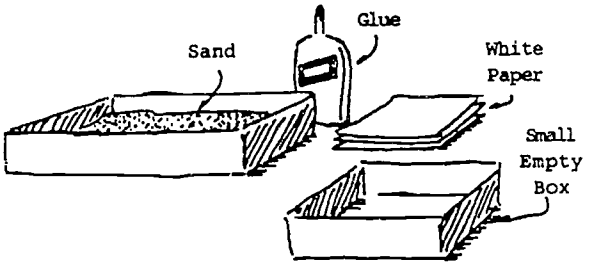
Remember, drawing is a very personal activity. There is no one correct way to draw anything. For most children, drawing is a natural, happy activity. Enjoy it with your child.



Sandy Letters

Put some clean sand in a small, flat cardboard box. If sand is not available, fine-grain kitty litter will work very well. Help your child make capital letters with glue on plain white paper. He would especially enjoy making the letters of his name.





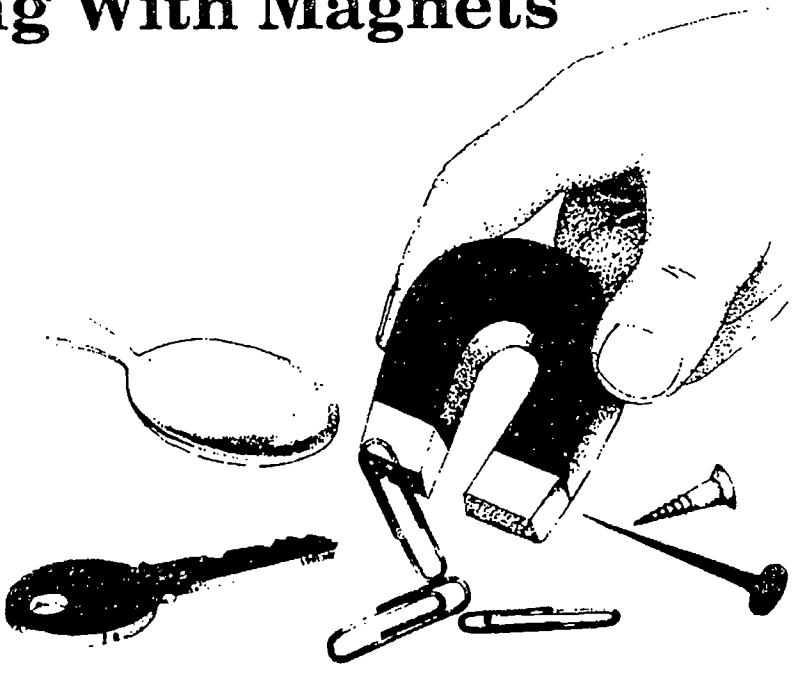
Put the paper in another small flat box. Pour sand on the glue and shake the box gently to spread sand over the letters. Pour the excess back into the sand box.

This activity is also fun with simple drawings, such as an outline of an apple. The process can be messy. Don't worry about it until you're finished. Then let your child help clean up.

Playing With Magnets

Buy a small, inexpensive magnet if you don't have one. Let your child discover which things the magnet will attract. Encourage guesses. "Do you think the magnet will attract this book? What about the spoon? Will it pick up this key?"

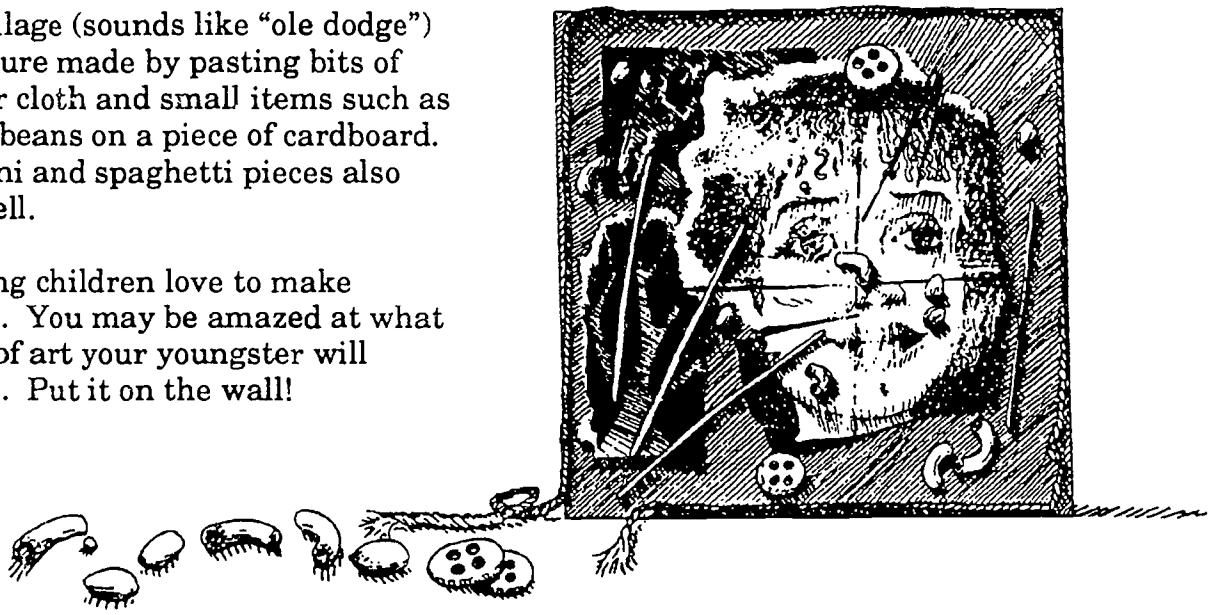
This activity will arouse curiosity in your child. It will create opportunities for you to talk together.



Collages

A collage (sounds like "ole dodge") is a picture made by pasting bits of paper or cloth and small items such as peas or beans on a piece of cardboard. Macaroni and spaghetti pieces also work well.

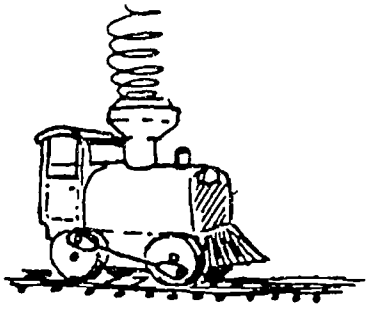
Young children love to make collages. You may be amazed at what a work of art your youngster will produce. Put it on the wall!



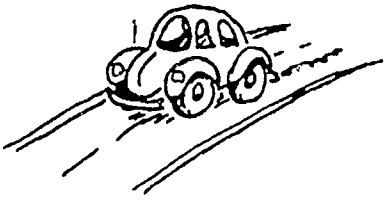
What Sounds Like This?

Here is an activity that offers a change of pace for you and your child in your time together.

Make the noise of a familiar animal: meow like a kitten, for example. Or bark like a dog. Ask your child what makes this particular sound. Then name some animals and ask what sounds they make.



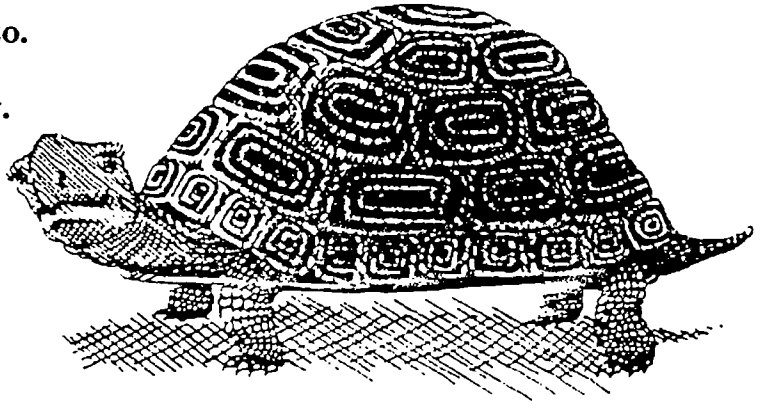
You might use chicken, duck, cow, horse, and pig. You can also have fun with the sounds of vehicles: train, plane, car.



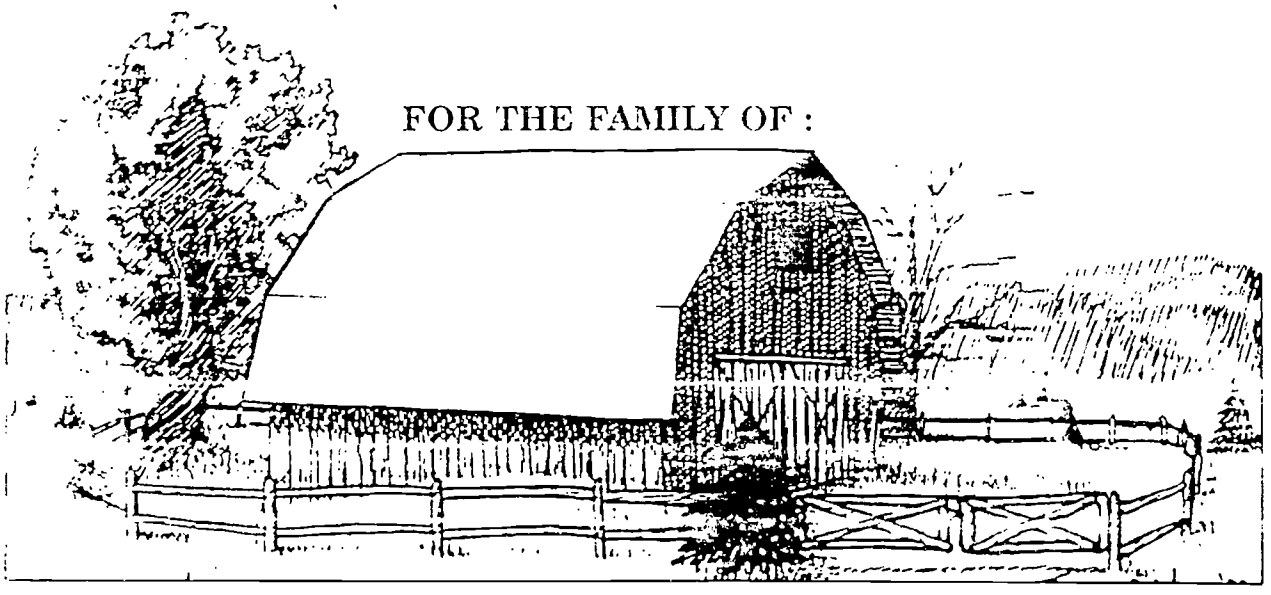
Myrtle Turtle

Myrtle Turtle
Lived in a shell.
She swam in a puddle.
She climbed on a well.

She snapped at a mosquito.
She snapped at a flea.
She snapped at a minnow.
She snapped at me.



She caught the mosquito.
She caught the flea.
She caught the minnow.
But she didn't catch me.



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Family Connections

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Hop, Skip and Jump for Development

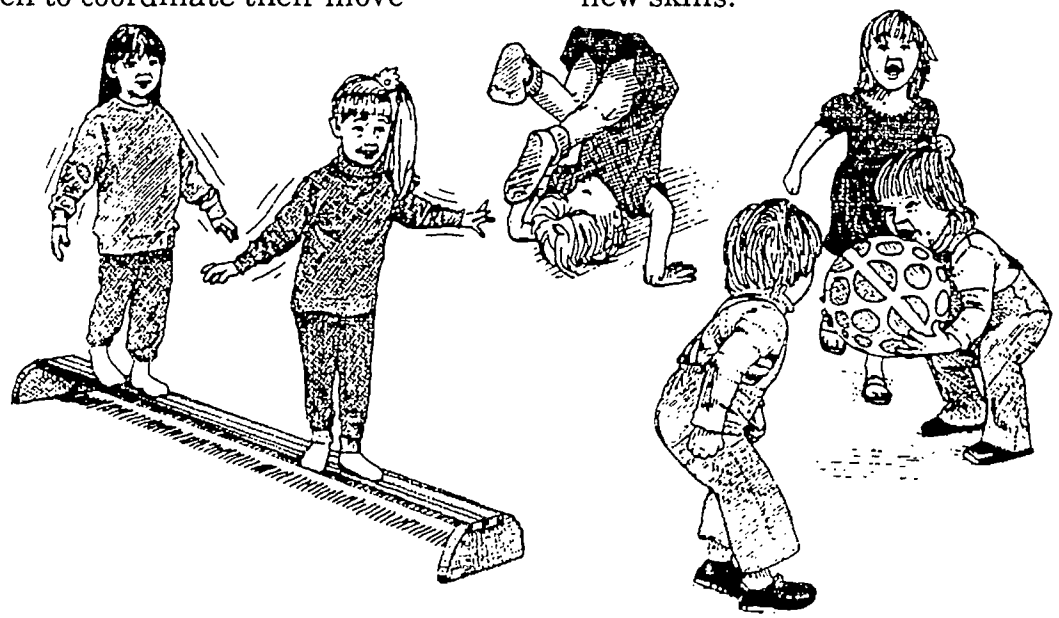
Children need to run, hop, skip, jump, climb and throw to develop their muscles. You can help your small child do things to use the whole body. Most are fun to do with other children.

For example, youngsters love to try to walk on the edge of things. If this is too difficult for them, draw a line in the dirt or with chalk on the sidewalk so they can practice balancing.

Bouncing a ball, climbing a tree, throwing rocks into a creek—all help children to coordinate their movements. They like for you do these things with them. They also like to show you how well they are learning new skills.

It is wise with this age group to stay away from games and contests that have winners and losers. They need to succeed when they try new things. Encourage with compliments. Say something like "You threw that rock a long way."

When you show your interest, your children will be eager to learn more new skills.



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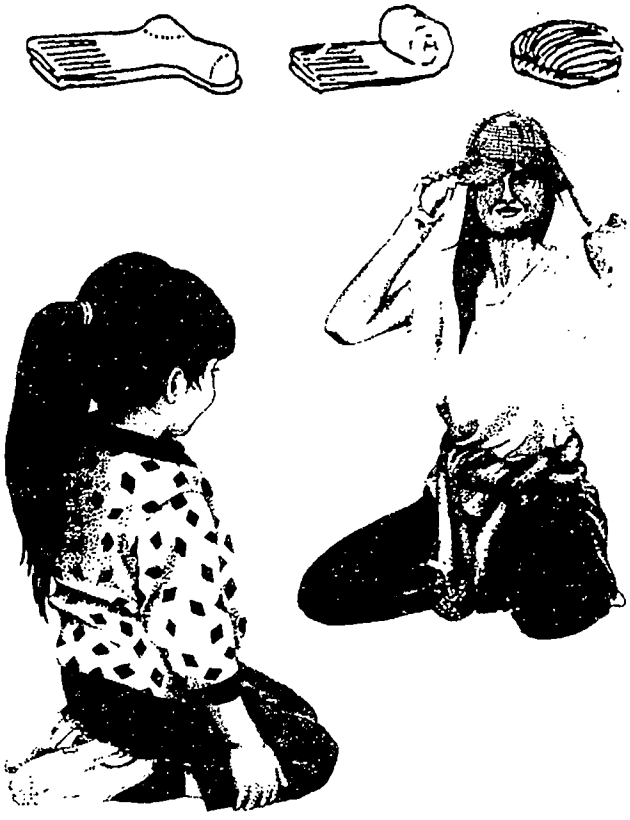
Taking Turns



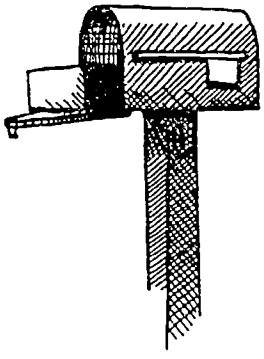
Your child can learn to take turns by watching you and taking turns with you. Play simple games where first one, then the other does something.

Here's one suggestion. Show your child how to make a sock ball. Find an old, large-sized sock with elastic in the top. Roll it from toe to top. Turn the top back over the rolled sock.

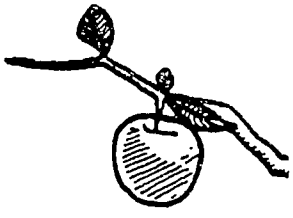
Now take turns throwing it back and forth with your child. When you throw it, say, "It's my turn." When the child throws it back, say, "Now it's your turn."

Let's Pretend

In this version of Let's Pretend the emphasis is on how it would feel to be whatever your child is pretending to be. Tell your child that you are going to play a pretend game. Ask how it would feel to:



- Be an apple on a tree.
- Be a lion in a zoo.
- Be a lion in a jungle.
- Be a big red balloon.
- Be a package in a mailbox.



Talking with your child about her answers encourages her to use her imagination. It also lets her be open about her feelings.

Most Four-Year-Olds Can Do These Things

- Wash and dry own hands
- Dress (with supervision)
- Button and unbutton large buttons
- Pedal a tricycle
- Say own first and last name
- Correctly use pronouns such as *I*, *you*, and *me*
- Use plurals like *cars* and *books*
- Understand meanings of such words as *on*, *behind*, and *under*
- Speak in short sentences
- Put simple puzzles together
- Hop, skip, go up and down stairs alone
- Tell the names of several colors
- Say a poem from memory

Remember, children develop at different rates. Some will be able to do some of these things when they are three; others will not do some of them until they are five. That's fine. If you are worried because your child isn't doing most of the things on this list, talk to his teacher or doctor.

> In all things, we learn only from those we love.
>
> —*Goethe*

—A READ-ALOUD

Move Like the Animals

Read this poem aloud to your child, suiting your actions to the words. Then have the child do the movements with you.

Can you hop like a rabbit?

Can you jump like a frog?

Can you walk like a duck?

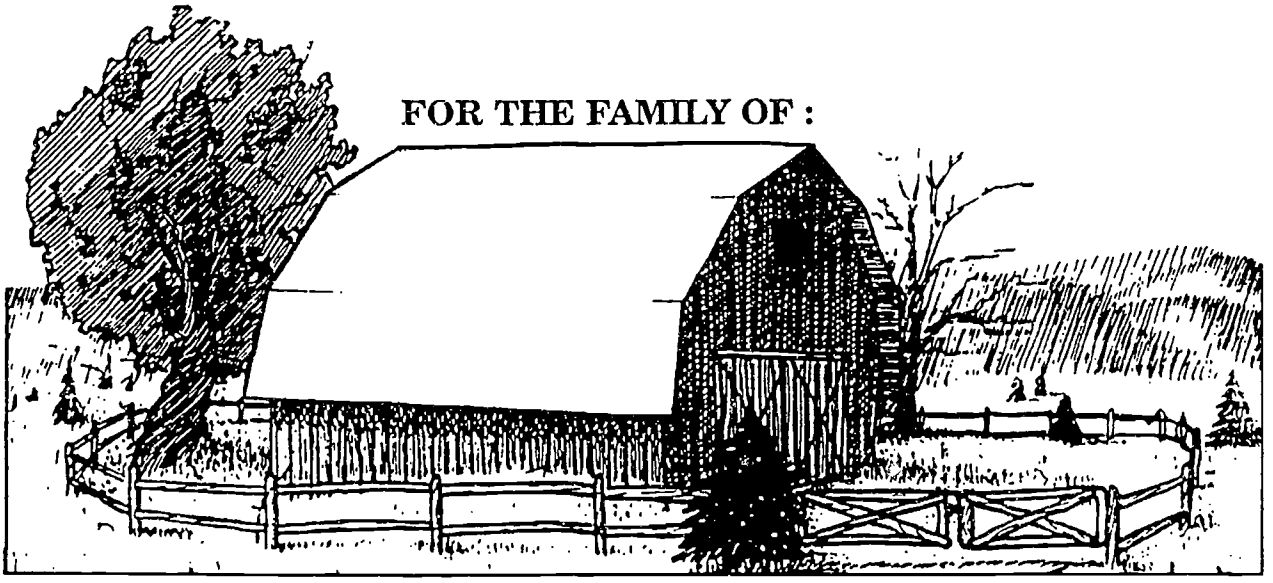
Can you run like a dog?

Fly your hands like a bird?

Swim your fingers like a fish?

And then be very still,

As still as you wish.



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Family Connections 1

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Children Do As You Do

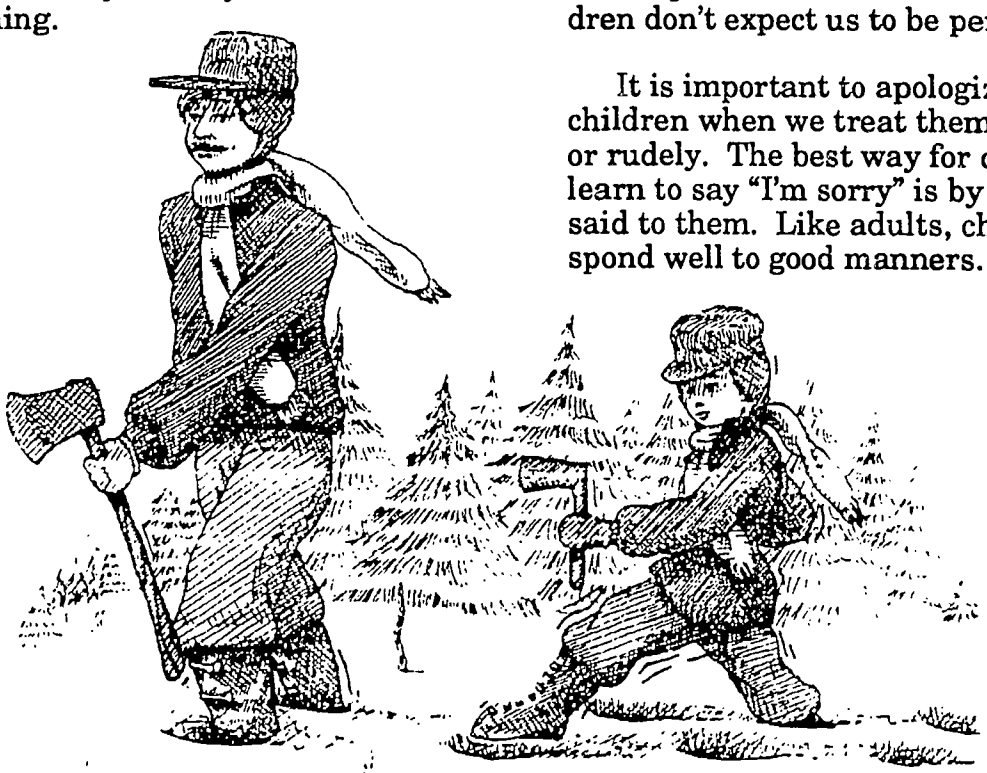
Children are natural copy cats. They try to do what adults do, and their parents are the ones they most want to be like.

The best way to encourage things you want your child to do is to do them yourself. If you want your child to be polite, be polite to your child. Say "please" and "thank you" when you talk to your child. Use a friendly tone of voice when you ask your child to do something.

When you work around the house or in the garden, include your child in what you are doing. Explain what tools you are using and why. Show your child good ways to complete tasks.

Your child will follow your example. All parents do things we would just as soon our children not imitate. Being a model isn't easy; none of us can be perfect models. Luckily, children don't expect us to be perfect.

It is important to apologize to our children when we treat them unfairly or rudely. The best way for children to learn to say "I'm sorry" is by having it said to them. Like adults, children respond well to good manners.



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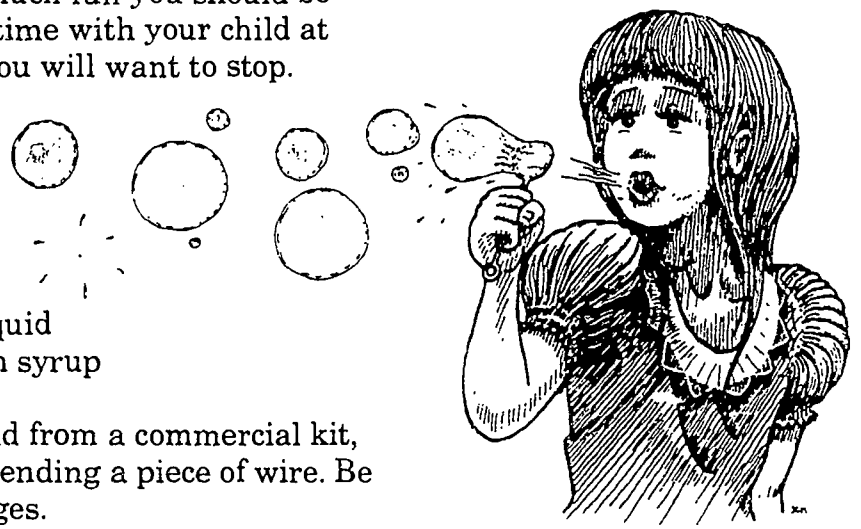
Blowing Bubbles

Blowing bubbles is so much fun you should be prepared to spend a lot of time with your child at this activity. Neither of you will want to stop.



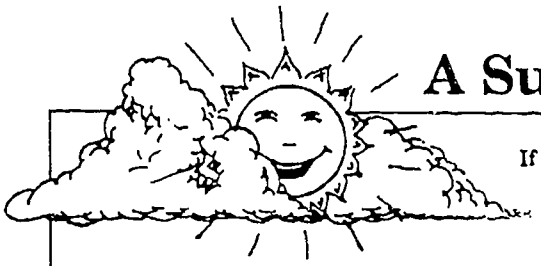
You can make your own bubble mix with this easy recipe:

1 cup water
1/3 cup dishwashing liquid
2 tablespoons light corn syrup

If you don't have a wand from a commercial kit, you can make a wand by bending a piece of wire. Be sure not to leave sharp edges.

Mix the ingredients and allow the solution to sit for one hour. Store whatever you don't use in the refrigerator. Use a covered container and LABEL IT. It would be an unpleasant surprise for anyone who tasted it.

> A child's life is like a piece of paper on which every passerby leaves a mark.
> —*Chinese proverb*



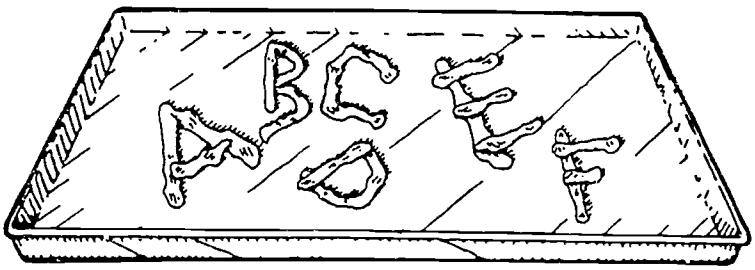
A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Bake Your Own Alphabet

Mix together:

1 cup flour
1/3 cup salt
6 to 8 tablespoons water.



Add water a tablespoonful at a time, using only enough to mix the flour and salt into a ball you can work with. Roll or pat it out 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick. A child can cut with cookie cutters or make objects with hands. You can cut shapes with a sharp-pointed knife.

Bake at 300 degrees until hard.

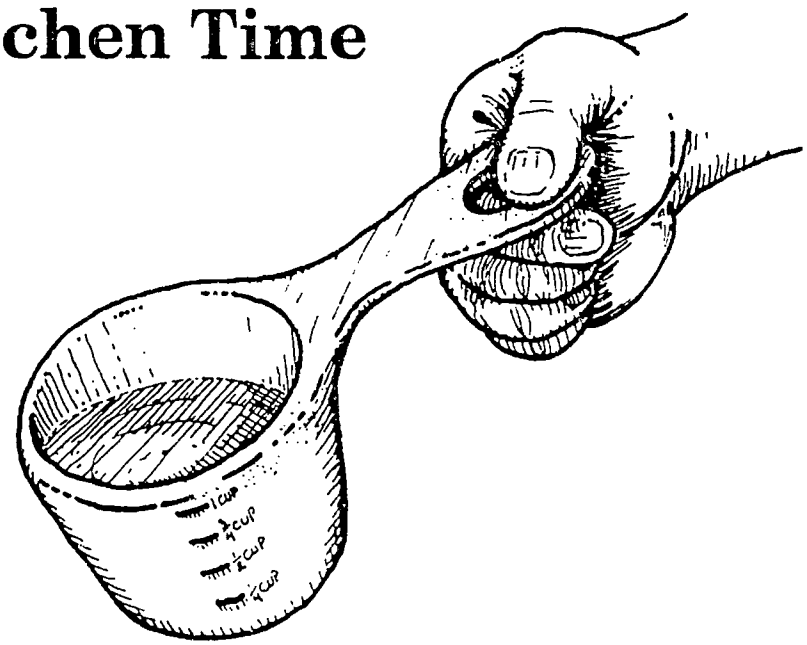
Young children like to make ABCs with this dough. They will need help in shaping the letters.

Be careful to have enough space in letters like "o" that they won't close up during baking and look like cookies.

You can enjoy this home-baked alphabet for a long time.

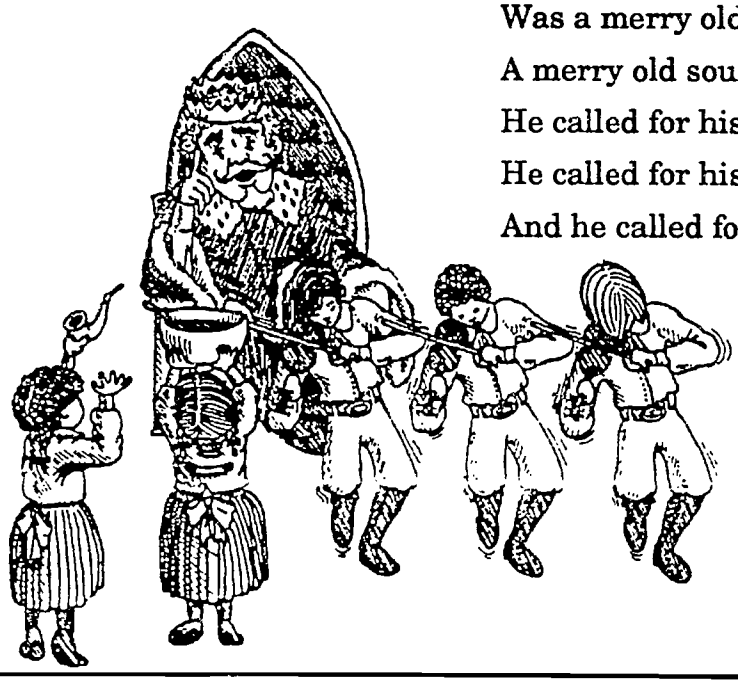
Kitchen Time

Kitchen time is a happy time for kids. They like to help. Let them do simple measuring for you. Use plastic cups and spoons in half, quarter and third sizes. Children can quickly see the difference in sizes. Let them experiment with "more" and "less" by pouring water from the cups into the clear container.

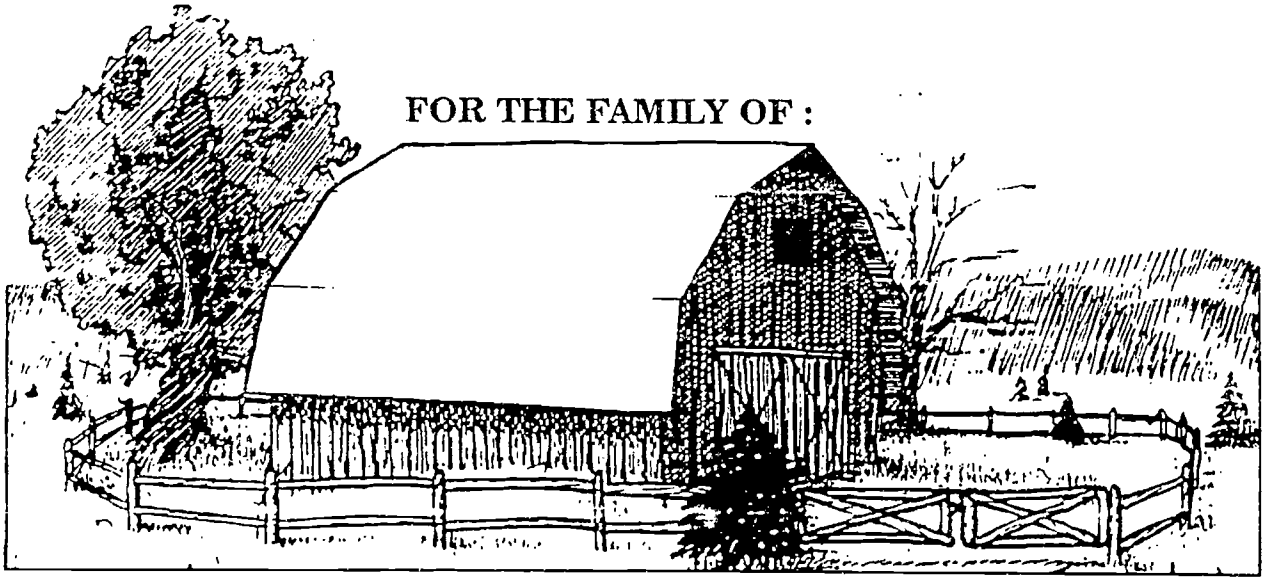


—A READ-ALOUD

Old King Cole



Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul,
A merry old soul was he.
He called for his pipe,
He called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three.



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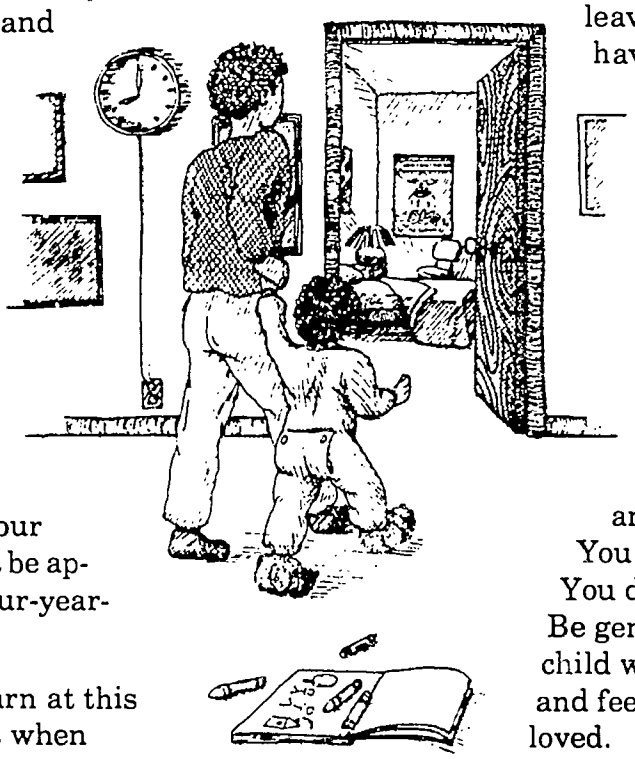
Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Discipline Leads To Self-Control

Many parents think discipline is the same as punishment. It isn't. Discipline is the way children learn self-control. You can help by making clear to your child what you expect.

Parents who let a child be the center of attention without regard for others make it hard for that child to learn self-control. Think of it this way: You are the adult and you are in control. Children will take over if you let them, but they do not want to be in charge. It scares them.



Your child wants you to set limits. Expand the limits as the child gets older. Limits you set for your two-year-old will not be appropriate for your four-year-old.

Children can learn at this age not to interrupt when others are talking. You can say: "I'm talking to someone else now. Wait a minute, please. Then I will listen to you."

Staying in the yard is a reasonable rule. So is having a set bedtime. Be sure the child knows what the rules are, and what will happen if they are broken. For example: "If you leave the yard, you will have to come in the house. You won't get to play outside for an hour." Be reasonable.

Don't have too many rules for young children. Rules can cause conflict between you and your child. Do say what you mean and mean what you say. You don't have to be harsh. You don't want to threaten. Be gentle but firm. Your child will learn self-control, and feel both secure and loved.

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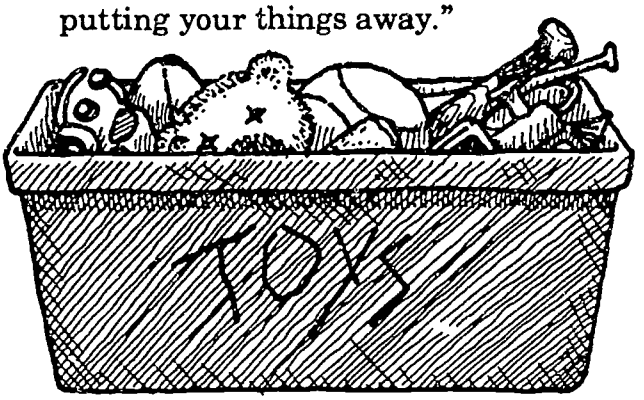
Taking Care Of Belongings

Now that your child is in school, he is learning to take care of his own things. He probably has a spot all his own where he puts his outdoor wear and other personal belongings.

Now is a good time for him to learn that taking care of his own things at home is a grown-up thing to do. You can help by putting up a hook that he can reach to hang up his jacket.

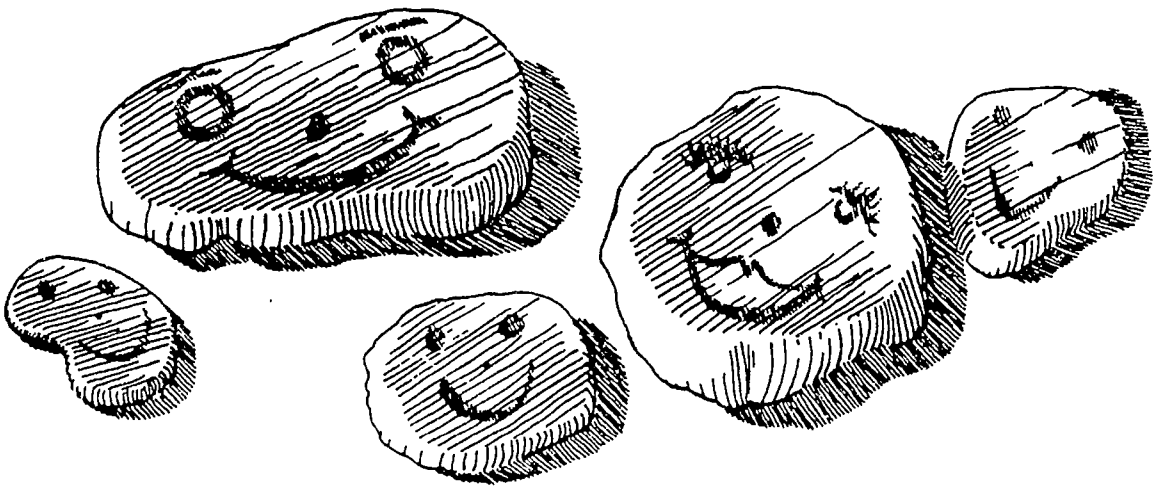
Find a box or basket where he can keep his toys. It's a good idea to have something he can carry from one place to another. Praise him for doing as you ask him to: "You did a good job of putting your things away."



A Special Rock

Most children like to "collect" rocks. Take a walk together and find a smooth rock that has a fairly flat surface. Decorate it together. You can show her how to paint a happy face on it with magic markers or finger paint. Or find a picture to cut from an old magazine. Let her paste the picture on the rock to decorate it.

She might like to give a special rock to someone as a present. She can also make a family of happy faces if you collect several rocks.



Thumb Pies

Use this simple recipe with your child to make a special pie.

1 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon shortening
2 tablespoons water

Help your child measure and mix the ingredients. Roll the dough into small balls. Then let her press her thumb print into each ball.

Bake the thumb pies at 350 for 8 to 10 minutes. Fill the thumb prints with jelly or peanut butter.

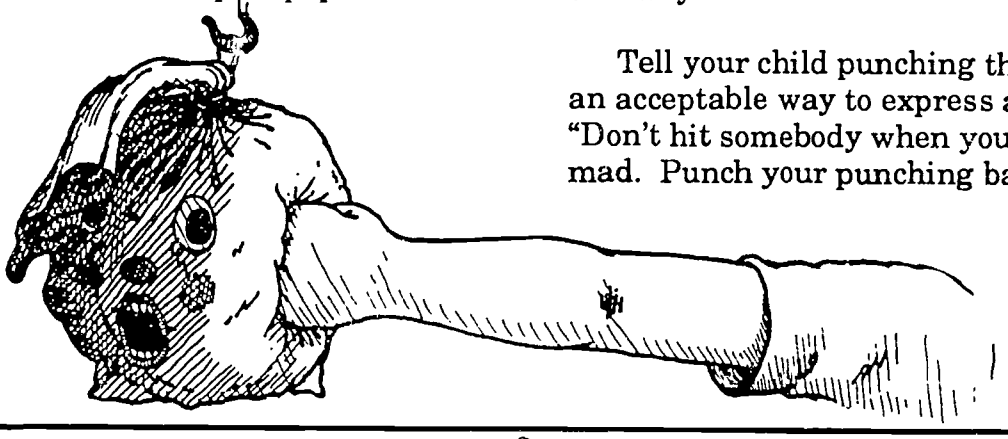
Explain to the child that her thumb print is different from every other thumb print in the whole world. She will like knowing that no one else can bake a thumb pie exactly like hers.

Punching Bag

You can make a punching bag from an old pillow case. Let your child decorate the case with crayon drawings. Fill it with something soft; rags, foam rubber, or crumpled paper will work.

Sew the bag closed or use a heavy rubber band to close it. Your youngster can kick it or use it as a punching bag if you hang it from a hook in a doorway.

Tell your child punching the bag is an acceptable way to express anger. "Don't hit somebody when you feel mad. Punch your punching bag."



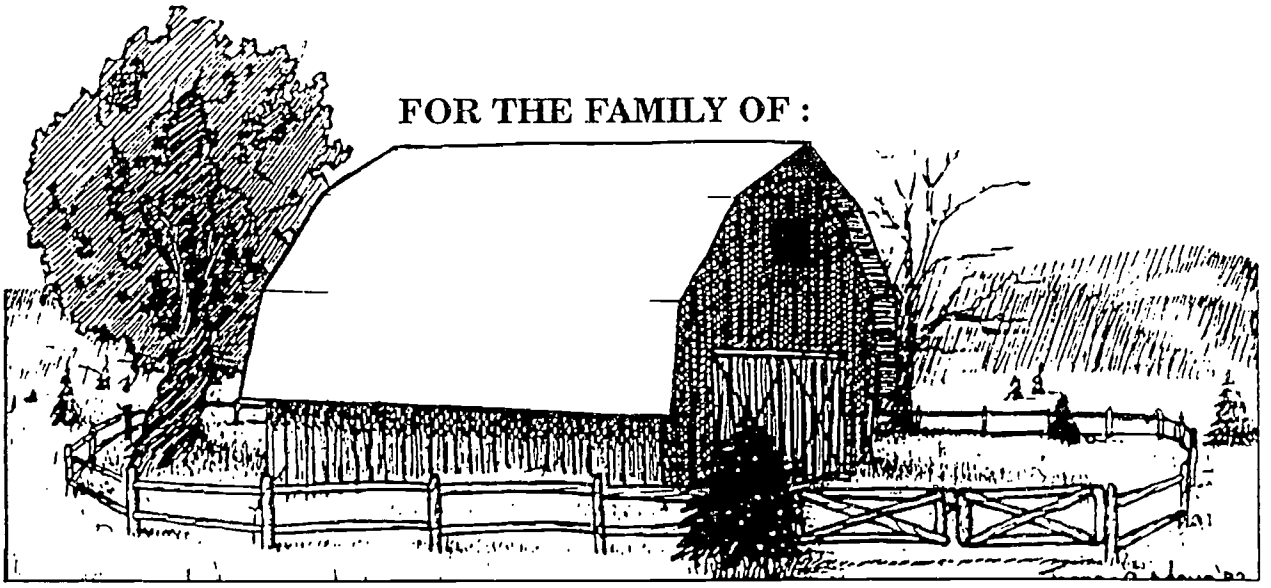
—A READ-ALOUD

Little Jack Horner

Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner
Eating his Christmas pie.
He stuck in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

Read or recite this nursery rhyme to your child. Ask her to tell you what Jack said about himself. Then talk with her about some of the things she might want to tell people about herself. What are some of the things she likes? What are some things she can do all by herself?

Let her know you are proud of her. She needs your encouragement as she becomes more independent.



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Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

The Sense of Touch

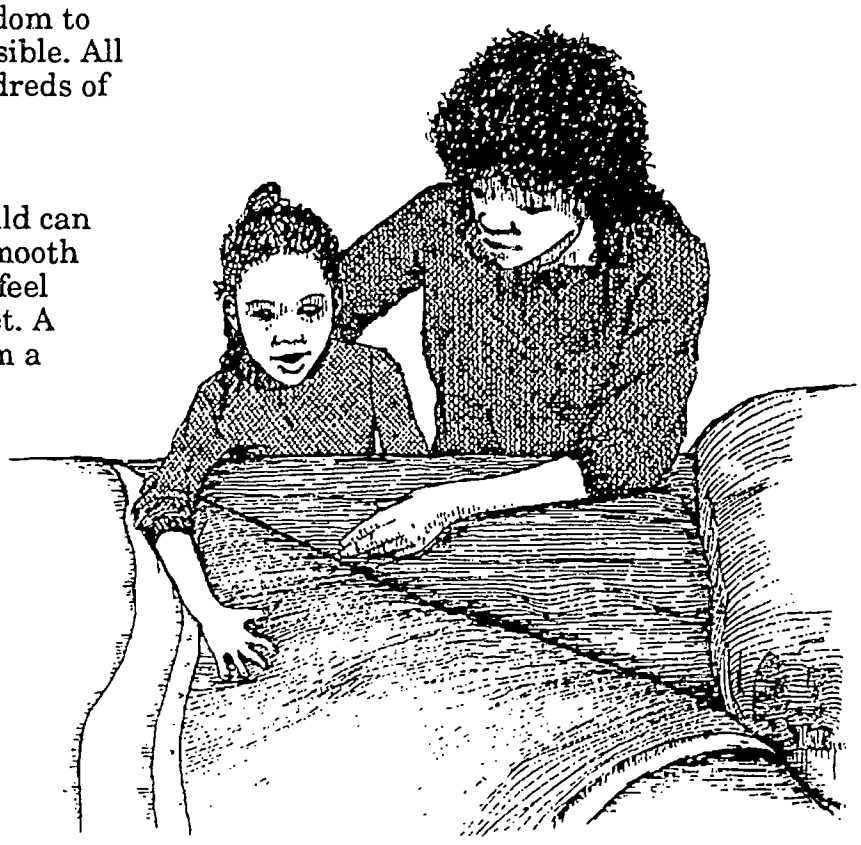
Young children learn and discover by using their five senses: tasting, smelling, hearing, seeing and touching. Finding out how things feel by touching them can be fun for you and your child.

Give your youngster freedom to touch as many things as possible. All through your house are hundreds of different textures to touch.

Perhaps you and your child can make a bed together. The smooth sheets have a very different feel from the soft or fuzzy blanket. A metal bed feels different from a wooden one.

Encourage your child to describe the different feels: rough, smooth, soft, furry and so on. If the child can't find a word to describe how something feels, you can suggest one. Take a walk outdoors. Call attention to objects you can stop and feel together. Touch a tree's trunk, its branches, its leaves, a brick wall, a car bumper. All feel very different.

Your child will enjoy knowing more about touch. Every experiment will lead to another. Learning through all the senses is valuable to young children. Give yours chances to touch.



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Exercise Time

Your child will like to do exercises, especially if you do them together. Many children are not active and are overweight at a young age. Try some of these moves:

- Touch your toes. Count 1..2..3..**up**.
- Stretch your arms **high** over your head.
- Hold on to a chair and kick one leg high in the air.
- Change and kick with the other leg.
- Turn your head to one side, then to the other.

Repeat the movements as many times as the child enjoys them.

If you want to, you can begin to teach "right" and "left" as you do the exercise.

A Different Touch

Not all touching and feeling come through your hands. Some other ways to feel:

- Walk in the rain with your child so she can feel the drops on her hair and face. Walk in falling snow, and feel the softness of snowflakes.
- Walk barefoot together in sand or mud. Talk about how different the ground feels when you are not wearing shoes.

Following Directions

Here's a way to have a lot of fun with your youngster while helping her learn something very useful: following directions.

Give each of the following directions slowly and clearly while doing the action yourself.

1. Touch your nose.
2. Touch your ears.
3. Show me your teeth.
4. Stick out your tongue.
5. Touch your elbows.
6. Clap your hands.
7. Wiggle your fingers.
8. Touch your knees.
9. Sit down.
10. Stand up.

Now let her give you directions to do these things or others that she thinks of.

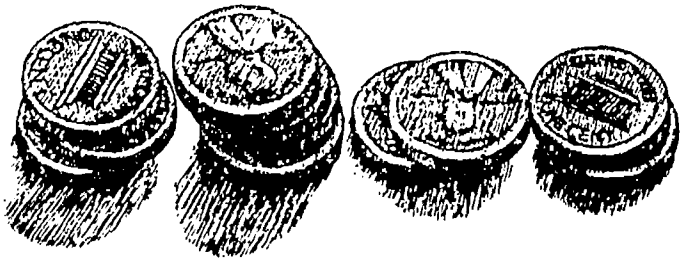
Play with Pennies

You don't find many uses for pennies these days, but if you collect a few you can do this activity with your child. It will help with learning how numbers work.

Ask your child to stack up 3 pennies. Hand her one more to add to the stack. Have her count to see that she now has 4 pennies in her stack.

Now have her make two stacks of 2 pennies each. Tell her: "You had 3 pennies, you added one more, then you had 4 pennies. You took 2 away from the stack. Now you have 2 left in one stack. You have 2 in another stack."

Keep it light and fun as you play with the pennies. When she is very sure of the numbers, you can increase the pennies.



—A READ-ALOUD

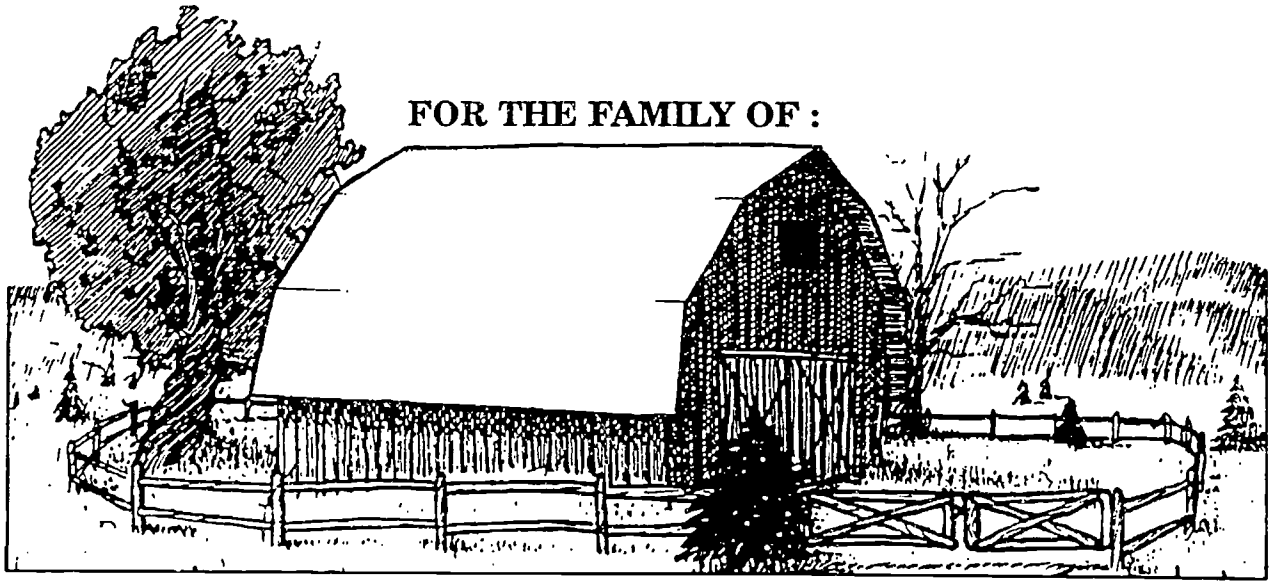
At My House

A cat that sleeps in Dad's hat
Lives at my house.

A bird that won't say a word
Lives at my house.

A fish that swims in a dish
Lives at my house.

Someday, if I have my way,
A pony who can say "Neigh"
Will live at my house.



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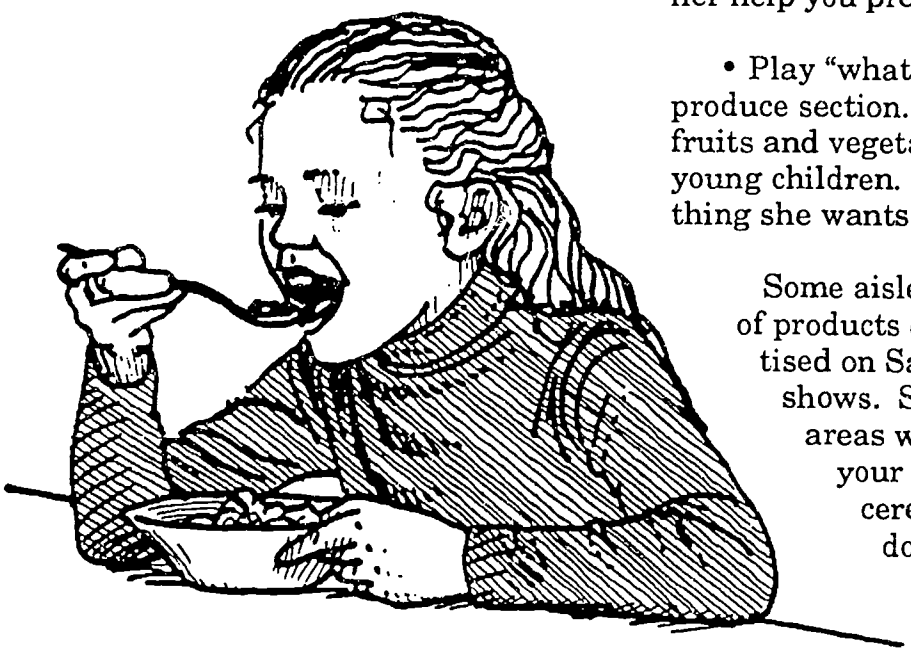
Family Connections

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Peanut Butter and Jelly Again?

Children learn to like foods more easily during their first five years. Now is a good time to introduce some new tastes. A child who gets to taste new foods will probably continue to like them in later years. And you won't be as likely to have a picky eater.

Offer a small portion of the new food along with one of your child's favorites. Let your child see you eat and enjoy the new food. Expect her to like the food, but don't make a fuss or insist that she eat it. Ask her to take one or two bites. If she still doesn't want it, take it away and try again at another time.



Here are some things you can do when you take your child with you to the grocery store.

- Let the youngster choose a new food and decide when to serve it. Let her help you prepare it.

- Play "what color is this?" in the produce section. Brightly colored fruits and vegetables catch the eye of young children. Yours may see something she wants to try.

Some aisles in the store are full of products children see advertised on Saturday morning TV shows. Stay away from those areas when you shop with your child. Those sugary cereals cost a lot and don't provide the best nutrition.

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Good Choices From The Library

These are books that children's librarians suggest for reading aloud to preschool children. There are many other excellent books for little ones. Ask your local librarian to recommend others if these are not available at your library.

Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans

The Bears' Vacation by Stan Berenstain

Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss

The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins by Dr. Seuss

Are You My Mother? by P. D. Eastman

Go, Dog, Go by P. D. Eastman

Millions of Cats by M. Ginsburg

Arthur's Prize Readers by L. Hoban

Bread and Jam for Frances by L. Hoban

Ben's Trumpet by R. Isadora

Prehistoric Pinkerton by S. Kellogg

A Color of His Own by Leo Lionni

Little Bear by E. H. Minarik

Curious George by H. A. Rey

Birthday Presents by C. Rylant

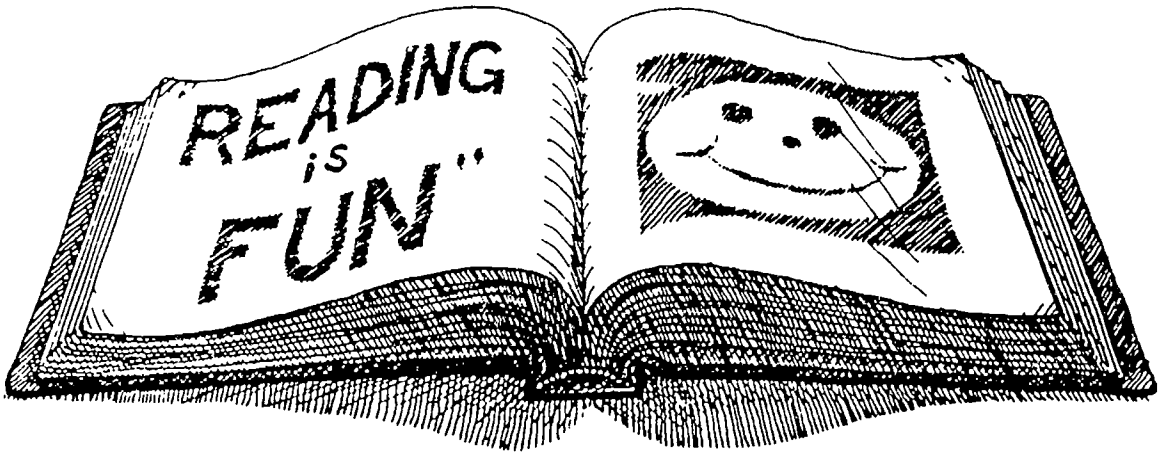
Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

Sheep in a Jeep by N. Shaw

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

Goat's Tail by B. Wildsmith

Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion

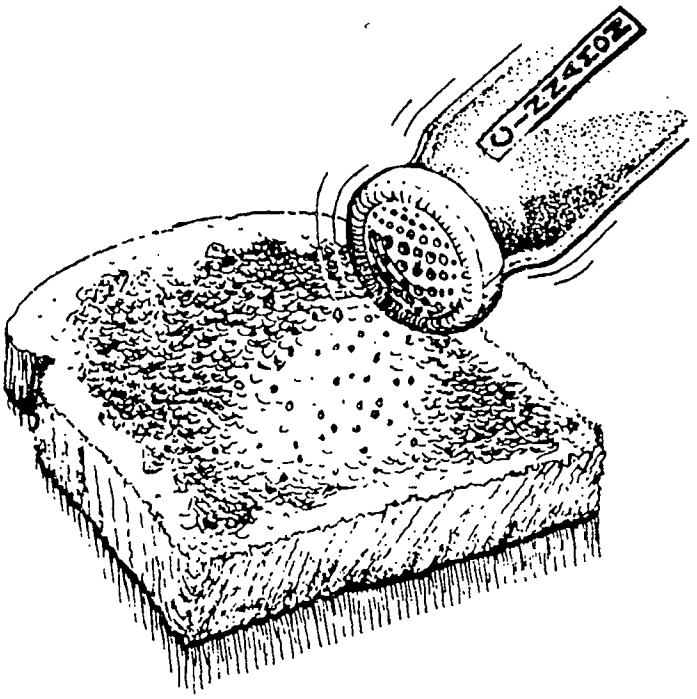


Cinnamon Toast

Here's a good activity when your child wants to do something for himself. Show him how to make cinnamon toast. Put the toaster wher he can reach it to put the bread in.

Help him mix sugar and cinnamon together. If you have a large salt shaker to put the mixture in, it will be easier for the child to use. If not, just use a spoon.

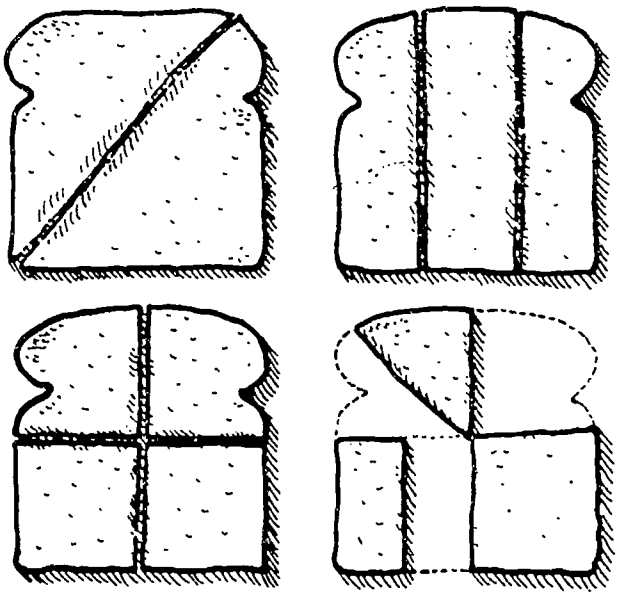
Show him how to spread butter or oleo on the warm toast and sprinkle the sugar-cinnamon on the buttered toast. He will enjoy this snack with a glass of milk.



Stay in Shape

By the way, while you are helping with the cinnamon toast, you can show him some shapes. The toast is a square to begin with. Cut the toast from corner to corner for a triangle. Cut it in thirds to make three rectangles. Cut it into four pieces to make small squares.

If you want to add interest, count out the pieces as you cut them. He will get to know more about numbers, too. This need not be serious business. Remember, for your small child learning is natural and fun.



—A READ-ALOUD

She Shall Have Music

Ride a cock horse

To Banbury Cross.

See a fair lady

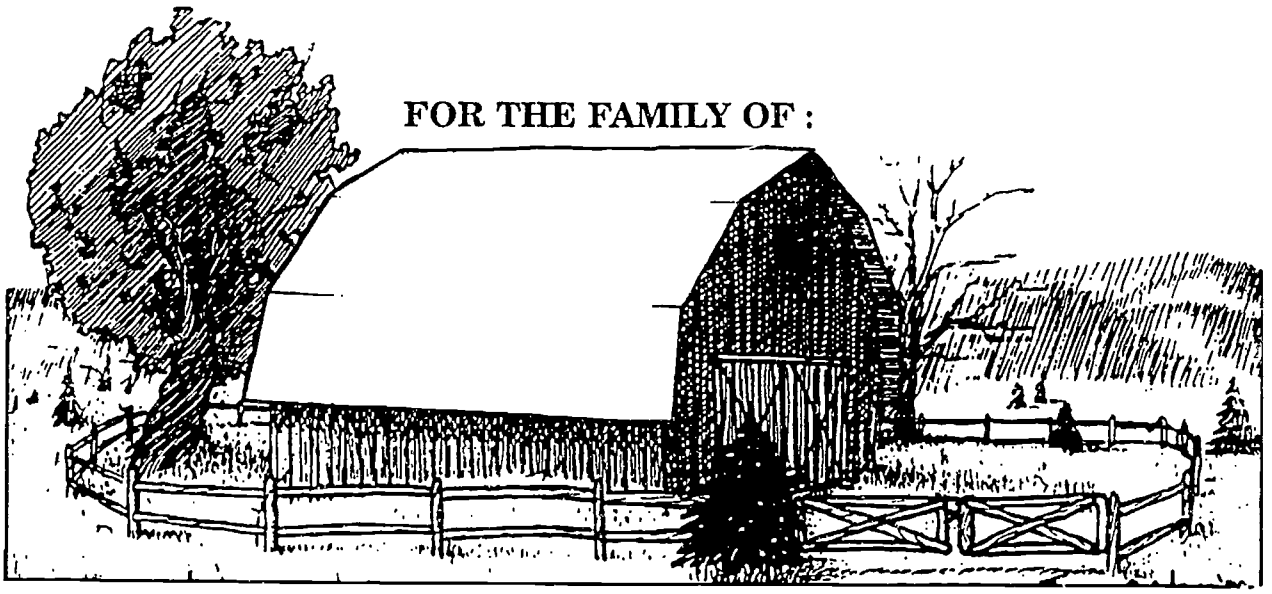
Upon a white horse.

Rings on her fingers

And bells on her toes,

She shall have music

Wherever she goes.



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Learning To Use Small Muscles

You can help your child develop small muscle control, the ability to use her fingers and hands. Let her experiment freely with materials that require her to work with her hands.

You don't need expensive things. Use paper, crayons and scissors. Old magazines and catalogs that she can cut up provide hours of fun and learning. Children love play dough and you can make it yourself very cheaply.

Encourage her to dress and undress herself. Putting arms in sleeves and buttoning clothes are real achievements for a small child. Show her how to thread large beads or buttons on long shoelaces. She will be proud to wear a necklace she makes this way.

About Scissors:

Be sure to provide scissors that are safe for children. The ones that have rounded ends are best for small hands. If you have a child who is definitely left-handed, buy left-handed scissors.

At this age children may use either hand to hold a spoon, crayon or scissors. They may still be deciding whether they prefer right or left. Let your child decide for herself. We live in a world that makes it easier for right-handed people, but it's best not to make a child use the right if she prefers the left.

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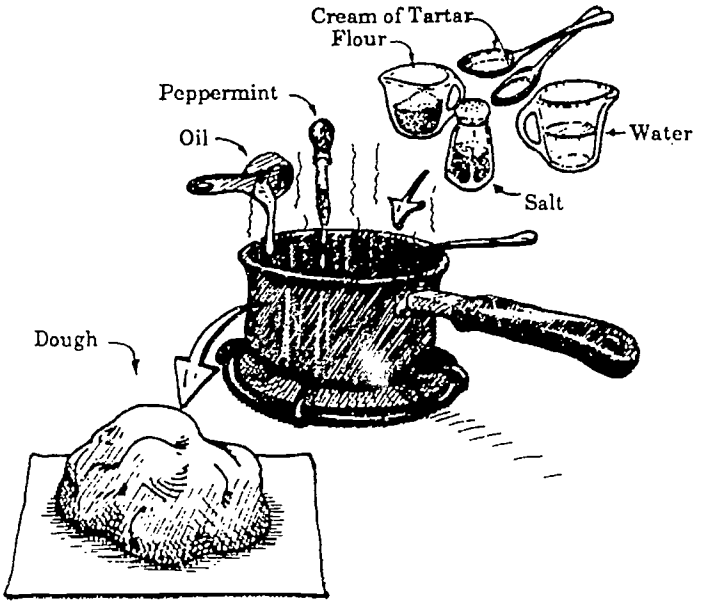
Home-Made Play Dough

This play dough will stay soft and pliable for a long time if you wrap it in plastic wrap and keep it in the refrigerator.

Mix together:

1 cup flour
1/2 cup salt
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1 cup water



Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a saucepan. If you have a drop of peppermint or wintergreen to add to the oil, it makes the dough smell wonderful!

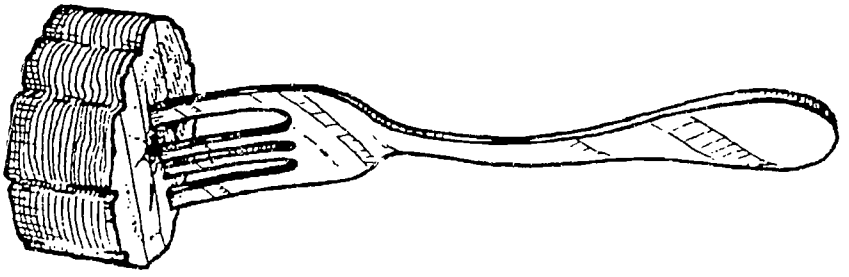
Add the other ingredients to the heated oil. Cook the mixture for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Drop the ball of dough that forms onto waxed paper or foil and let it cool until you can handle it.

Knead the dough until it is pliable. Separate it into 2 or more portions, depending on how many colors you want to make. Use food coloring to add color.

Fork Foods

Snack time is perfect for learning to eat with a fork. Some good foods to spear with a fork are:

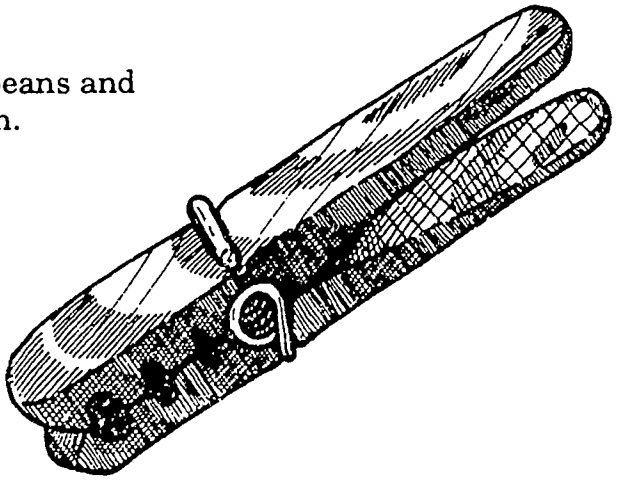
- thick banana slices
- pineapple chunks
- cubes of cheese
- pickle chunks
- cubed apples or pears



A salad fork is easier for small hands to use.

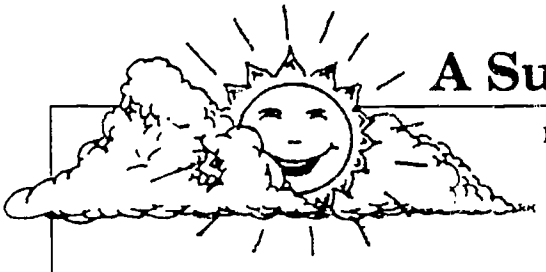
Clipping with Clothespins

Spring-type clothespins can provide excellent practice in using the thumb and index finger together. Let your child try opening and closing the pins. Once he can do this, he will have fun with the following:



- Pick up small objects such as dried beans and drop them into a basket or coffee can.
- Clip clothespins around the rim of a coffee can.
- Tie a rope between two chairs to make a temporary clothes line. Clip doll clothes or child's socks on the line.

You and your youngster will think of other ways to use the clothespins.



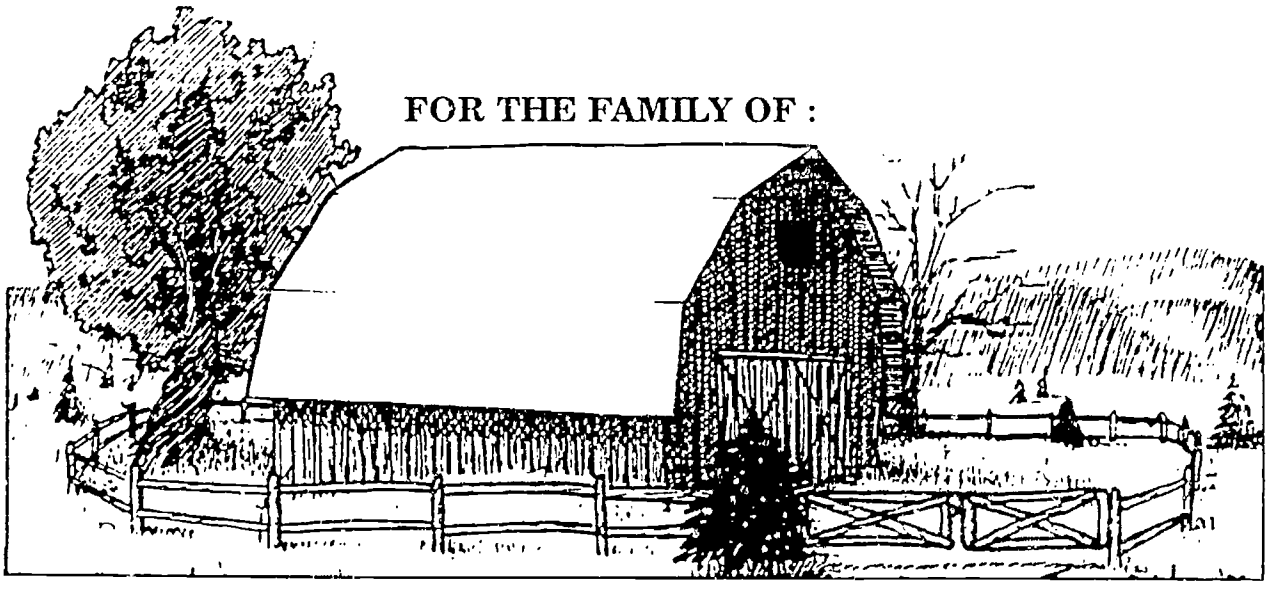
A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

—A READ-ALOUD

A Visit From Grandma

When Grandma comes to visit
She takes me to the park.
She helps me bake some cookies,
And plays with my cars.
She holds me on her lap,
And rocks me in the rocking chair—
Even though I'm getting big.
When Grandma comes to visit
We have fun together.
Mommy says Grandma will stay
for two whole weeks.
I hope two weeks is a long, long time.



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Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Hearing And Listening To Learn

Much of what we learn throughout our lifetime comes to us through our ears. If we are physically able to hear, we can learn to listen. We are not born knowing how to listen well. It is a skill we develop through experience and practice. The first step in learning to listen is being able to hear differences among sounds.

Help your child be aware of everyday sounds. For example, when you take a walk with your youngster, see how many sounds the two of you can identify. Talk about how some of the sounds are soft, some loud, some high, others low. Try to tell what direction a sound is coming from. This is not easy to do, but your child will benefit from trying.

Help your child learn to listen to the many everyday sounds. City sounds and country sounds can be quite different. If you live in a rural place, your child is more apt to know the sounds of farm animals and nature: mooing cows and croaking frogs, for instance. A city child is likely to hear ambulance sirens and taxi horns. As you watch TV together, you can point out these differences.

Listen to your child attentively. Respond thoughtfully. Be a good example for your child. LISTEN.

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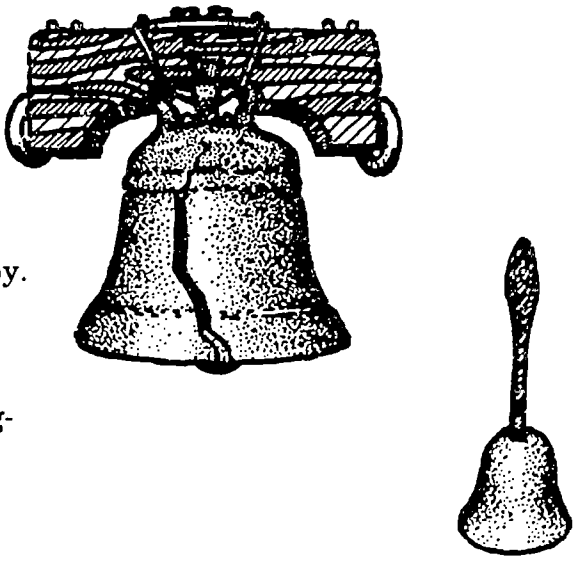
Loud and Soft



It is important for children to understand "loud" and "soft" sounds. Ask your child to make these sounds.

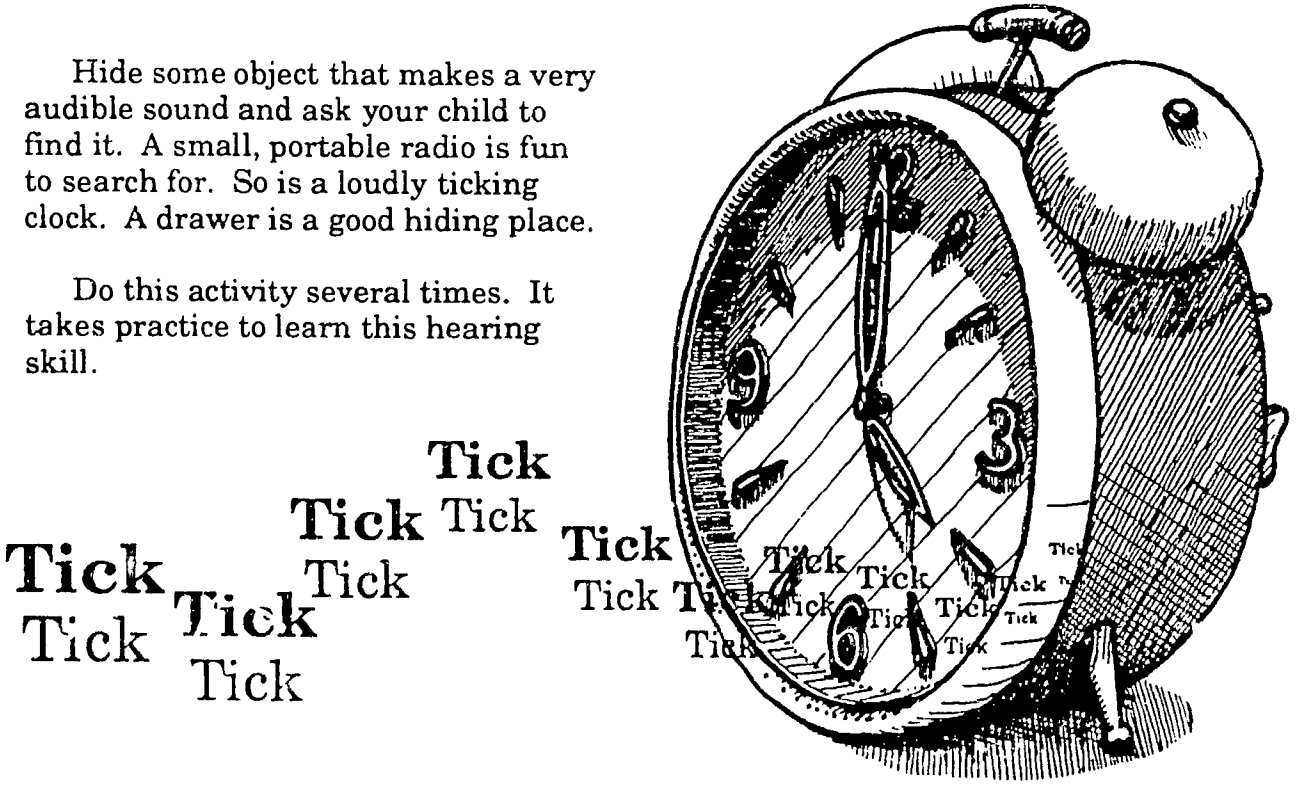
Ring like a big bell, then a small bell.

Bark like a big dog, then like a small puppy.

Quack like a big duck, then a baby duck.

Children like to make animal sounds. Suggest others that let your child demonstrate "loud" and "soft."

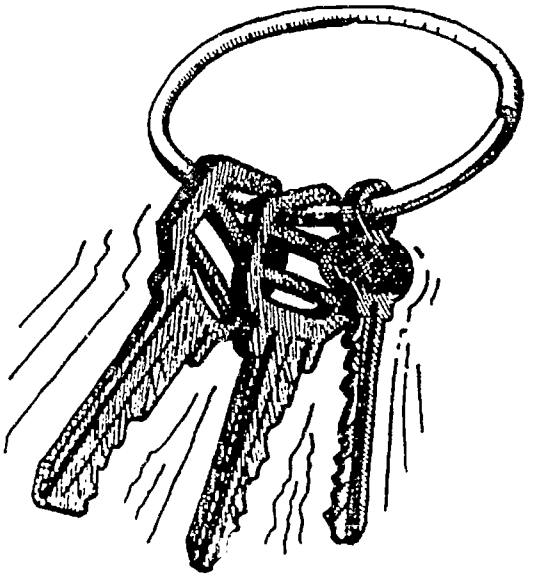
Find That Sound


Tick
Tick
Tick

Tell Me What You Hear

Stand where your child can't see you. Make these sounds. Ask your child to tell you what the sounds are.

rattling keys
clapping hands
stamping feet
tearing paper
bouncing ball
snapping fingers
rattling silverware
running water

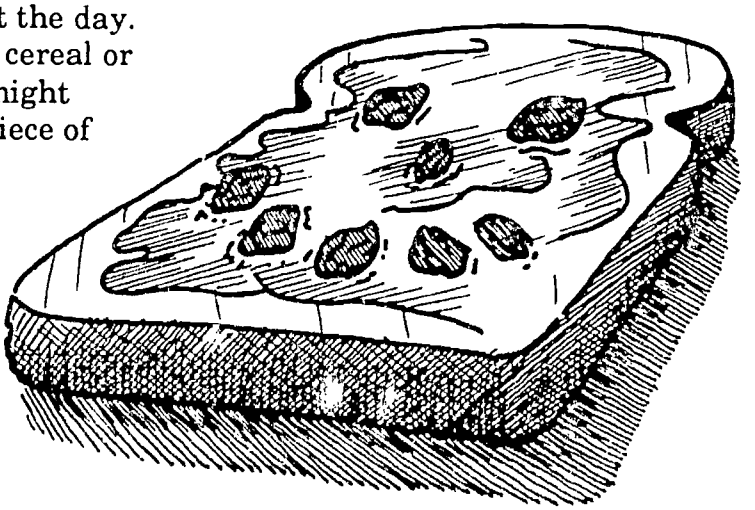


Breakfast: The Power Meal

Breakfast is important to everyone. Eating nourishing food in the morning helps people perform better in school, at work, or at play.

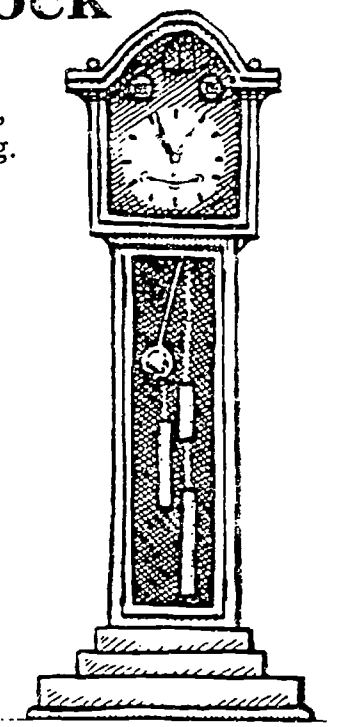
Foods eaten in the morning provide the body with energy to start the day. Breakfast doesn't have to be cereal or bacon and eggs. Your child might enjoy a glass of juice and a piece of toast spread with peanut butter. Let your child make a smiling face of raisins on the peanut butter. A glass of milk rounds out the meal.

Suggested amounts for preschoolers are 1/2 cup of juice, 3/4 cup of milk. Small stomachs don't like large servings.



—A READ-ALOUD

The Grandfather Clock



Isn't it funny that a clock has
hands?
It also has a face.
The hands move right around
the face,
They don't stay long in any
one place.

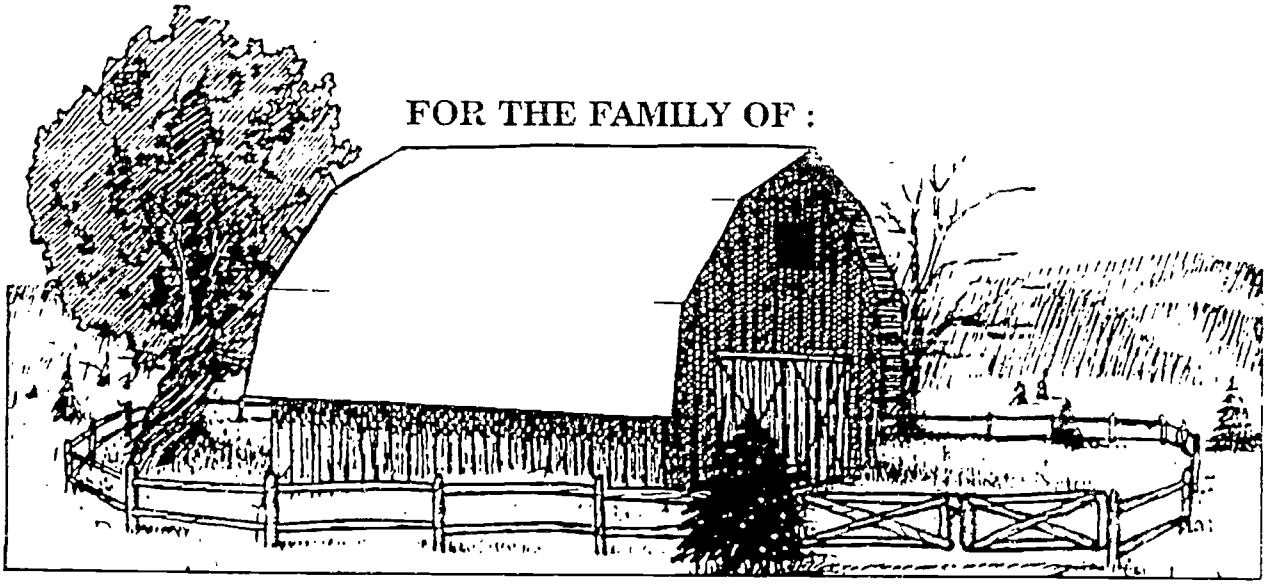
The grandfather clock has a
great big tock,
It also has a tick.
TICK, TOCK, TICK, TOCK
Says the grandfather clock.

Now and then,
I can't say when,
The clock goes
BONG, BONG, BONG.

For that great big sound,
The clock has to be wound,
With a key that's very long.

I wish I knew,
Can I learn from you
Why it's called
a grandfather clock?

It seems to me,
I think it could be
A hickory, dickory dock.



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Family Connections

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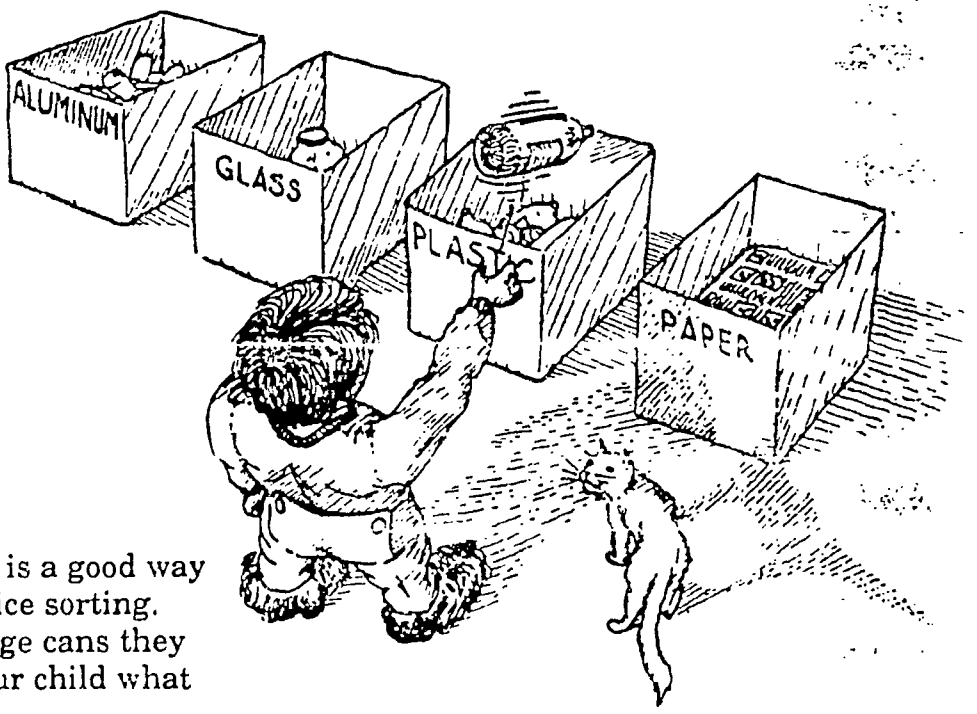
Don't Litter—Do Recycle

When you are out with your children—having a picnic or eating a snack in the car—what do you do with empty cans and wrappers? Your children will do as you do. If you put litter in the trash can, they will, too. If you throw trash on the ground, they will, too. If you save empty cans and bottles, you teach them it is important to recycle.

Talk with your child about what "recycle" means. Using something over again saves resources. Recycling is good for the environment. And a recycling center will pay for the cans and bottles you save. Your child will like earning money.



Saving to recycle is a good way for children to practice sorting. Have boxes or garbage cans they can reach. Show your child what goes into each container. Have him cut out pictures of a can and a bottle. Help him tape or paste a picture on the box. Then he will know where to put each item to save it for recycling.

Sorting is an important skill for children to learn. Sorting to recycle also teaches them to be good citizens.

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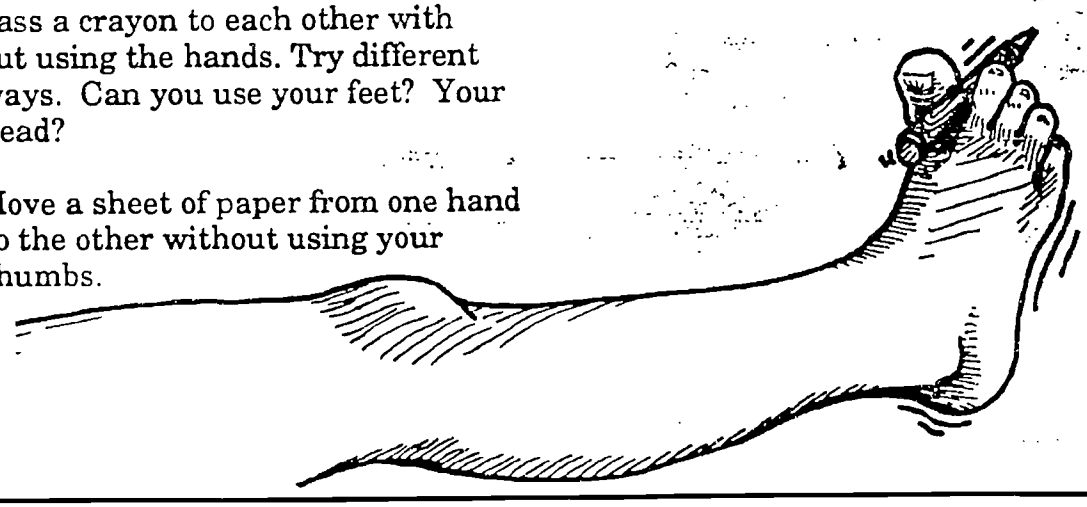
Helping Hands

Gather paper, scissors, paste and crayons. Sit down with your child and talk about the way we use our hands. Play a little game.

- Pass a crayon to each other with out using the hands. Try different ways. Can you use your feet? Your head?
- Move a sheet of paper from one hand to the other without using your thumbs.

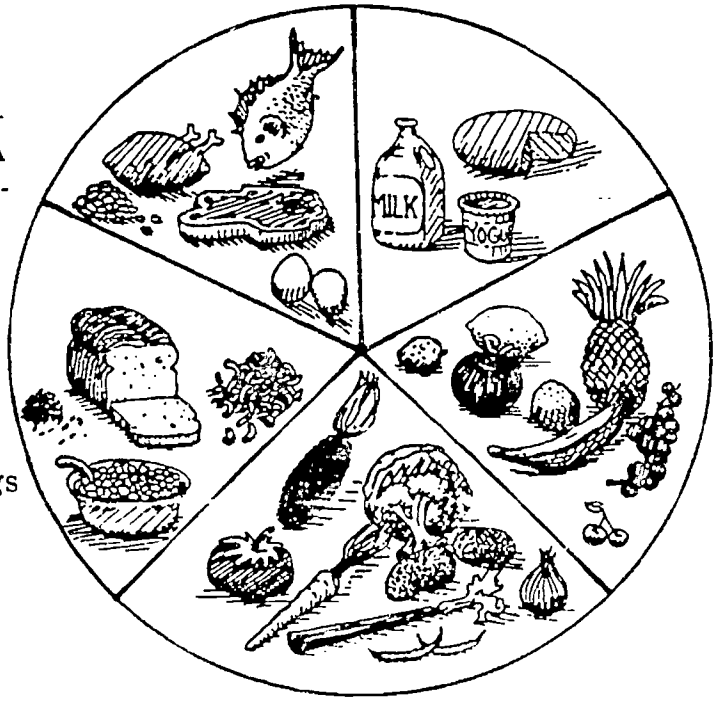
Try to think of ways we use our hands: to eat, drink, cut, paste, write, draw. Now let your child use the items you gathered to do some things with his hands.



Basic Food Groups

Use good nutrition to help your child be healthy. Here are the basic food groups with the number of servings a child should have each day. A child-sized serving is one tablespoonful for each year of age.

- Breads, cereals, rice, pasta: 6 servings
- Vegetables: 2 servings
- Fruits: 2 servings
- Milk, yogurt, cheese: 3 servings
- Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs: 2 servings



Read Aloud

This is a finger-play rhyme. You can also sing it to the tune of *Frere Jacques*. Have your child copy your movements. Start with both hands made into fists, thumbs hidden. As you read, extend the thumbs and fingers as they are called on. When you read, "How are you today, sir?" move the thumb of your right hand as if it's talking to the left thumb. Then "Very well, I thank you" is the left thumb answering. When you say, "Run and hide," tuck first one, then the other back into the fist.

For Family, extend all the fingers at once. At the end, you will have both hands in fists.

Where Is Thumbkin?

Where is Thumbkin?
Where is Thumbkin?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.

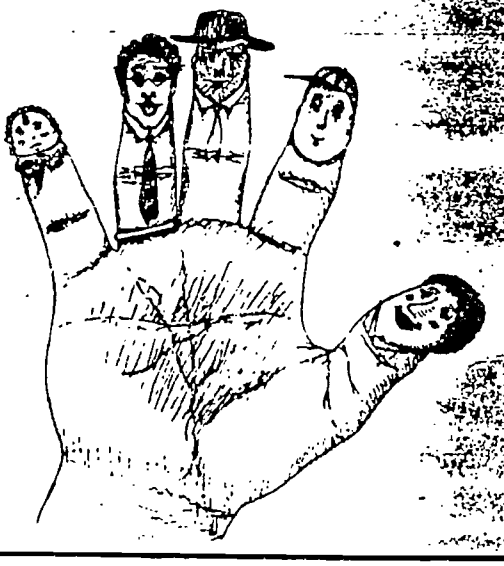
Where is Pointer?
Where is Pointer?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.

Where is Tall Man?
Where is Tall Man?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.

Where is Ring Man?
Where is Ring Man?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.

Where is Baby?
Where is Baby?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.

Where is Family?
Where is Family?
Here we are. Here we are.
How are we today, then?
Very well, we thank you.
Run and hide. Run and hide.



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Simon Says

Remember the game "Simon Says"? Whoever is "it" gives a direction beginning with "Simon says." If "it" doesn't say "Simon says" the player should not follow the direction.

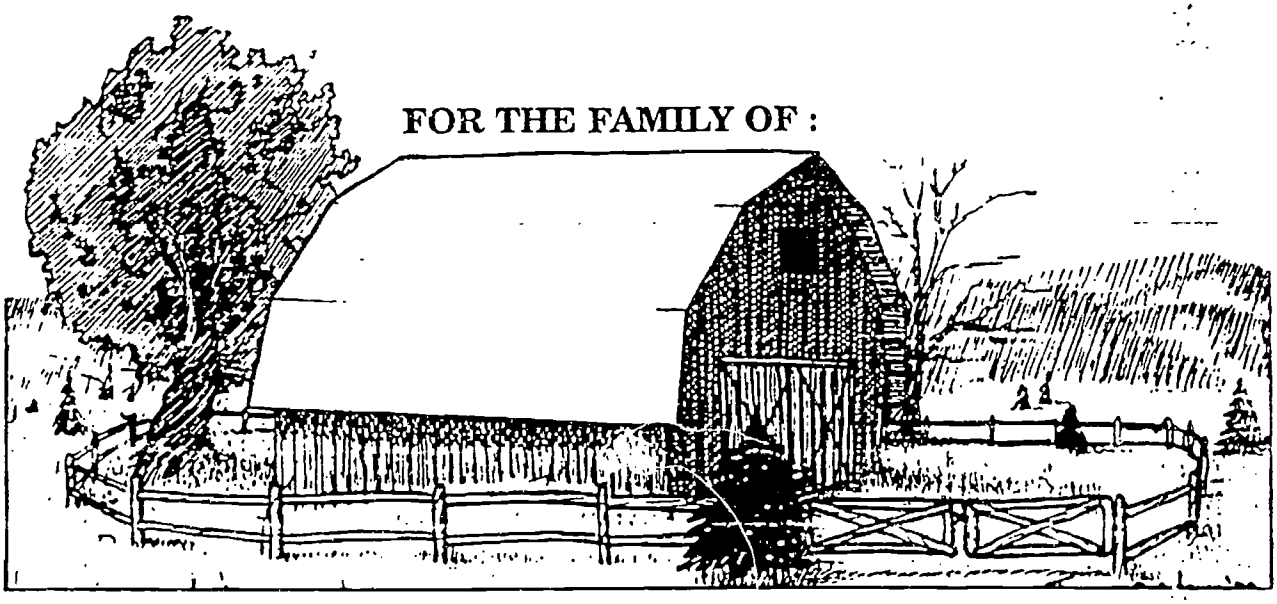
Playing the game with your child is a good way to have her follow directions. It's also a way to practice taking turns.

Here are some examples.

Simon says, "Take one giant step."
Simon says, "Hop on one foot."
Simon says, "Raise one hand."
Simon says, "Raise both hands."

If you don't say "Simon says" and the child does the action, she becomes "it." Then she gives you directions.

Just the two of you can play, or several people can play together.



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Waiting Can Be Useful Time

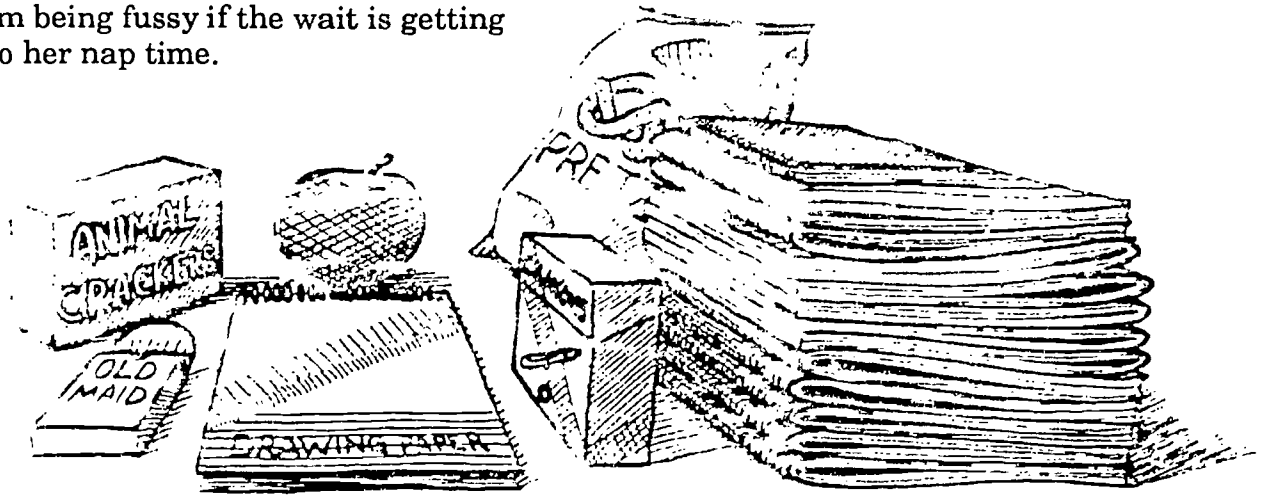
We all have to wait sometimes. Waiting can be a boring, miserable time for a small child. It can also be a time for learning and fun.

If you expect to have to wait, come prepared. A simple game, a story book, or a deck of cards can help pass the time and be enjoyable, too. Paper and crayons will keep small hands occupied. Your child will be happier if you do things with her instead of just offering things to keep her quiet.

It's a good idea to take along something to nibble on. Pretzels and an apple are nutritious snacks. A treat revives energy. It also keeps a child from being fussy if the wait is getting into her nap time.

You might want to keep your car stocked in case you have to wait there. A stack of old magazines will keep your four-year-old happy for a time. Paper and crayons are useful in the car, too.

Talk with your child about why you have to wait. Try not to be cross with her if she becomes impatient. You may feel like whining yourself when you have to wait in a doctor's office for an hour. But waiting time can be a chance to spend some valuable minutes with your youngster.



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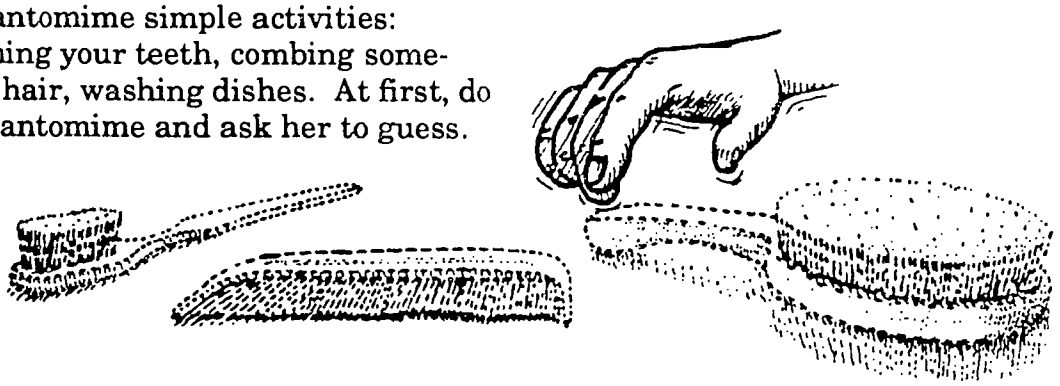
Acting Out

Tell your child that you are going to act out (pantomime) something that happens often in your house. She must watch closely so she will be able to guess what you are doing. Then it will be her turn to act out for you.

Pantomime simple activities: brushing your teeth, combing someone's hair, washing dishes. At first, do one pantomime and ask her to guess. Then you can do two or three in a row. Ask: "What did I do first?" "What did I do next?"

This activity helps children learn to describe what they see, an important language skill.



Doing Dishes

Ask your child to help you wash and dry the dishes. (If you have a dishwasher, you can do the same things as you unload the clean dishes to put them away.) Have him sort things by type and size, like this:

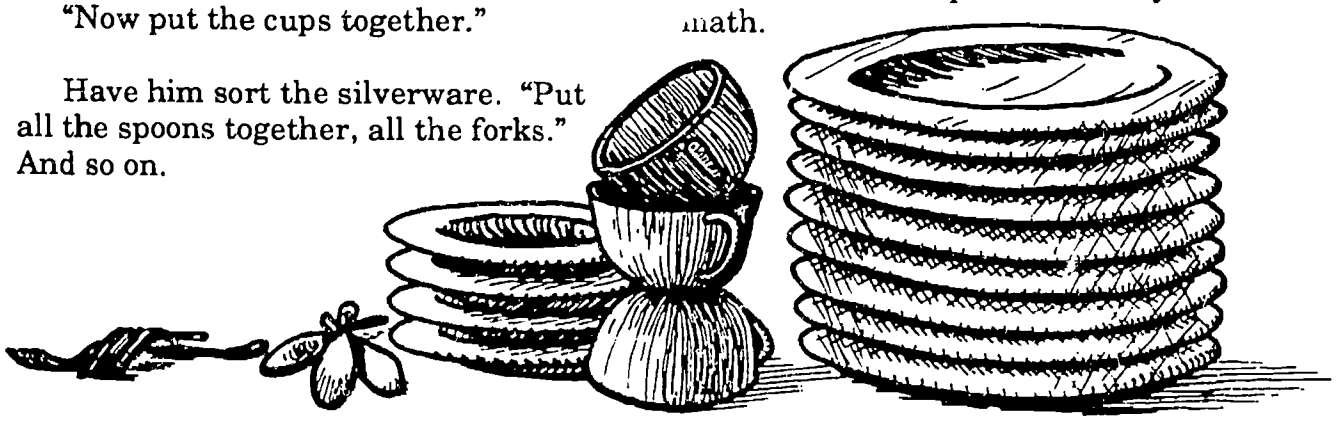
"Let's put all the plates together."

"Now put the cups together."

Have him sort the silverware. "Put all the spoons together, all the forks." And so on.

If you have more than one size of any item, have him put the same-sized pieces together.

Ask questions. "Which cup is the biggest?" "Which plate is the smallest?" With this activity, you can have a good time together while he gets skills that will help him be ready for math.



NURSERY RHYMES TO READ ALOUD

Jack be nimble,
Jack be quick,
Jack jump over the candlestick.
Jump it lightly,
Jump it quick.
Jump right over the candlestick.

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey.
Along came a spider,
Who sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Mary, Mary quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells,
And cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

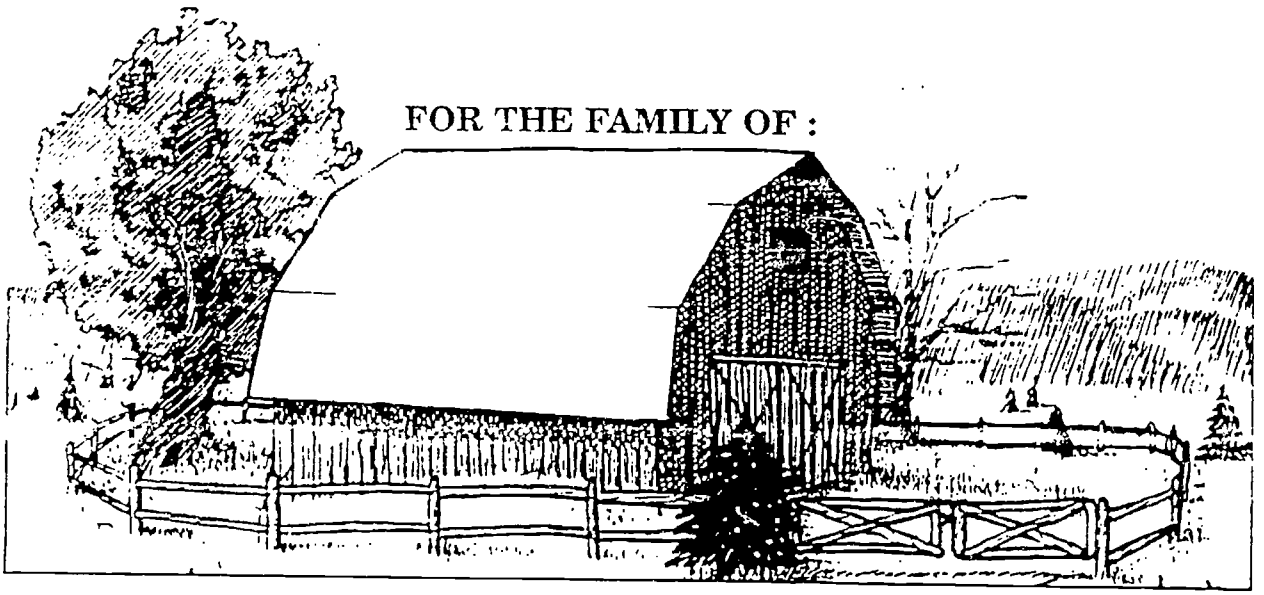
The Perfect Gift

Looking for a Present for your Child?
How about one that

- is portable
- is unbreakable
- requires no assembly
- needs no batteries
- takes little space
- one size fits all

And it doesn't have
a big price tag.

THE PERFECT GIFT —
A BOOK



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Family Connections

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Learning By Seeing

Words alone have no meaning for children. If you say "cow" to a child and she does not see one, or hear one, or touch one, she will not know what a cow is.

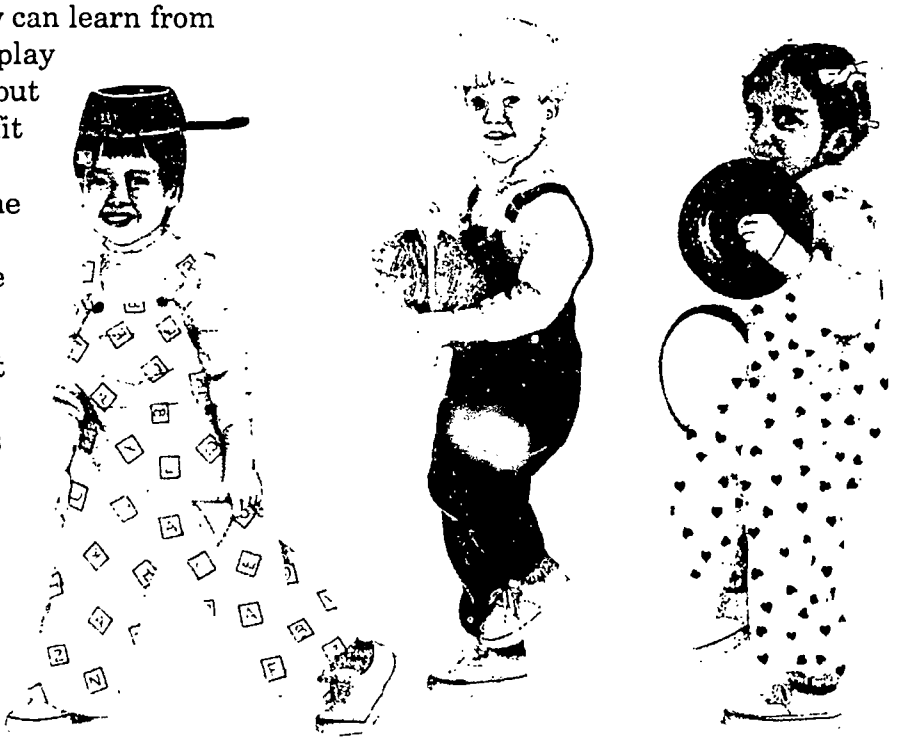
Children have to experience things to learn about them. That doesn't mean you have to buy elaborate toys or take children on trips to help them learn. Your kitchen is a great laboratory.

Just think what they can learn from pots and pans. As they play with pans they learn about sizes. A small pan will fit into a larger one. The larger one can fit into one that's even bigger. One might be the perfect size to fit a small head.

They can learn about shapes. "This pan is round. That cake pan is square." "This pan that I use when I cook lasagna is a rectangle. Can you find another pan that's a rectangle?" "What about the cookie sheet? Is it a rectangle, too?"

You don't need to make a job out of teaching shapes or sizes. Just let the child discover. The most important thing about this play in the kitchen is the time you spend with your child.

Talk with your child as much as you can. Share her discoveries. You are her first and most important teacher.



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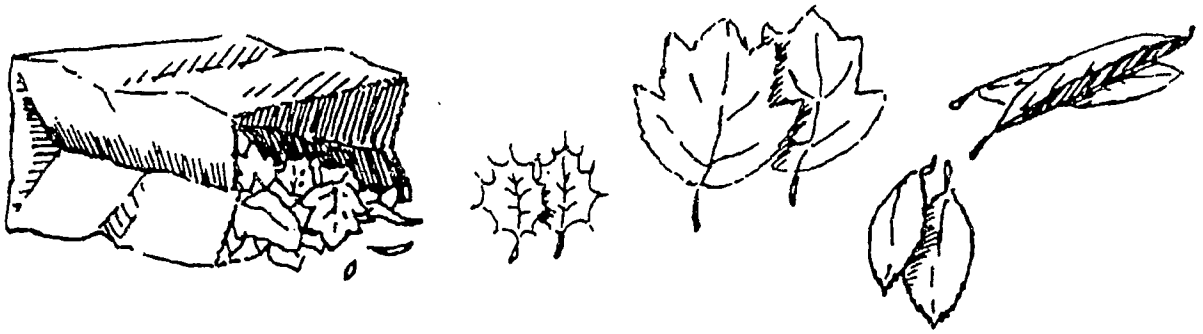
Leaf Walk

Go for a leaf-collecting walk together. Pick up different kinds of leaves and put them in a bag. When you get home, dump the leaves on a newspaper and let your child sort them by shape. In the fall, he could sort them by color.

If you know the names of the trees the leaves came from, he will like learning the names. You could also get a child's book on trees from the library. Let him look for pictures to match the leaves he gathered.

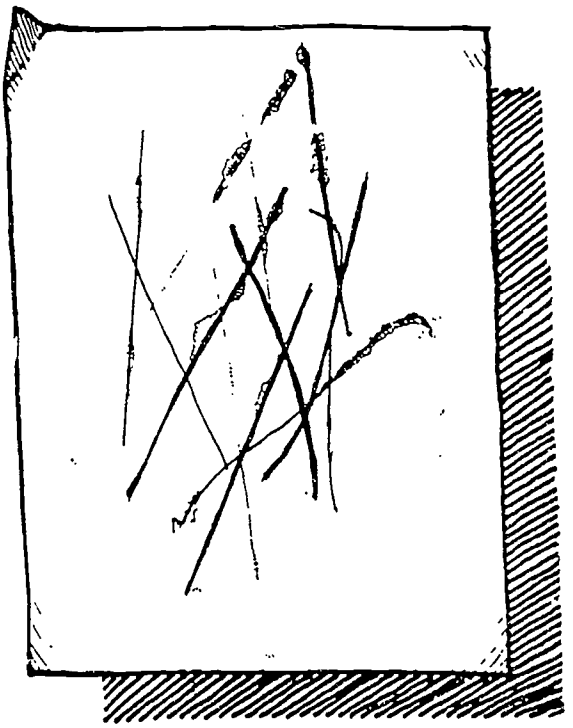


String Paintings

Most young artists like to do string paintings. You will need to provide finger paints or poster paints, construction paper, and pieces of string about six inches long.

Show your child how to dip a piece of string into a color and pull it across a section of paper. She will soon discover how many patterns she can make using a different piece of string for each color.

You may find that you want to make a string painting, too. You surely will want to display hers.



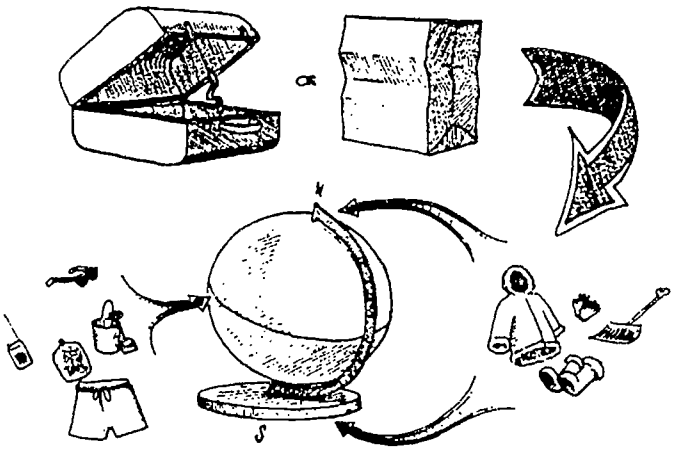
Looking Forward

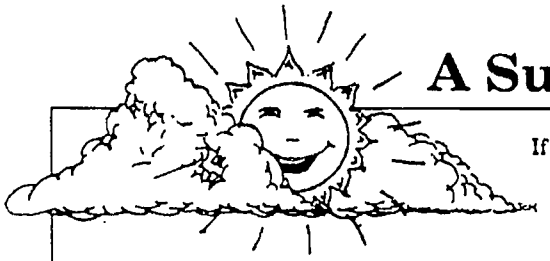
Planning for a trip is exciting to a child. Even if you are not going on a real trip, your child would enjoy preparing for an imagined one.

Talk together about where you would like to go. Think about the best way to get there. You might go on a plane, a train, a car—maybe even a dog sled.

Talk about what you will do. What will you need to take on this journey? Do some pretend packing. "What will you put in your suitcase if we go to the North Pole?" Let him dictate a list to you. You could even let him put things in a suitcase or a shopping bag.

If you have an old magazine or catalog, let him look for pictures of things he will need on the trip. He can cut them out and pack them, too.





A Sunshine Gram

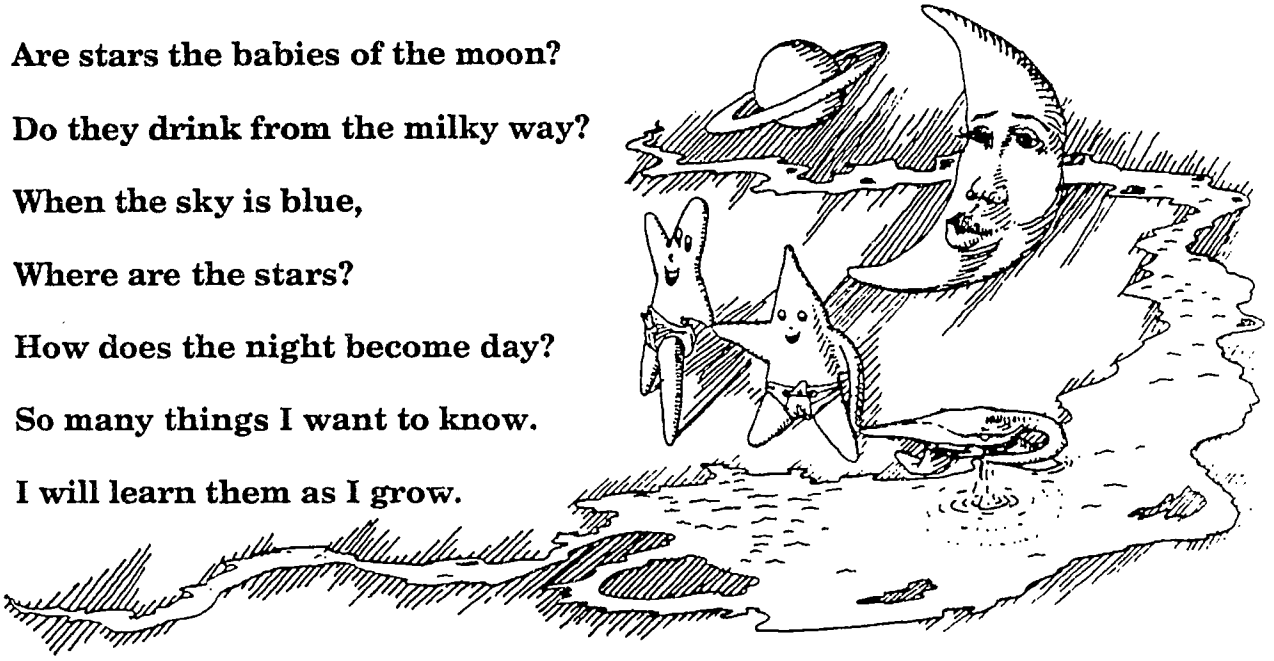
If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

"If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident".

—Dorothy Law Nolte

—A READ-ALOUD

As I Grow



Are stars the babies of the moon?

Do they drink from the milky way?

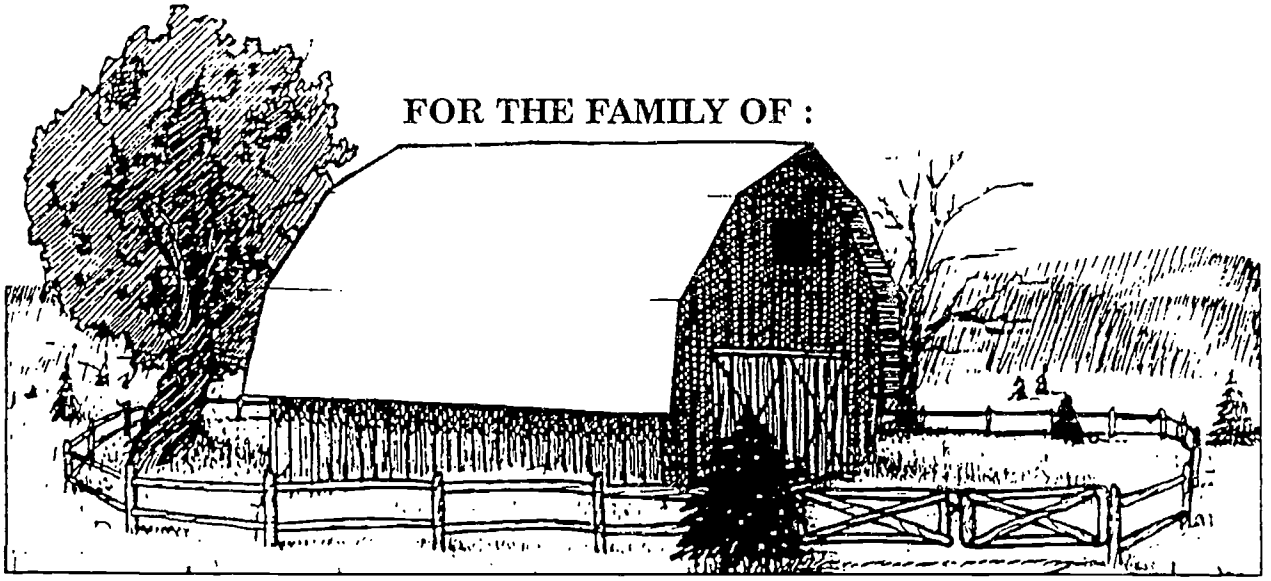
When the sky is blue,

Where are the stars?

How does the night become day?

So many things I want to know.

I will learn them as I grow.



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Spending Time

If I just had more time ..." Well, you don't. Everyone has exactly the same amount of time each day. You can't buy more, no matter how rich you are. You can only decide how to spend it.

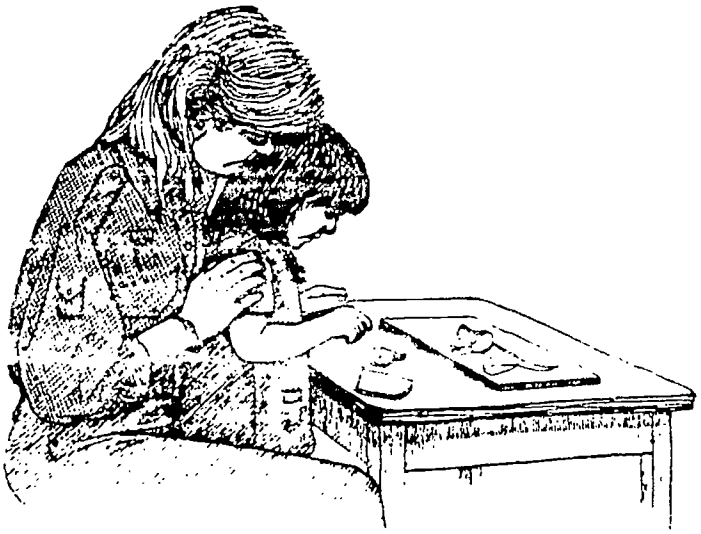
Where does it go? One study in 1985-86 showed that male and female adults each spend an average of six hours a week shopping. Each averages 30 hours a week watching television. We eat, sleep and work. We clean house, cook and do yard work. All those things take time.

Another study found that mothers who work outside the home spend an average of 11 minutes daily of one-on-one time with their children. They did better on weekends — 30 minutes. Fathers spent eight minutes daily, 14 minutes on weekends. Mothers at home spent only two minutes more a day. Most parents didn't spend much time enjoying their children.

There will always be another mall to shop. Your favorite TV show will come around on reruns. Ball games will be there to be watched in 20 years. And the kitchen will forever be waiting for you to mop it.

But your children will be gone, grown up and living their own lives. You don't get another chance at spending that time with them. Find 15 minutes to read aloud to them. Find another 15 minutes to make some play dough with them.

It's your time to spend. Can you think of a better way to spend it?



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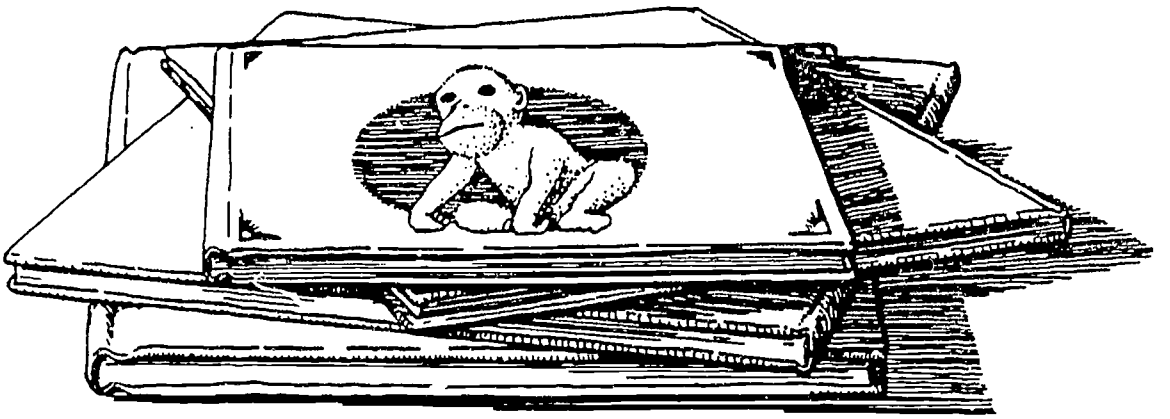
Wordless Books

If you think you're not a good reader aloud, try wordless books. They are books that tell stories in pictures. You can "read" them to your child. Your child can read them to you. Wordless books are fun. Some you and your child would enjoy:

Title	Author
Ah-Choo	Mercer Mayer
The Bear and the Fly	Paula Winter
Bobo's Dream	Martha Alexander
Creepy Castle	John Goodall
Do You Want To Be My Friend?	Eric Corle
Frog Goes to Dinner	Mercer Mayer
Good Dog	Carl Alexandra Day
Deep in the Forest	Brinton Turkle
The Adventures of Paddy Pork	John Goodall
Rosie's Walk	Pat Hutchins
Where's My Monkey	Dieter Schubert
Peter Spier's Rain	Peter Spier



The Kid's Question and Answer Book is 77 pages of questions and answers on 100 topics, from dinosaurs to sneezes. It's by the editors of *Owl* magazine and has many pictures.

> In the long run, the only thing of lasting value you can give a child is your time and the memories of the time you shared together.
>
> — *Jim Telease*

Talking Puppet

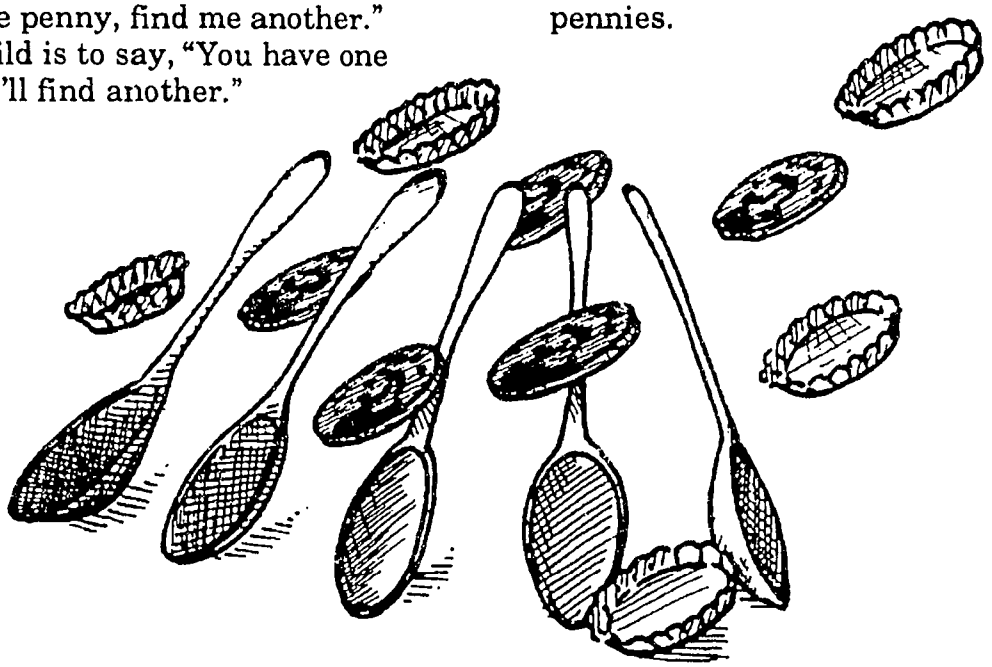
Show your child how to make a little puppet friend using a fist. Use crayons to draw eyes and nose on the side knuckle of the index finger. Paint a lipstick mouth on the thumb and lower palm. By moving the thumb up and down you can make the puppet talk. Encourage your child to talk to the puppet or have the puppet talk to you.

Find Me a Penny

Begin this game by hiding five pennies in places where they will be easy to find. (You could also use spoons or bottle caps.)

Have your child come into the room to hunt the pennies. Explain that as each penny is found you will say, "I have one penny, find me another." Your child is to say, "You have one penny, I'll find another."

When the child brings you the second penny, you say, "I have two pennies, find me another." The child is to say, "You have two pennies, I'll find another." Continue to answer in this way until he finds all of the pennies. If he enjoys the activity, do it again. This time, let him hide the pennies.

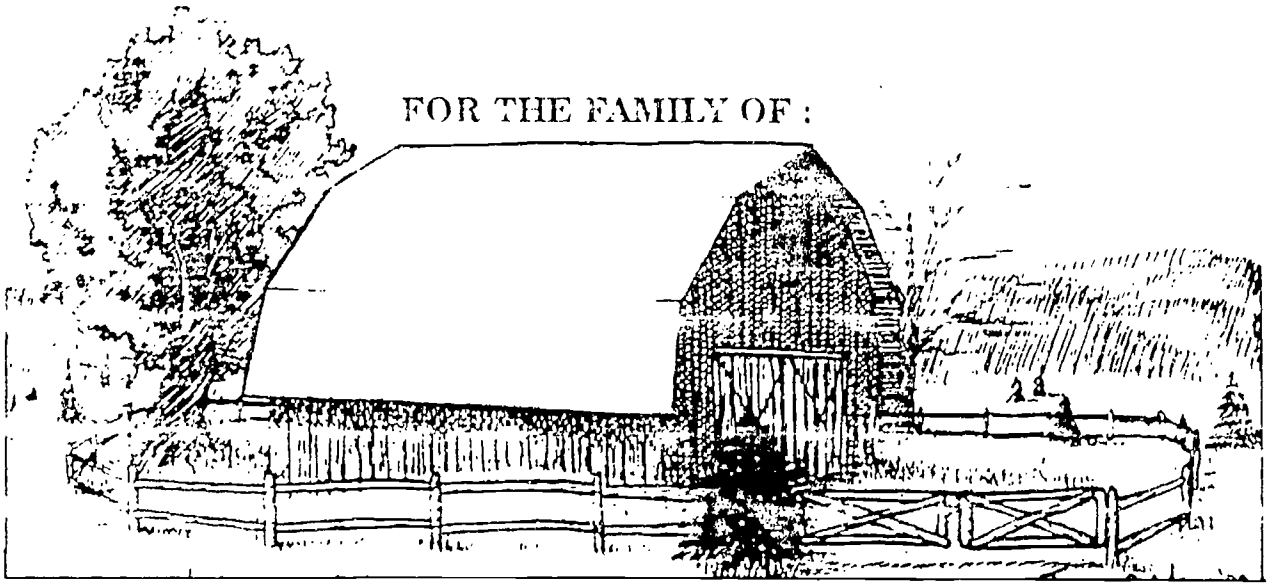


You Can Make a Rhyme

It isn't so hard
To make a rhyme.
Just pick out words,
One at a time,
'Til you match the one
That's in your head.

To rhyme with **head**
You might pick **red**
Or **said**
Or **wed**
Or **bed**. . .

See how easy it is
To make a rhyme.



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About Reading Aloud

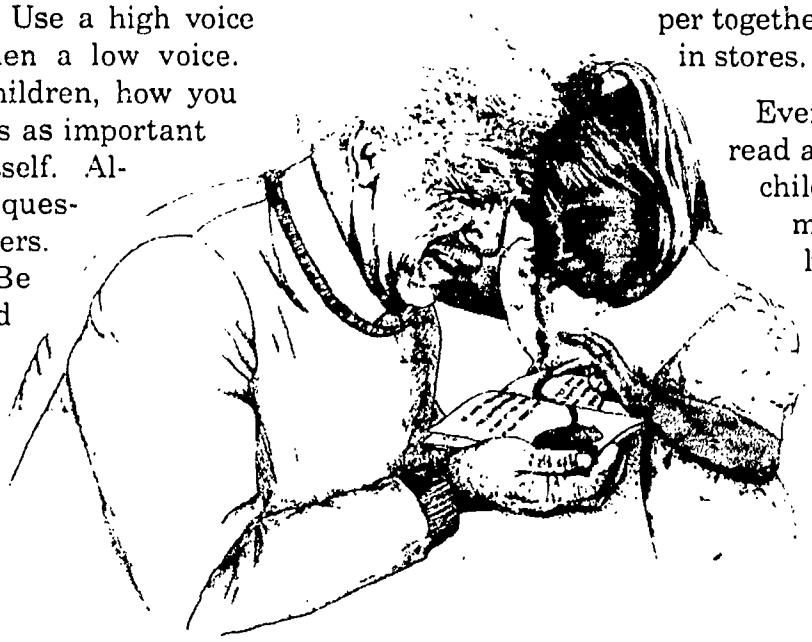
Children develop reading tastes early. They have favorite books and will ask for them nightly for months on end.

You will get tired of their favorites long before they do, but try to be patient. Like you, your children are most comfortable with what is familiar. When they are relaxed, they're better able to absorb. Rereadings of their favorite books improve their memory skills and vocabulary.

As you read aloud, change your tone of voice. Use a high voice sometimes, then a low voice. With young children, how you tell the story is as important as the story itself. Allow time for questions and answers. Don't hurry. Be sure your child can see the pictures. Ask "What do you think will happen next?"

Familiar books are comforting to children. So are routines. They like a schedule for getting up, for eating meals, for taking naps. And they like a regular reading time.

Bedtime is a good time for reading aloud, but it should not be the only time. Read all kinds of things to your child whenever you are together. Read aloud road signs when you're in the car. Read comic strips in the newspaper together. Read signs in stores.



Every time you read aloud to your child you send a message about how important the printed word is.

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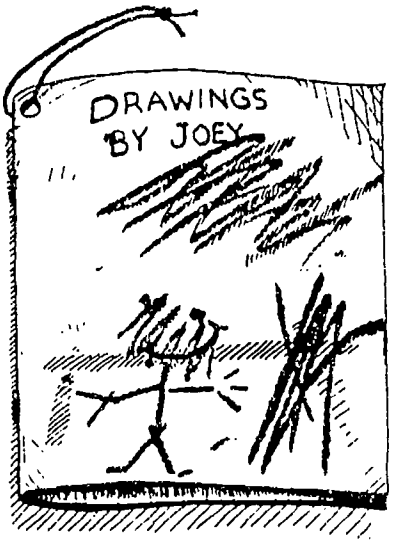
Making a Little Book

Wouldn't it be fun to make a picture book for the poem on page 4? After you have read "The Dinner Party" aloud a few times, suggest that your child draw pictures to go with the words.

All you need is paper and crayons. Cut a sheet of typing paper in half, then fold the two halves together. Staple or paste the folded edge and you have an 8-page "little book."

Be sure to print your child's name on the book: "Drawings by (your child's name)."

Your idea of what a purple cat looks like might not match your child's drawing. Just remember, it's her purple cat!



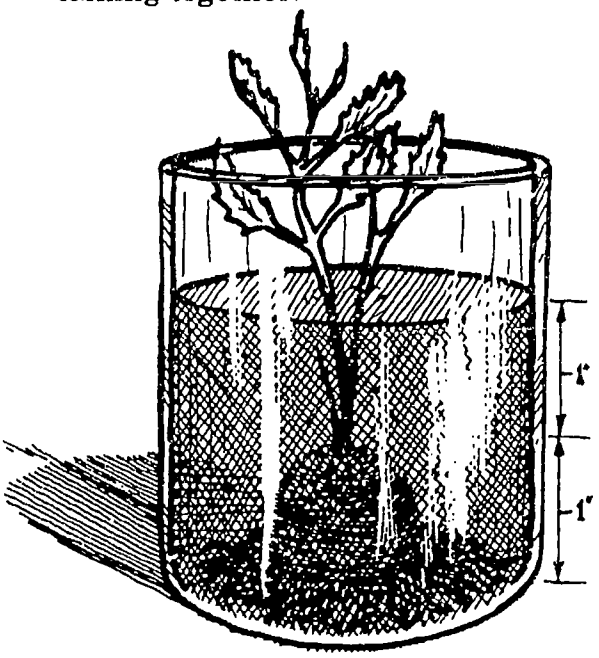
Watch It Grow

Watching a plant root and grow is interesting to a young child. Cut an inch-long piece off the top of a carrot. Let your child put the carrot piece in a clear container, cut side down. Add water to cover the carrot piece by an inch or so.

Set the glass in a window sill where the carrot will get plenty of light and sun. Within a few days it should sprout, then leaf.

To add interest, put a second carrot piece in a dish of water and set it in an unlighted place. Let your child discover that the carrot will not grow without sunshine.

Growing things with your child gives you lots of opportunities for talking together.



Set Our Table

"The Dinner Party" is also useful for number play. Let your child set the table for dinner.

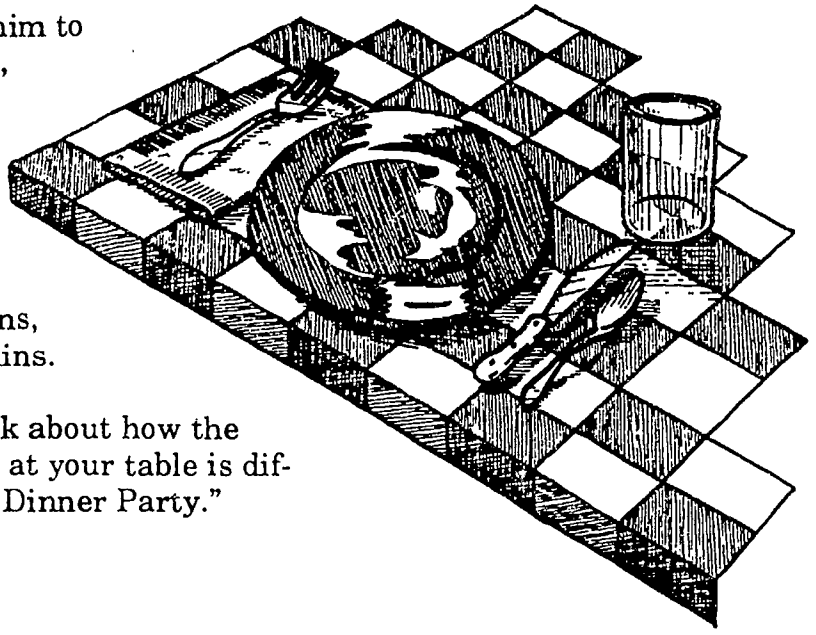
"How many will be at dinner? Can you name them? Mommy, Daddy, Sister, Brother . . . get one fork for each person."

Don't expect him to count. If he does, that's fine. Let him use his own way to decide how to set a place for each person. He can also get spoons, knives, and napkins.

You might talk about how the number of places at your table is different from "The Dinner Party."

"We have four places at our table. Is that more than the number of places in our poem? Is it less than the number?" You can use forks to help him see the difference.

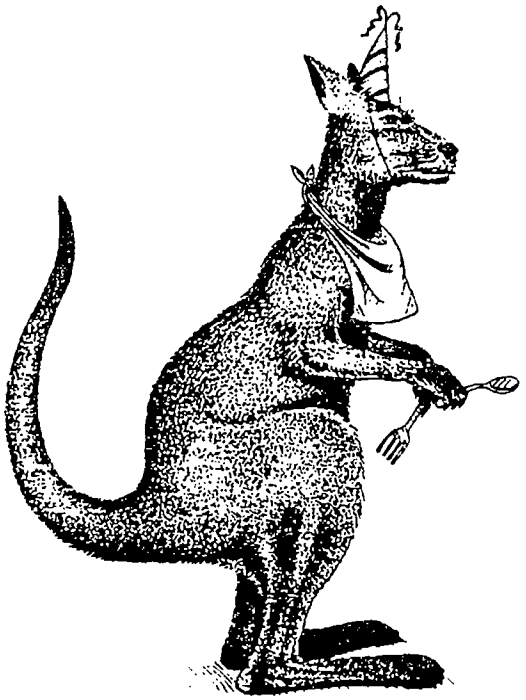
Be sure to tell the family how he helped by setting the table for dinner.



It's never too late for learning. If you are interested in getting a General Educational Development (GED) Certificate, call your local Board of Education. Someone there can tell you how to go about it.

—A READ-ALOUD

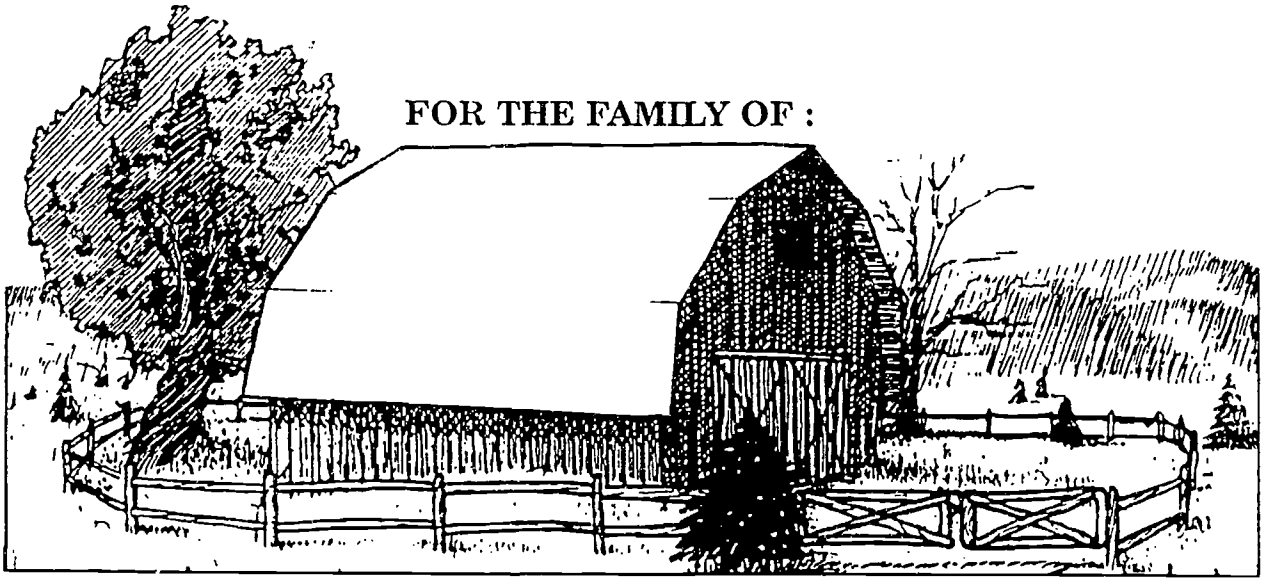
The Dinner Party



I'd like to set the table,
If I just had seven forks,
And seven yellow napkins,
And some bottles with red corks.

To be at the table with me,
I'd like a purple cat,
My teddy bear,
And Uncle Don,
And you, in a bright blue hat.

Let's see . . .
That's just five places.
So in the other two,
I'd like to have an orange bird,
And a big green kangaroo.



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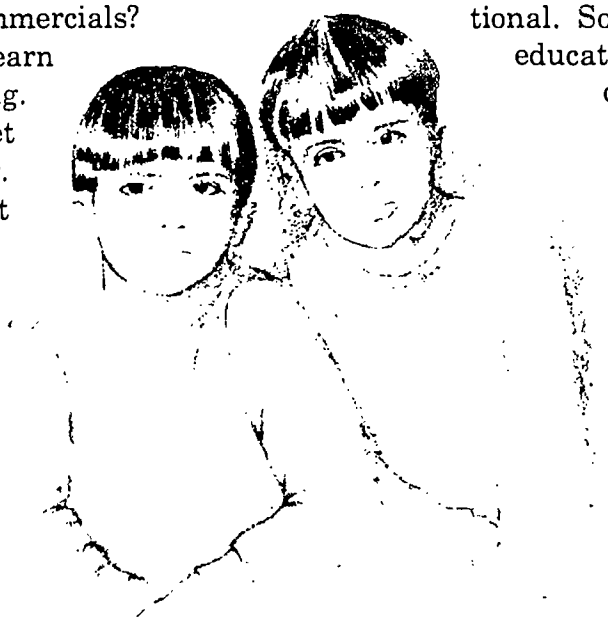
Children and Television

Children spend more time with television than with you or their teachers. From the time they are born until they turn 17, children watch 15,000 hours of television. That's five years worth of 8-hour days!

In that time, children are exposed to about 400 TV commercials a week. What do they learn from commercials? One thing they can learn is deceptive thinking. They see problems get solved the easy way. They get the idea that you can fix almost anything with something you spray on from a bottle.



Television is not a social experience for children. They sit passively in front of the screen. They don't interact with anyone. And TV takes away their most important learning tool—questions. Children learn more by asking questions than in any other way.

Some parents worry because in one hour of Saturday morning cartoons, the average child will see 54 acts of violence.

Of course, watching TV is not all bad. Some programs are healthily entertaining. Some are educational. Some are both. Few educators recommend that children not watch television at all. They do recommend a lot less TV than most children now watch.

Limit the amount of TV. Together, choose a few shows a week. Watch with your child. Talk about the shows that you see together. Encourage questions. Let your child know what you like and do not like. The things you value will become clear to your child as you spend TV time together.

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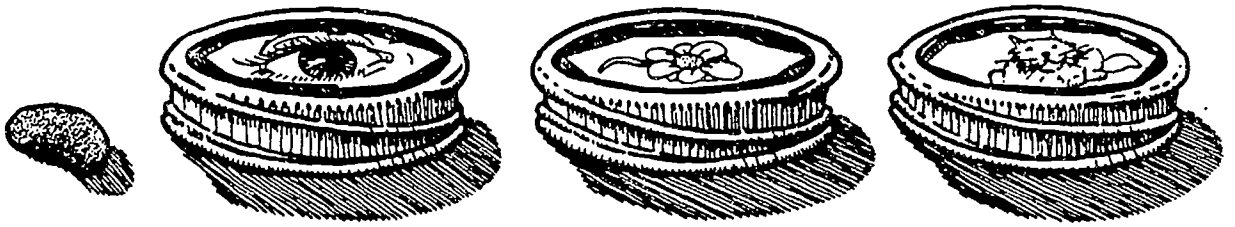
The Lid Game

With three jar lids, three pictures cut from an old magazine, and some paste, you can make a simple game. Let your child paste a picture on each lid. Have something you can hide under one of the lids. A coin or a dried bean will work fine.

Tell your child how the game is played. "I am going to hide this bean under one of the lids while you are not looking. Close your eyes so you can't see where I put the bean."

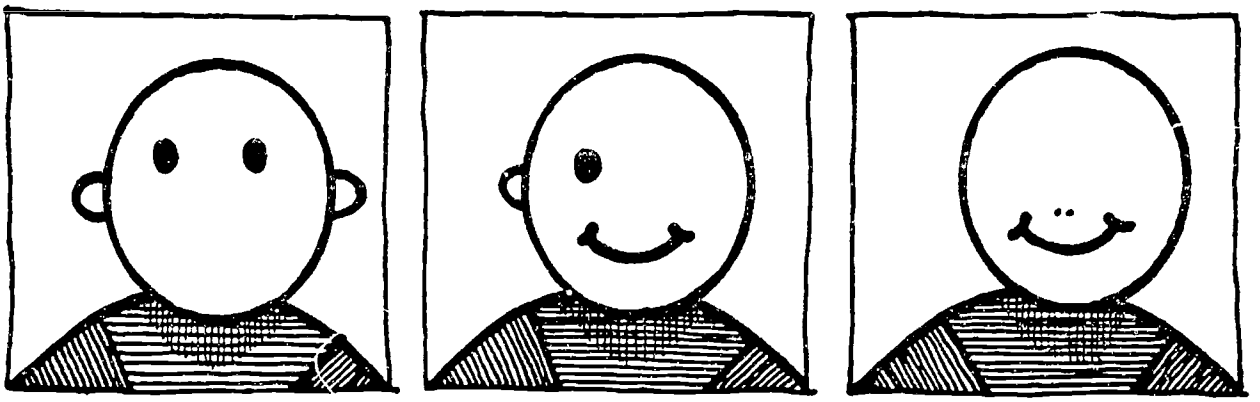
Then have the child guess which lid the bean is under. He is not allowed to point or touch; he must answer with a sentence. "It's under the lid with the flower." Or, "It's under the one with the kitty's picture."

Take turns hiding the bean. You can show him how to use complete sentences to answer.



Finish the Face

With your youngster, look at the faces pictured here. Ask: "What is missing? Can you finish this picture?"



Let the child draw in the missing feature with a crayon or marking pen. Some children might add ears or hair. That's fine.

Remembering Directions

This activity will help your child learn to follow more complicated directions. It will help develop memory, too.

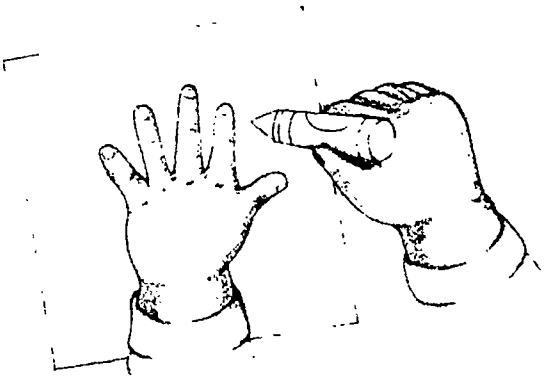
Tell your child you are going to give directions that she is to follow in order. Start with something simple like: "Stand up. Jump two times." After she has followed the directions, do some others.

1. Run to the door. Run back to me. Sit down.
2. Stand up. Find a book. Put it on the table.
3. Crawl to the window. Run back to me. Touch my arm.
4. Hop on one foot. Hop on the other foot. Raise your hand.

You can think of many others. Let her have a turn at giving you directions.

Right Hand, Left Hand

You will need two pieces of heavy paper or cardboard, about 6 inches by 9 inches. Have your child put his right hand on the paper with fingers spread. Draw an outline of his hand with a crayon or marking pen. Let him do as much as he wants of the drawing. Print the word "right" under the outline of his hand. Read the word to him. Tell him, "This is your right hand."



Do the same thing with his left hand. Then ask, "Which picture is of your right hand?" "Which picture is of your left hand?" He can put his hands on the drawings to get the answer.

—A READ-ALOUD

Make A Rainbow

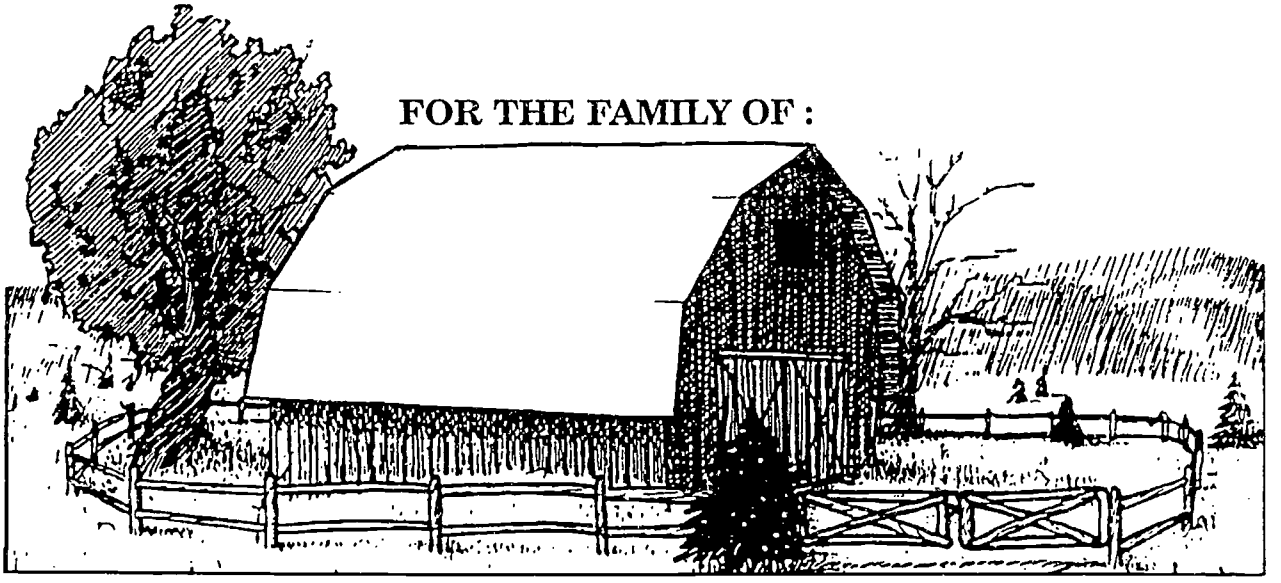
After the rain, when the world is wet,
If things work out just right,
Sometimes you can see a rainbow
Shimmering in the light.

They say at the end of the rainbow,
Is buried a pot of gold.
But no one has ever found it.
Or so I have been told.

You can make a rainbow.
With all the colors you know—
Red and green and yellow,
And lilac and orange to glow.

So gather up your crayons,
And color all the bands.
You can make a rainbow,
Using your own two hands.

Give your child a sheet of plain white paper so she can make a rainbow of her own. Don't expect even bands.



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Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Dealing With Feelings

Everyone has feelings, even young babies. They express feelings with tears and noises you can only guess the meaning of. As babies grow, they begin to show feelings with speech.

Then they need help to learn how to use words to get their needs met. They will keep crying and hitting until they find better ways to express feelings.

Here are some things you can do to help your child learn to use words.

1. Listen. Listen with an open mind, so your child knows you will hear her out.

2. Speak clearly so your child will learn how to pronounce words correctly.

3. Listen patiently. Don't hurry your child. Give her time to say what she wants to without pressure.

4. Talk with her. Not to her, with her. Have conversations. Show interest in what she thinks about things.

5. Read to her. Poems and stories give you things to talk about together.

Most important, let her know it is natural to have feelings. Everyone gets angry or upset sometimes. It is okay to say you are angry; it is not okay to hit. Don't say, "You shouldn't feel that way." We feel an emotion whether we want to or not. But we can learn to express the feeling in an appropriate way.

And always remember that your child follows your example.

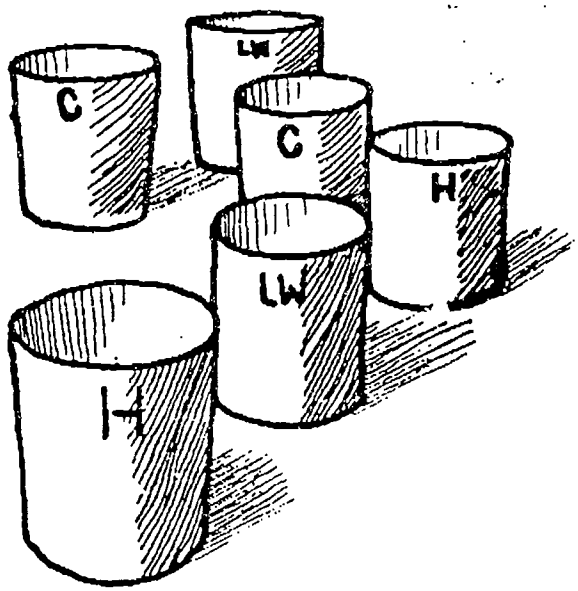
Hot or Cold?

To do this activity you will need six cups, some ice, hot water, and warm water. (The water doesn't have to be very hot to feel hot to a child.) Put ice in two cups, hot water in two cups and warm water in two cups.

Ask your child to touch the cups and tell you which are cold. Which are warm? Which are hot?

Then ask: "Can you set the two that are hot together?" "Can you find the two that are cold and put those together?" "Can you put the two that are warm together?"

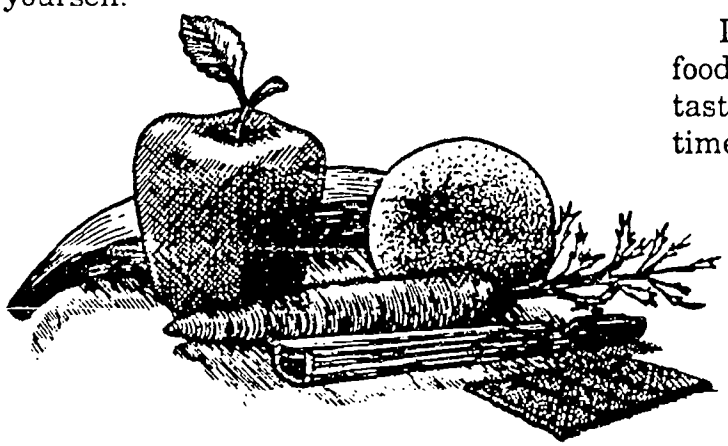
Doing these things helps your child develop the sense of touch.



Tips For Healthy Eating

Buy only foods that you want the child to eat.

Set an example. Eat healthy foods yourself.



Don't worry if the child wants the same thing at every meal, as long as it is wholesome. He will want variety in a while.

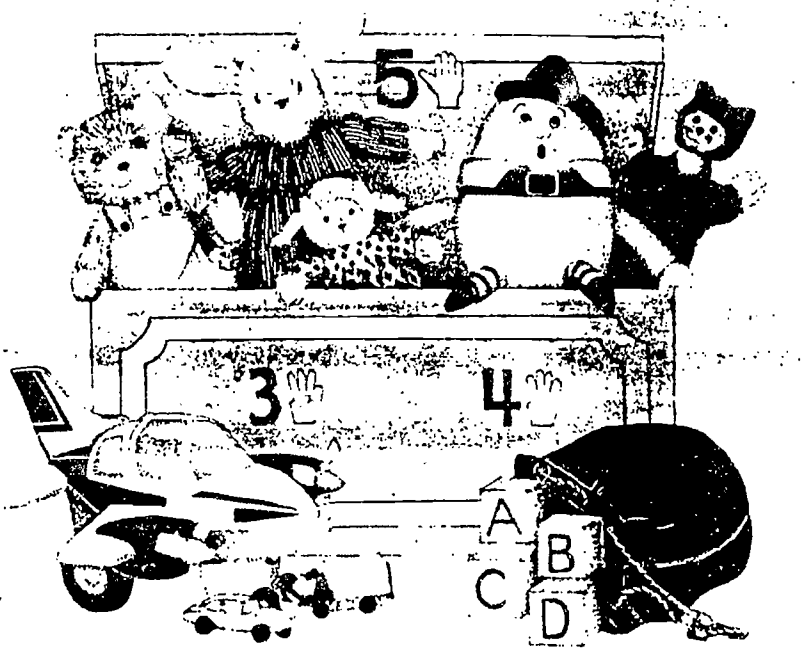
Don't pressure him to eat new foods. Offer them and urge him to taste. If he doesn't want them this time, try again.

Offer smaller portions that you think he will eat. He will ask for more if he wants it.

For snacks, offer fresh fruit, carrot and celery sticks, or graham crackers.

At Home With Numbers

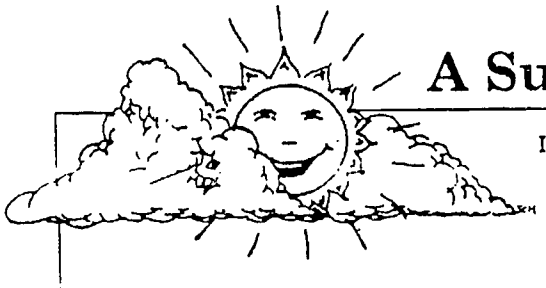
Many parents teach their children to count. Some four-year-olds can say numbers easily from 1 to 20 or more. But they have little or no idea of what numbers mean. It's better for them to discover what numbers are about. You can help. Some things your child can do with you around the house:



- Count toys with him as you are putting them away together. When you are done, say "We put away _____ toys." You can say something else about the number if you want. "That's four more than we put away yesterday. You were busy today."

- Together, sort toys into sets: blocks, dolls, vehicles. Talk about what you are doing. "Now you can put all the toys with wheels here."

> The best preparation for life is a happy childhood.
>
> — *Unknown*



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

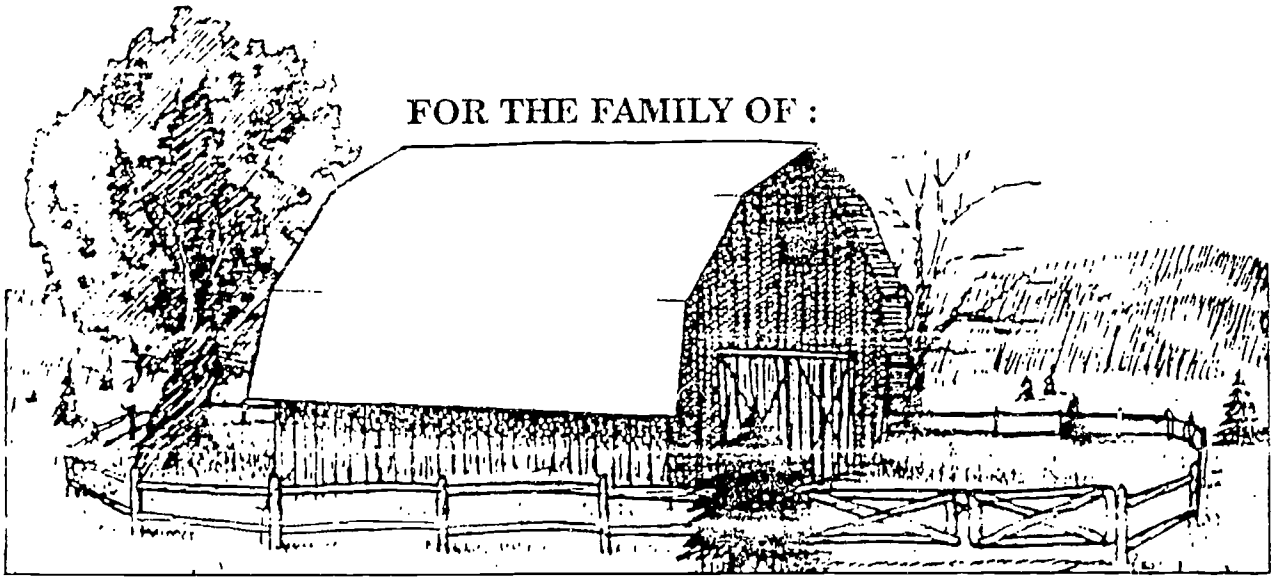
Animal Clouds

You never know
What you might see,
If you watch the clouds
in the sky.

Sometimes a cat,
Sometimes a cow.
Once, I saw a turtle go by.

My big sister saw a snail.
Well, she said she saw a snail.
When I looked at the very same cloud,
What I saw was a whale.

You never know
What you will see,
When you watch the clouds
in the sky.



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Family Connections 1

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Wordless Messages

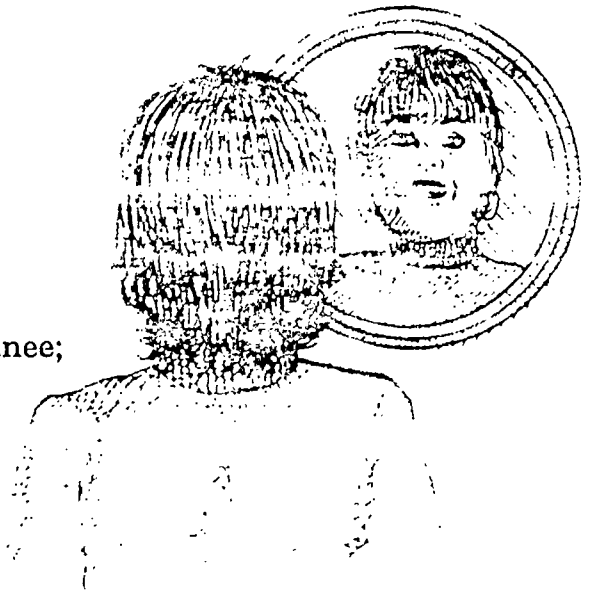
We all send messages sometimes without saying a word. We can say what we mean with facial expressions. We convey meaning with our hands. We use what is called body language.

Did you ever get a message that someone was tired from the way she sighed? Can you tell when someone is angry by how stiffly he is standing? Can you tell by a facial expression when someone doesn't understand what you are saying?

You can help your child understand and use facial expressions. Ask such questions as these. "How would you look if you were sad?" "Show me an angry face." "What does your happy face look like?"

Stand in front of a mirror with your child. Say, "Show how your face would look if:

- you had just eaten a slice of lemon;
- you got a puppy for your birthday;
- you fell off your bike and scraped your knee;
- your favorite friend came to visit."



Using wordless messages gives children another means of expression. They begin to understand that people can convey feelings in more than one way.

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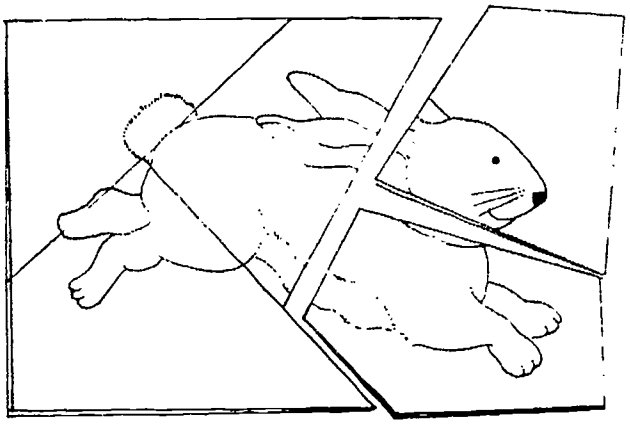
Make A Puzzle

You can make a jigsaw puzzle with your child. You need a simple, but colorful, picture. You might use a page from a child's coloring book, or a photo from a magazine. You could also use a picture postcard.



You also need scissors, paste or glue, and a piece of cardboard the size of the picture. Paste the picture on the cardboard. Cut it into 4 or 5 different shaped pieces.

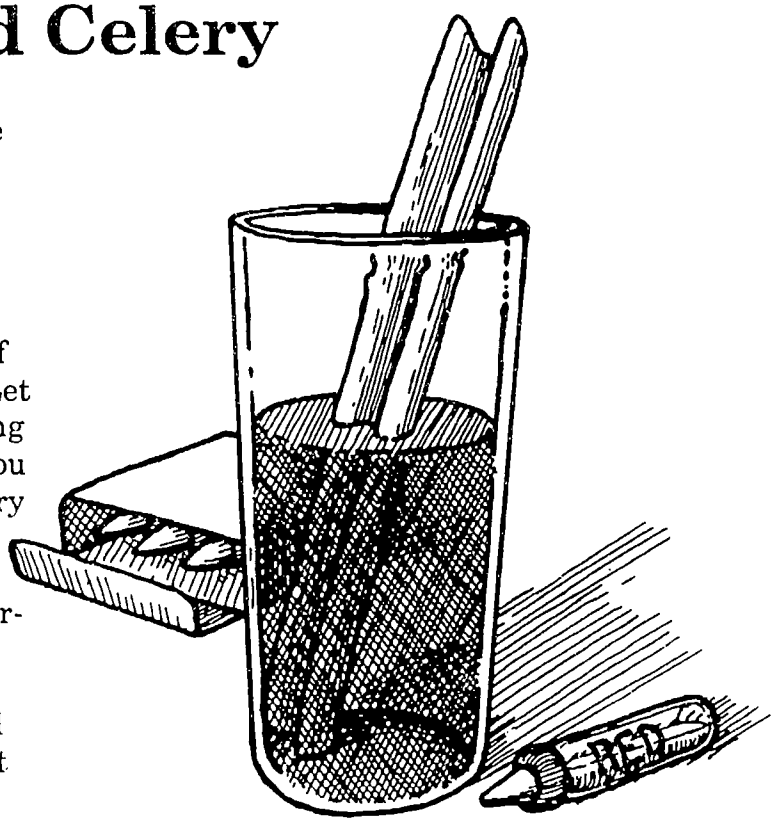
Your child can put the puzzle together, and then show someone else how to do it.

Red Celery

Children are interested in science even before they know that there is such a thing. You can encourage the interest with simple experiments. Here is one.

You need a piece of celery, a jar of water, and some red food coloring. Let the child mix some of the food coloring in the water. Then ask: "What do you think will happen if you put the celery in the red water?"

Any answer is a good one. Encourage her to complete the experiment. Talk together about what happens. She might want to find out what will happen to other objects she could put in the red water. You can have fun with this, too!

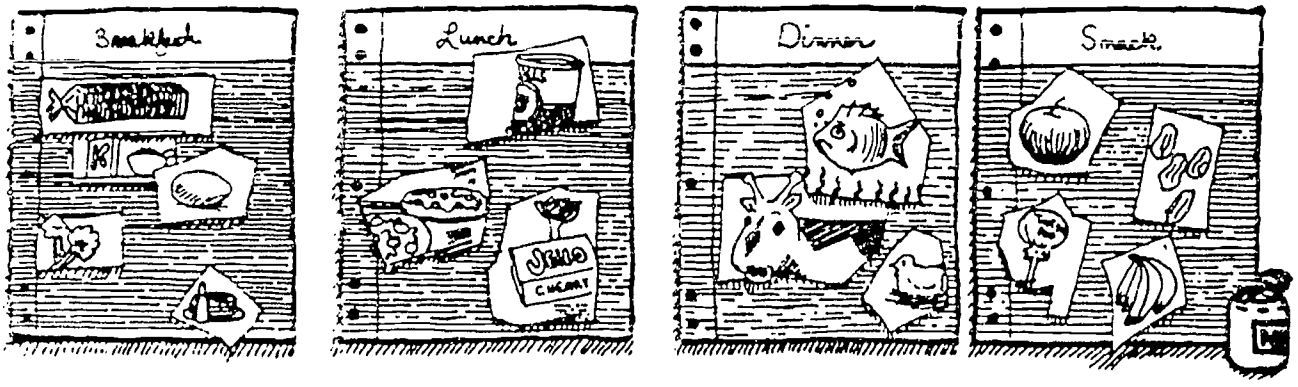


Menu Planning with Pictures

If you have some old magazines with lots of food pictures in them, your child might enjoy making a meal-planning book. You will also need scissors, paste, and heavy paper. Colored construction paper is good for this activity.

Have the child cut out several pictures of all kinds of food. Sort the food pictures into categories of "breakfast," "lunch," "dinner" and "snack." Put those words on separate sheets of paper and let him paste the pictures on the appropriate page. You can help him clip or tie the pages together to make a book.

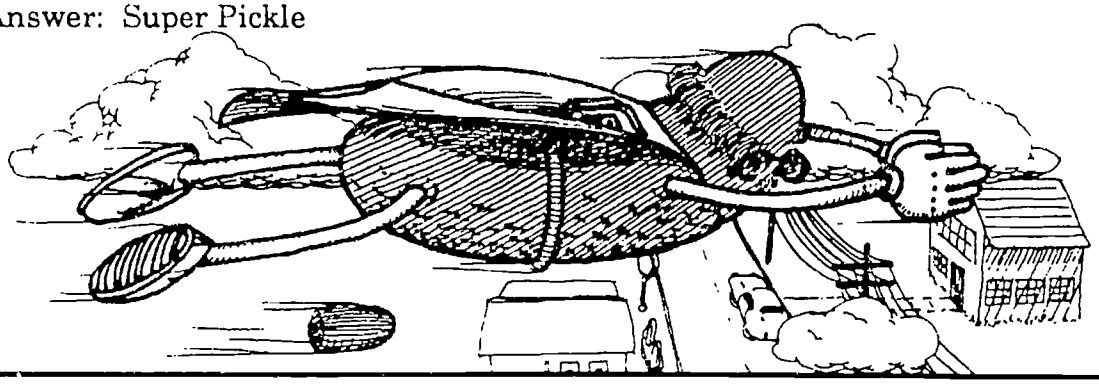
(If he thinks broccoli is for breakfast, don't make him feel he's made a mistake. Maybe it would be good for breakfast. You could have some interesting talks about why we eat what we do when we do.)



A Silly Riddle

Question: What is green and flies through the air faster than a speeding bullet?

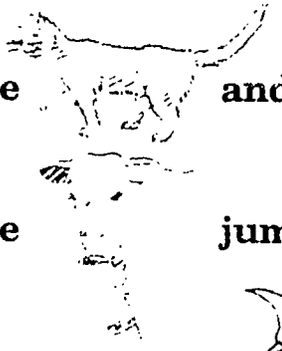
Answer: Super Pickle



Hey, Diddle. Diddle

A rebus is a text in which pictures substitute for some of the words. A good way to read a rebus is for you to move your finger along each line under the words. Pause at the picture to give your child a chance to "read" it. Rebus books are a good introduction to the alphabet and reading.

Hey, diddle, diddle

The  **and the**

The **jumped**

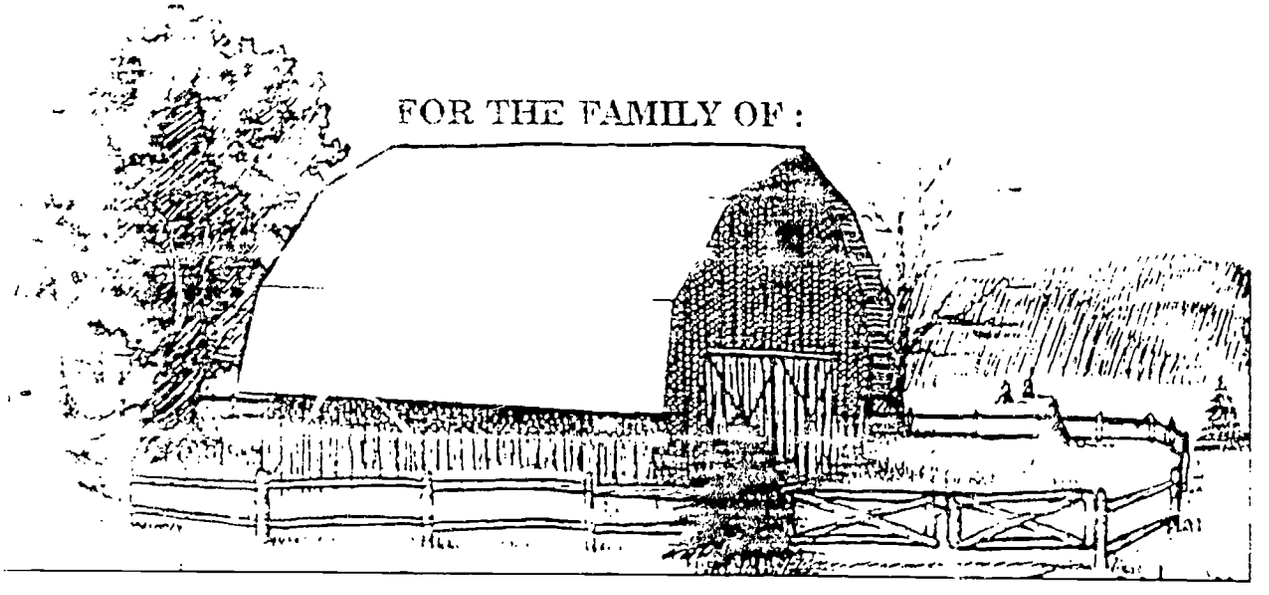
over the **.**

The little **laughed**

To see such sport

And the **ran**

away with the **.**



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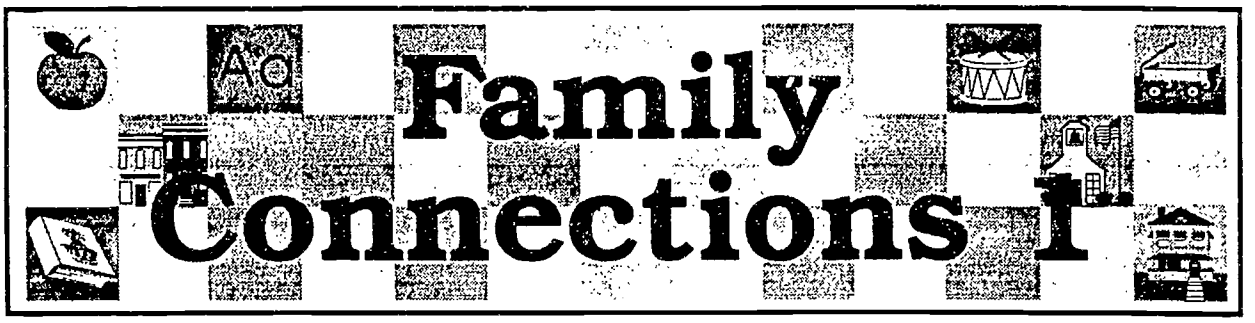

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Resolving Conflicts

We all know that when two or more people, children or adults, get together, arguments can occur. Adults can usually solve problems by talking things over. When children see adults reach agreement, they have a good model for resolving conflict.

Children must learn to share and take turns. They have to learn to play together. They can begin to learn sharing at about four years old. Parents can watch and listen as youngsters play together. When they disagree, it's sometimes best not to intervene. Sometimes children learn best by settling matters on their own.

Times when you should get involved right away include these:

- When there is danger of injury. If children are arguing over something that could hurt them, step in.
- When a larger child is picking on a smaller one.
- When children are doing something that could cause damage to property. For example, they might throw rocks at parked cars, not realizing the seriousness of what they are doing.

In other disagreements, it's best to help children figure out how to solve problems for themselves. You might say something like: "I know you both want to play with the dump truck. What might be a good way to let you both enjoy the truck?"

It is normal for children to be angry or upset sometimes. Let your child know such feelings are ok: "I know you are mad because Andy knocked down your block tower. You can tell him you don't like what he did, but it is not ok to hit him."

It is also normal for children to cry when they are upset. Making fun of a child's tears will probably make them last longer. Recognize the feeling: "It's all right to feel sad when you lose something you like." Most children will stop crying quickly if you acknowledge their hurt.

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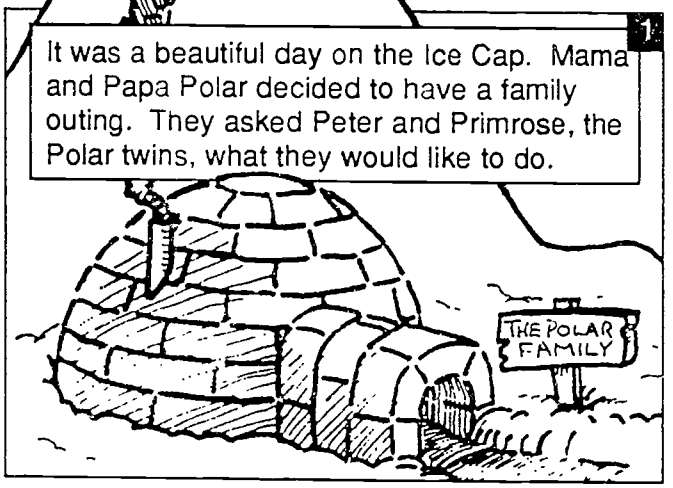
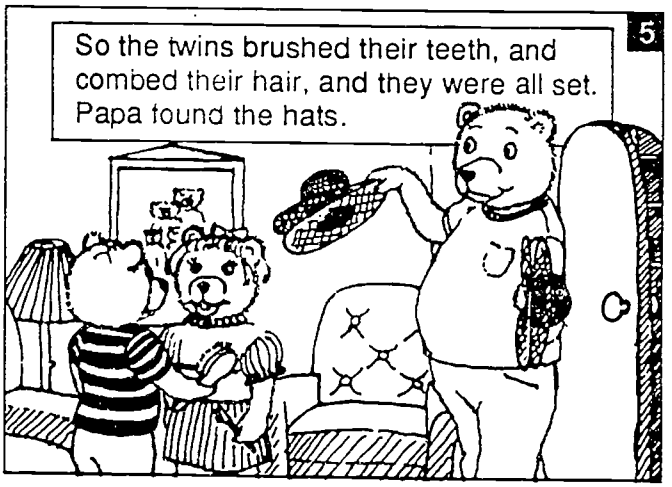
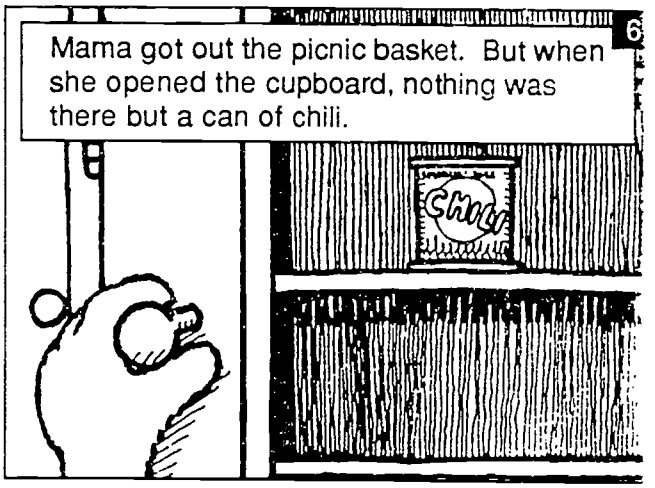
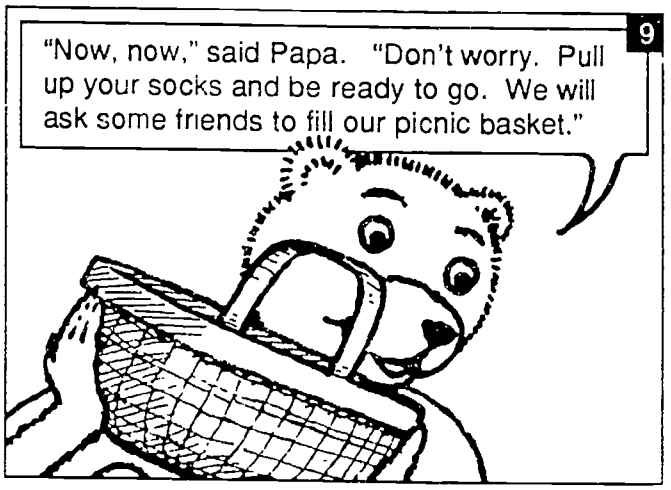
The Polar



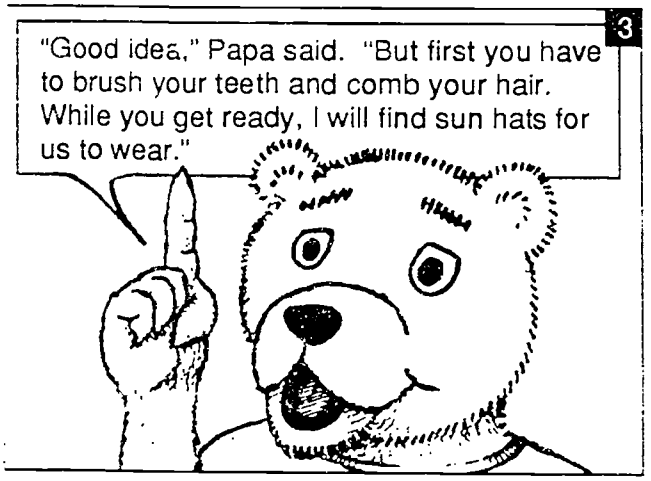


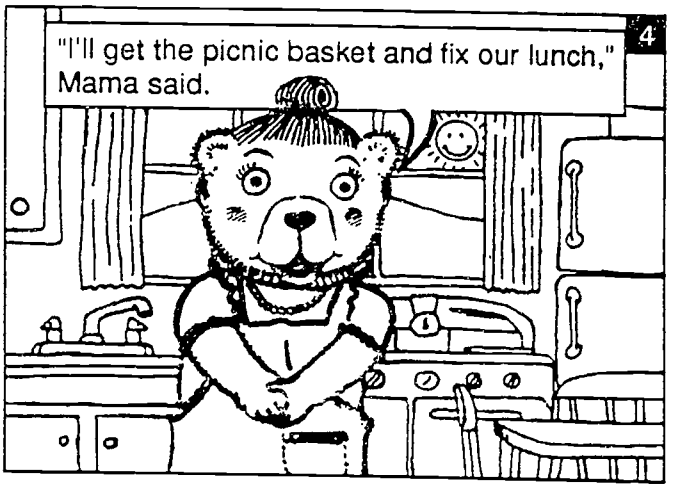


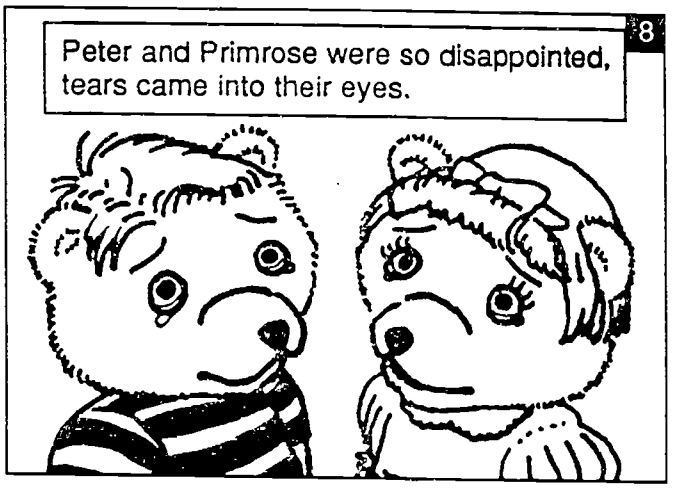


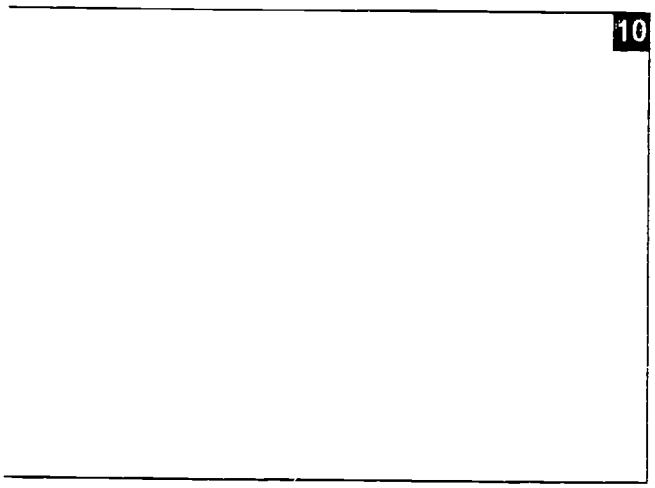
Would **you** like to help the Polar family have their picnic? Why don't you draw some pictures of things you like to eat at a picnic? Or, you could cut out some magazine pictures of picnic food to put in their basket.

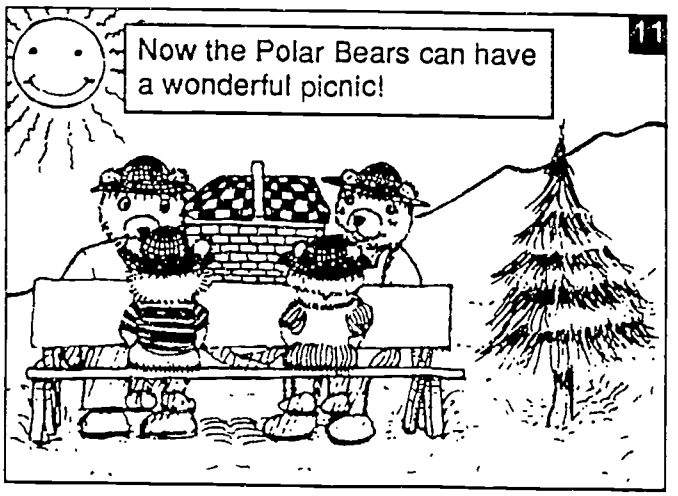
Bears' Picnic







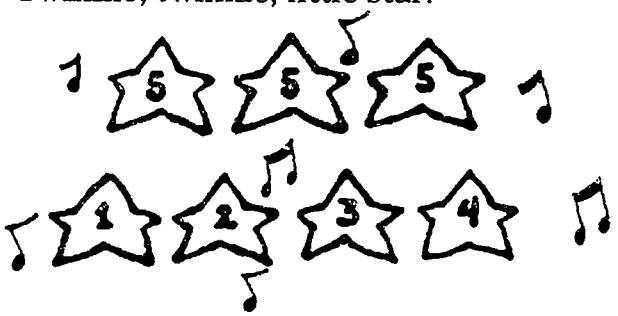




Sing Your Telephone Number

Singing with your child is not only fun, it can also be useful. Children love to sing, and they can't be unhappy and sing at the same time. Singing is a good way to brighten a child's mood.

It's also a great way to learn something by repetition—like your phone number. Try it with your child. Sing "Twinkle, twinkle, little star."



Now put the numbers of your telephone number to the tune.

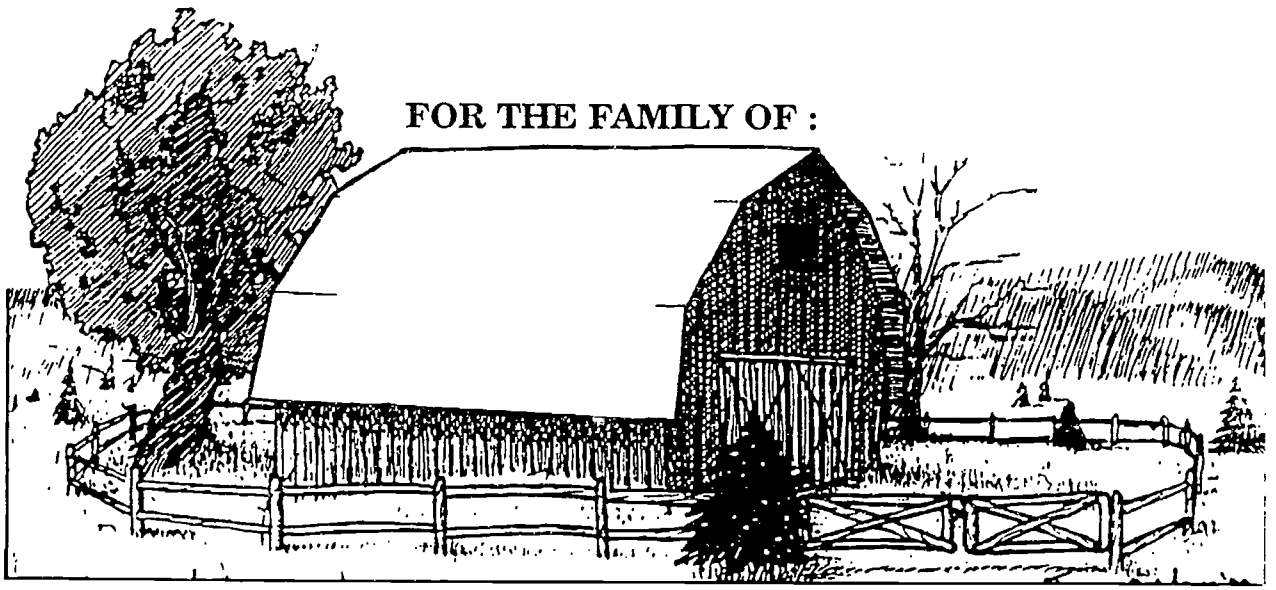
Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star
5 5 5 1 2 3 4

How I won-der what you are
5 5 5 1 2 3 4

Up a-bove the world so high
5 5 5 1 2 3 4

Like a dia-mond in the sky
5 5 5 1 2 3 4

Encourage your child to sing along, and soon he will know the number.



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Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Helping Your Child Pay Attention

Many parents worry that their child doesn't pay attention long enough to finish anything. A child's attention span is related to whether a task is appropriate to her age level. Often we expect too much of young children.

You can expect most four-year-olds to look through a child's book from beginning to end. You would not expect a child that age to pay attention to a book that has no pictures. She might work an easy wooden puzzle. Don't expect her to watch a whole TV show intended for adults. She might put away some toys, but don't expect her to clean her whole room.

You can help your child spend more time with a certain activity. Often, all you need to do is show interest or offer encouragement. Sometimes you just need to be nearby.

If your child seems easily distracted, you can help by using activities that don't take long to complete. When she succeeds with these, do other things that take longer. If she can't sit still to listen to a story, for example, read a nursery rhyme. Later, read short books that have a lot of pictures.

If she has trouble listening to you, it may be because there is too much going on in the room. Move to a different room to have time together. Get away from the television set and other people's activities.

As you try to increase your child's attention span, be sure to do things she can finish. Help her be successful.

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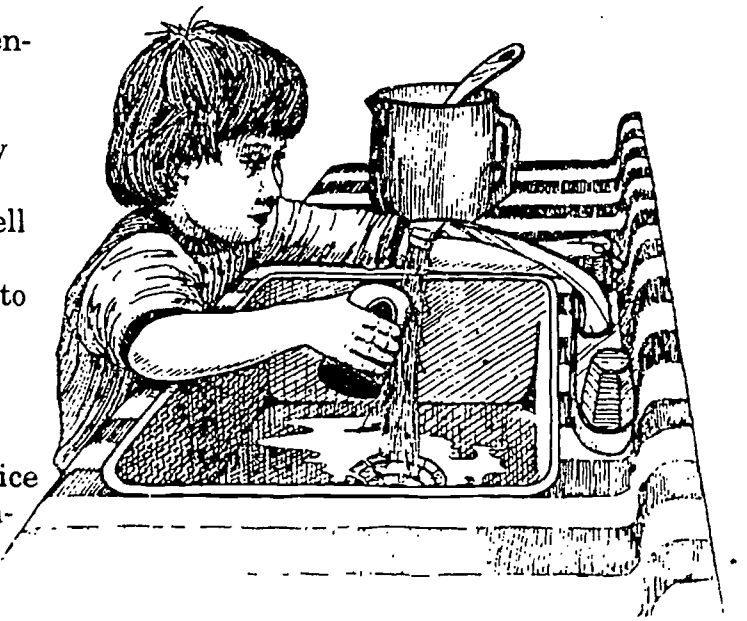
Mixing Juice

Here is a simple task your youngster will enjoy completing. Let him make orange juice from frozen concentrate.

Show him how to open the can by pulling the tab. Give him a plastic pitcher to put the concentrate in. Tell him he will need to fill the can with water 3 times and pour the water into the pitcher. He may need help with the counting. Show him how to stir the juice with a long spoon.

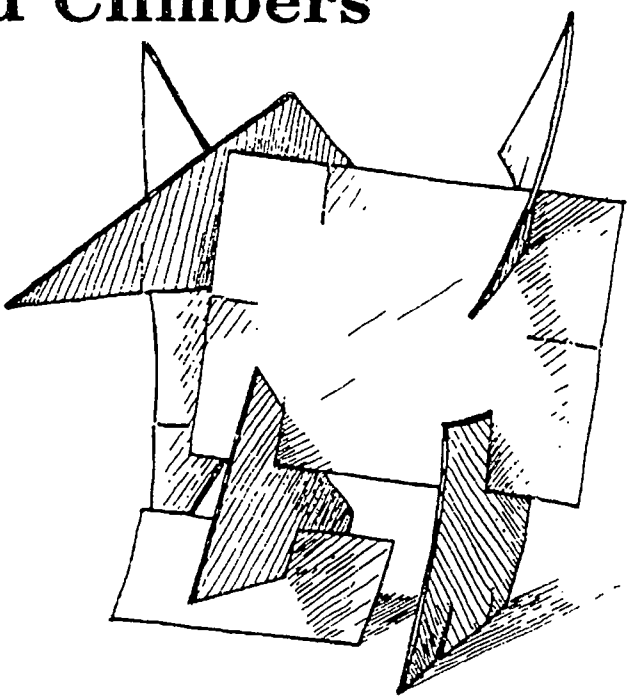
Making the juice gives him practice in pouring and in working with numbers. If time permits, he could also pour juice into glasses for you and other family members.



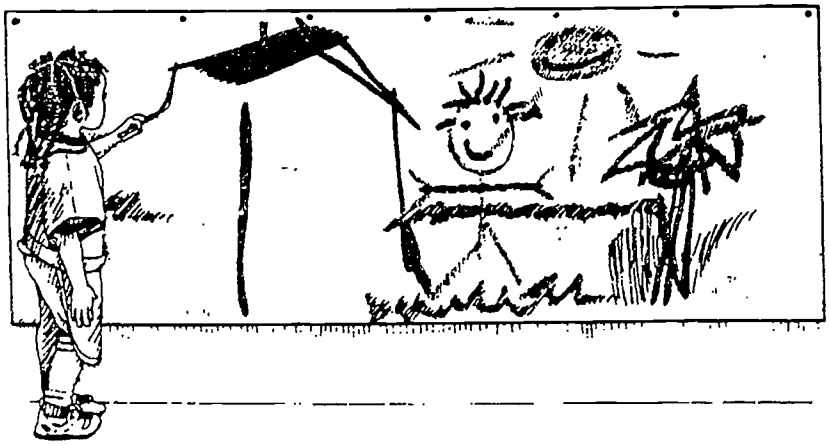
Cardboard Climbers

Cardboard climbers are pieces of cardboard with slits cut in them. Save cereal boxes of different sizes. Cut the backs and fronts from the boxes and cut them into different shapes and sizes. Then cut two slits about 1-1/2 inches long on each side of each piece.

Your child can then fit the pieces together in many different ways to make such things as houses. You will probably enjoy planning and building with her. You will be surprised at how many things you can make together.



Making A Mural



To do this activity with your child, you will need 10 to 12 feet of heavy wrapping paper. You can get it in rolls of brown or white. Tape the paper to a wall with the bottom edge about 12 inches off the floor.

Talk with your child about what she wants to do with this space. She might decide to draw a big picture of her family. She might want to use part of the space for drawing with crayons and part for writing in pencil.

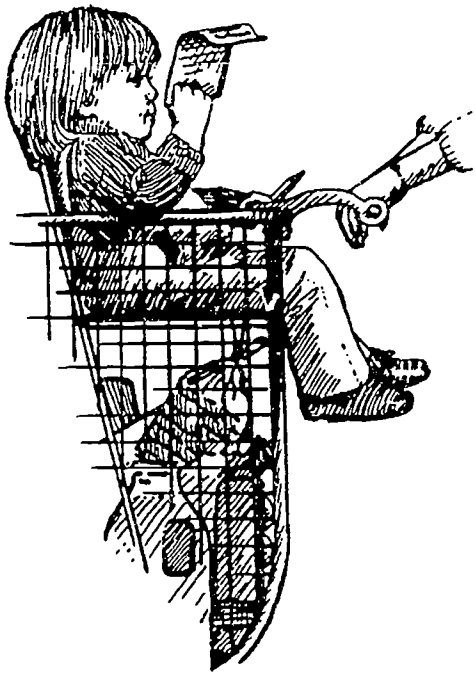
If she wants to use finger paints or magic markers, be sure the paper is heavy enough that the color won't go through on the wall! She can work on this big project for several days.

Grocery Shopping

Sometime when you need to go to the grocery store, let your child plan with you what you are going to buy. Sit at the table with him and talk about what you need. Make a list as he mentions items you might shop for. Show him the list as you make it.

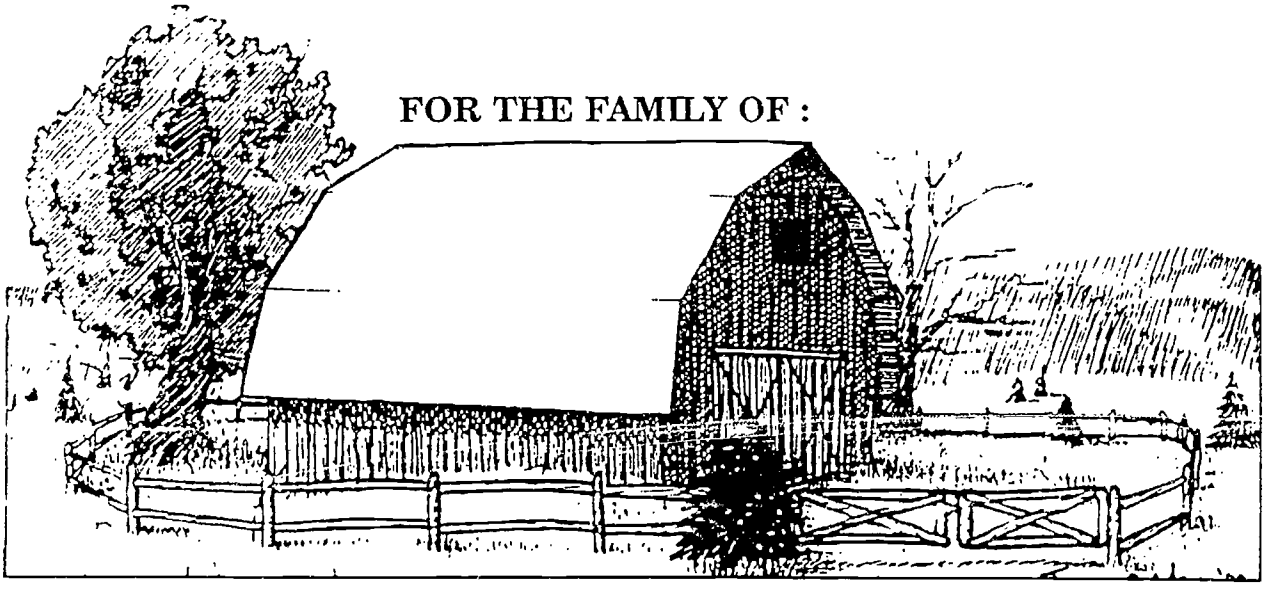
Let him carry the list to the store. He could take along a pencil and mark off things as you point them out on the list. He can also find items on the shelves and put them into the shopping cart.

He will begin to learn about planning with this activity. When you get home, he can help put the groceries away.



Song of Sixpence

Sing a song of sixpence,
Pocket full of rye,
Four and twenty blackbirds,
Baked in a pie.
When the pie was opened,
The birds began to sing.
Now wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before a king.



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Family Connections

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Building Self-Esteem Is Important

Children need to feel good about themselves. A positive self-concept provides confidence and optimism. Some evidence suggests that low self-esteem leads to all sorts of problems, including doing poorly in school.

Children develop self-esteem when they feel loved. Their self-esteem grows when they succeed at things they try. Being able to finish a job is important to them because it pleases you. They like to make you happy.

Here are some ways you can help your child build self-esteem.

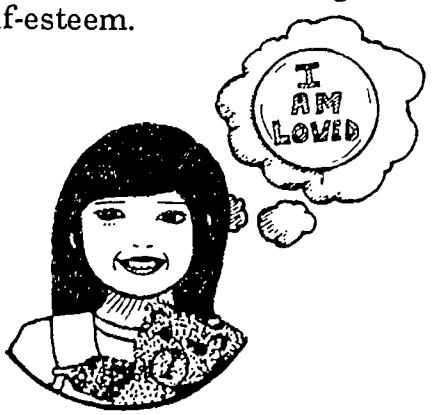
- Look for the positive. If you pay attention only to what your youngster does wrong, misbehaving becomes the way to get attention. Applaud behavior you want to encourage.

- Give them tasks to do that they can complete successfully. When they finish the job, praise them. Praise in a specific way. "Thank you. You did a good job picking up your blocks." Saying "please" and "thank you" to children shows respect for them and adds to their self-esteem.

- Be realistic about what you expect. Four-year-olds are not short adults. They are children, and they need patient guidance. Offer your help, but don't take over. It may be easier to do it yourself, but children will not feel capable if you help too much or too soon.

- Say "I love you" to your child.

Children who respect themselves are likely to become adults who respect others. Confident children are likely to become adults who work with and help others. Self-respect and self-confidence are important ingredients in self-esteem.



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Learning To Concentrate

Explain to your child that you are going to tell a story. He must listen very carefully because you are going to ask 3 questions about the story. Make up a simple story, such as this one:

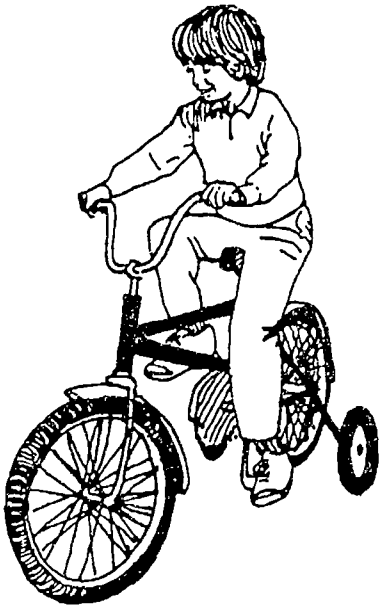
Justin had a birthday party. He was 6 years old. He invited 2 boys and 4 girls. He got some nice presents. His parents gave him a bicycle. That was his favorite present.

Ask these questions:

1. How old was Justin?

2. How many boys did he invite to his party?

3. What was his favorite present?



Make up other short stories. Do the activity as often as your child shows interest. If 3 questions are too difficult, use only 1 or 2 at first.

Stories like this will help children learn to listen. They might not do well at first, especially if they have trouble paying attention to details.

The first time your child hears this story, she may not be able to answer any of the questions correctly. That's ok. When she gets a question wrong, say, "Listen again. See if you can hear the right answer this time." Repeat the story. This time, your child will know to listen more carefully. She will know what to listen for.

Be patient. This is not a test. Do everything you can to help your child succeed. It will build confidence in her own ability.

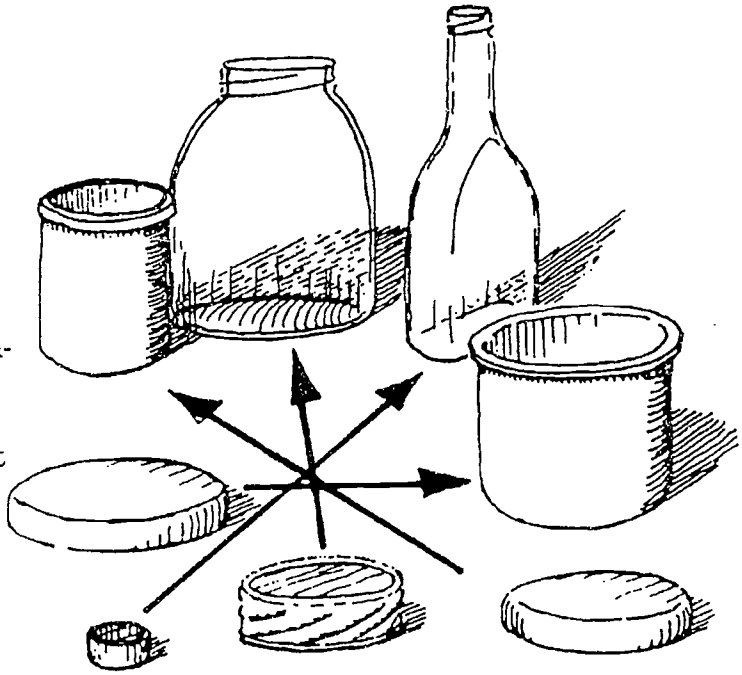
Tops and Lids

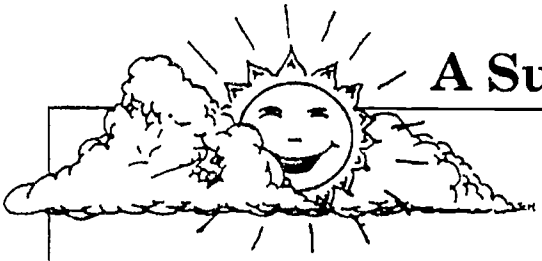
Collect several different kinds of empty containers with lids. Peanut butter jars, juice bottles, soft drink bottles and plastic milk jugs are good.

Put all the tops and lids in a box. Let your child select the right top for each container.

You can also use the small containers with snap-on lids that film comes in. You will probably need to show your child how these lids are different from the ones that screw on.

This activity helps your child develop small muscles. It helps build sorting skills, too.





A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

> ...If the future of the nation is to be secure, we must all come together on behalf of children.
>
> — *Ernest L. Boyer*

—A READ-ALOUD

Another Rebus

There was an old

Who lived in a .

She had so many

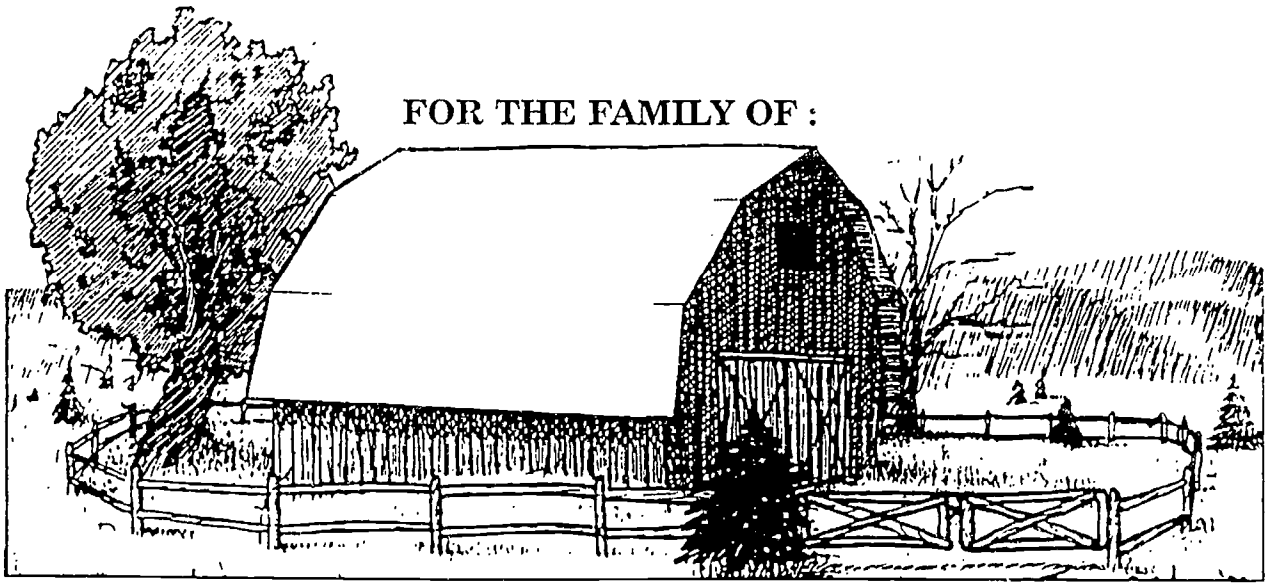
She didn't know what do.

She gave them some broth

Without any .

Then said good night

And sent them .



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Family Connections

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

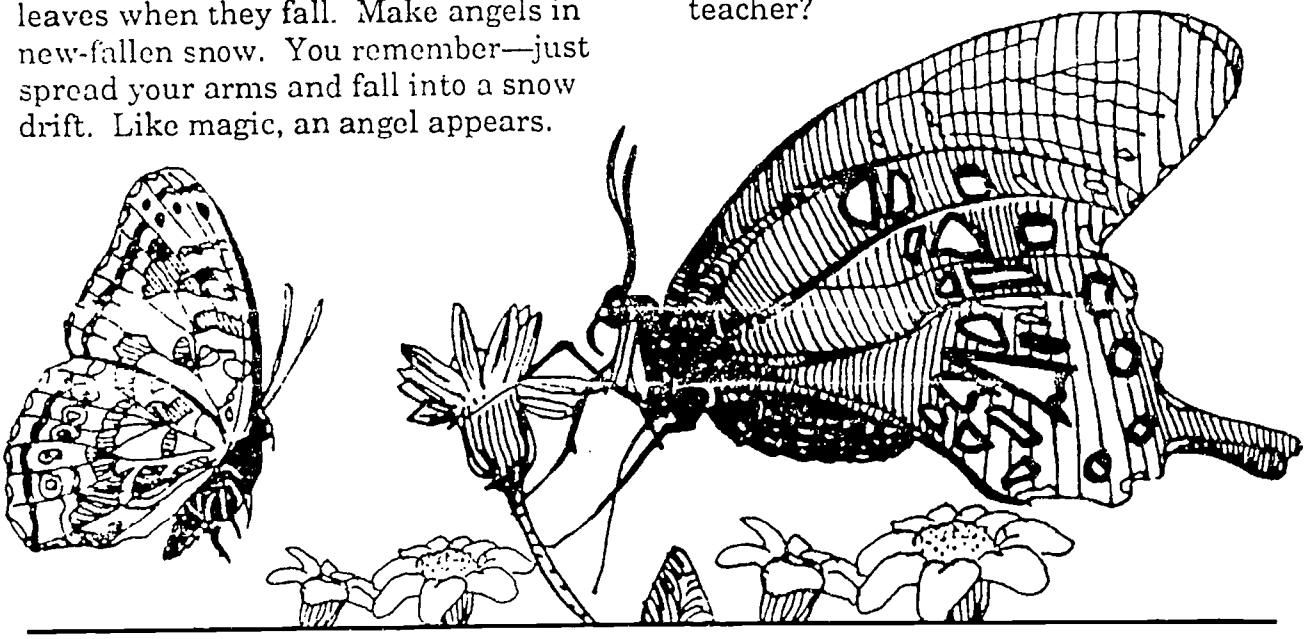
The Wonder of It All

Do you know the walrus from "Alice in Wonderland"? He wondered about shoes and ships and sealing wax and cabbages and kings. He asked why the sea is boiling hot. He wondered whether pigs have wings. Author Lewis Carroll knew that children love nonsense verse, because they like to use their imagination.

Children are eager to explore the mysteries of the world. You can be your child's guide and learn about the wonders that are waiting. Watch the sunset together. Roll in the autumn leaves when they fall. Make angels in new-fallen snow. You remember—just spread your arms and fall into a snow drift. Like magic, an angel appears.

Take walks together. If you look carefully, you may find a feather from a bird long gone. You may see a butterfly on a flower. Every experience is a discovery for your child. The questions will come thick and fast. Encourage them. You don't have to give an answer every time. The two of you can look for answers together.

When you marvel at the beauty of the earth, so will your child. Curiosity will follow, along with a desire to learn more and more. Isn't it great to be your child's first and most important teacher?



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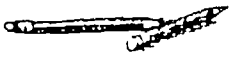
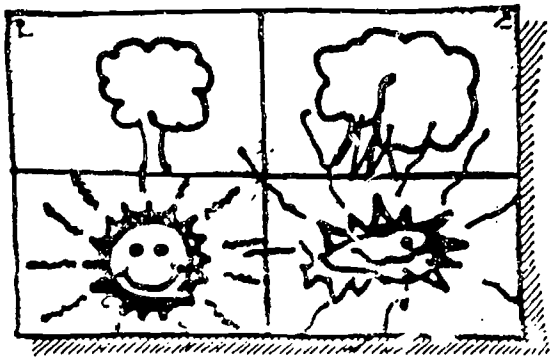
The Copy Game

This easy activity is an enjoyable way for your child to practice following the lead of another person. The only materials you need are plain paper and crayons.

Divide a sheet of paper into four squares. In the first square, make a simple drawing—a tree, the sun. Ask your child to copy the drawing in the square beside your drawing. Don't expect an exact likeness.



Reverse roles. Let your child make a drawing and you copy it. Repeat the process as long as it is fun. This is also a good activity for two children to do together.



Shaped Play

Here's a game that gives your child three experiences at one time: following directions, learning shapes, and developing motor skills. You can do it outdoors or inside.

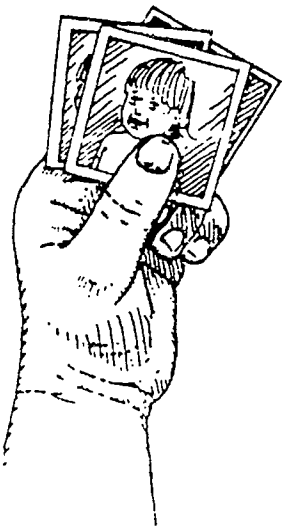
Outdoors, use chalk (on sidewalk or driveway) or a stick (in sand or dirt) to draw three shapes—square, circle, and triangle. Leave some space between the shapes. Give your child these directions:

1. Jump into the square before I count to three.
2. Hop around the circle.
3. Jump over the triangle.
4. Sit between the circle and the square.

You can think of many other directions.

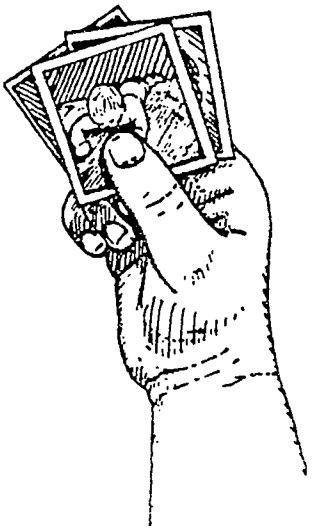
To play the game indoors, use masking tape to make shapes on the floor. If your child is already familiar with these shapes, you can add some new ones.

Some Special Time Together



Children love to see pictures of themselves as babies and toddlers. To create some special time, sit down with your child and look at photographs together. Tell stories about those early years. Mention likes, dislikes, special occasions and funny things that happened.

Your child will enjoy hearing such stories now. Tell them while they are still fresh in your memory. Later, the stories you like most may not appeal to your more grown-up youngster.



Eat-A-Boat

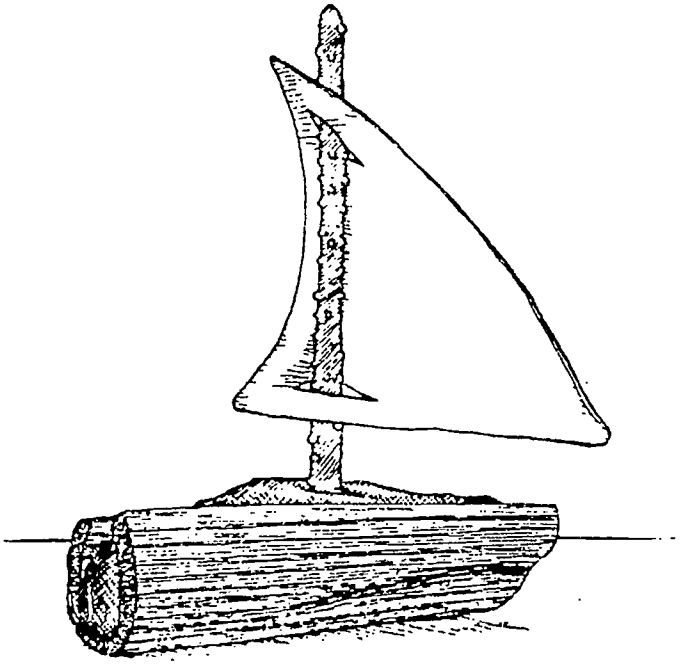
You can make a healthy snack that will be a special treat. Let your child help.

You will need:

celery sticks about 4 inches long
peanut butter
pretzel sticks
paper triangles

To make the boats, fill celery sections with peanut butter. Cut paper triangles for the sails and cut slits in them about ¼ inch apart. Slip a pretzel through the hole. Stick the sail in the peanut butter boat.

You can use other stuffings: peanut butter mixed with raisins, egg salad, or something else your child likes to eat. This snack is nutritious and fun to prepare.



—A READ-ALOUD

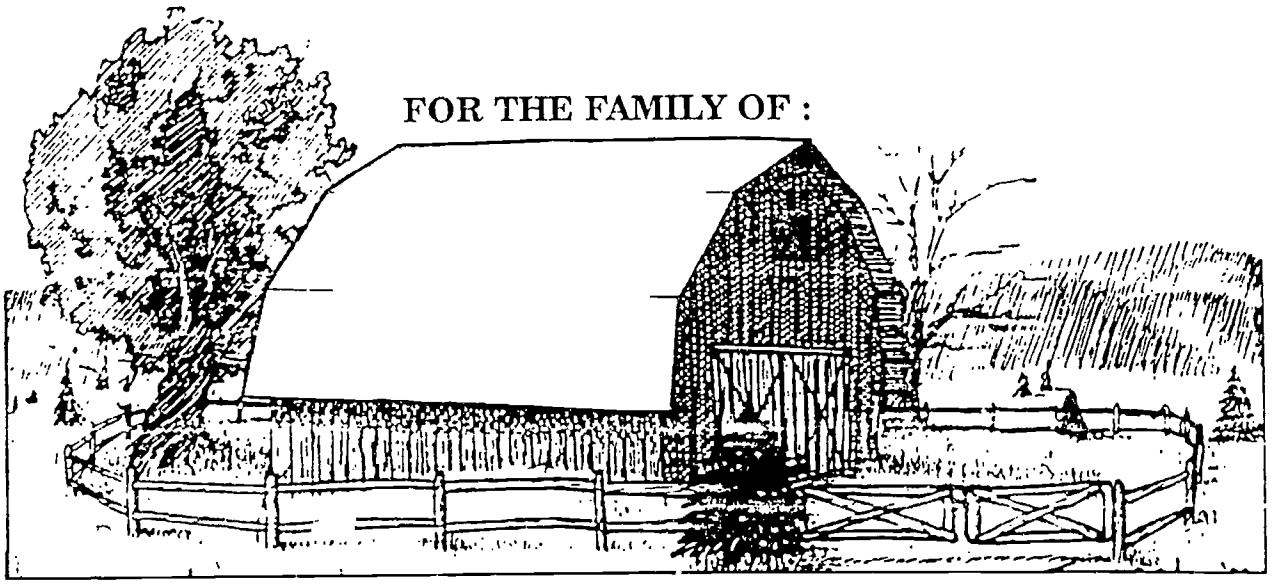
Engleberry Wilson

Engleberry Wilson
had a clock for a nose.
He could breathe
through his fingers,
and talk with his toes.

His friends thought him funny,
And they loved to tease,
So they set him afloat
In a bowl of melted cheese.

He swam to the edge
Fell out onto his knees
Got up and found his friends,
And turned them into trees.

—*Carla Thomas McClure*



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Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

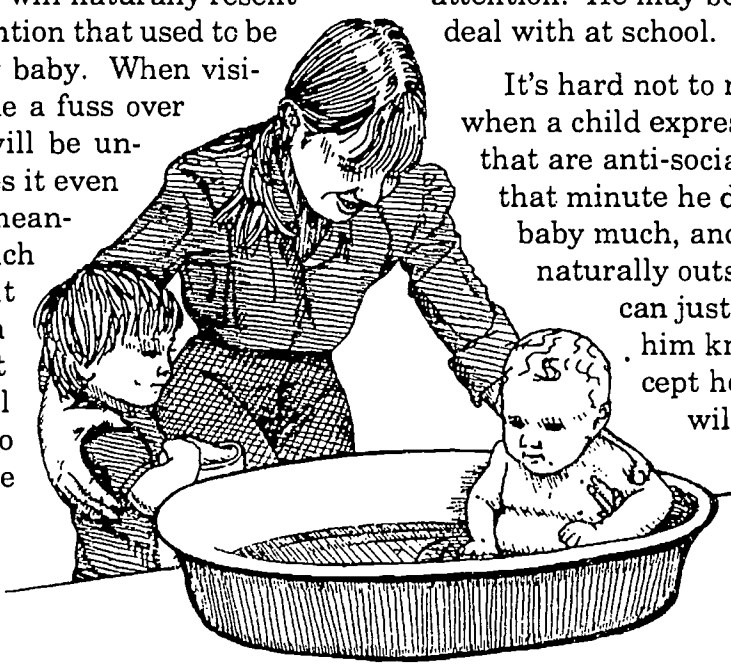
Learning to Show Negative Feelings

Sometimes it's hard for parents to accept emotions in our children that we have always thought of as being negative. We may have learned that it's not nice to be angry, for instance. So when our child shows anger, we don't accept his feelings. We don't acknowledge the emotion. The child then learns not to express those feelings directly; he acts them out in some other way.

An event that can be very difficult for a young child is to have a new baby come into the family. He will naturally resent it when all the attention that used to be his goes to the new baby. When visitors come and make a fuss over this intruder, he will be unhappy. What makes it even harder is for well-meaning adults to say such things as "Isn't it wonderful to have a new little sister?" It probably doesn't feel a bit wonderful to him, and now he feels guilty, too.

Don't wait for him to start acting out. Acknowledge his feelings. "I know you're upset because I spend so much time with the new baby. She really asks for a lot of attention, doesn't she?" Include him in the conversation when visitors come. "Tim is so helpful with the baby. He gets me things that I need when I give her a bath."

If you deny his feelings—"Of course you don't hate her. You love her. She's your sister."—he will stop expressing them openly. He may misbehave to get attention. He may become difficult to deal with at school.



It's hard not to react negatively when a child expresses feelings that are anti-social. But right that minute he doesn't like the baby much, and children are naturally outspoken. If you can just remember to let him know that you accept how he feels, he will have an easier time with what can be a rough spot in a young child's life.

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Peanut Butter Special

Small children and peanut butter seem to be a natural combination. Most children love it; even picky eaters like peanut butter. But it is high in fat. You might try this fat-lowering trick to create a new taste treat.

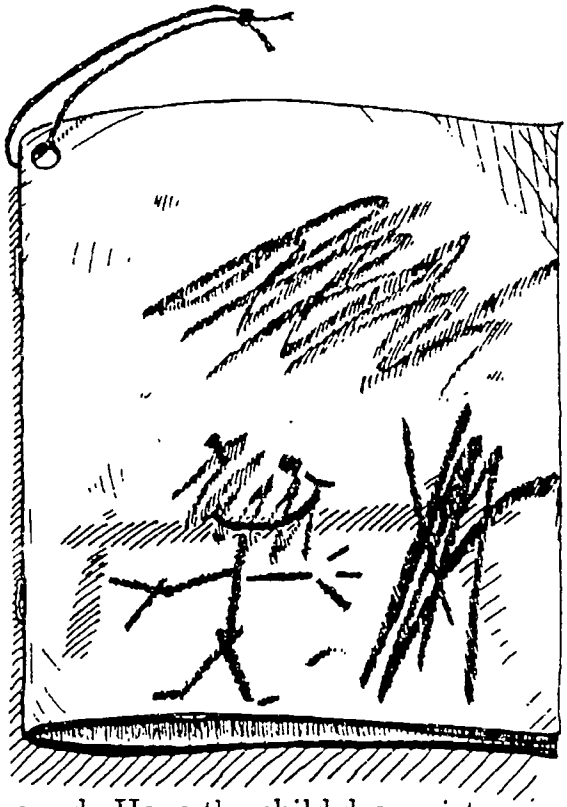
Mix in mashed banana, pureed pears or peaches, apple sauce, or other fruit with peanut butter. It will be even more nutritious, as well as lower in fat. Bonus: It's easier to spread. Your child will be able to make this favorite sandwich without tearing the bread.

My Own Book

Young children love little books of their own. You can make a blank book easily. Cut a sheet of typing paper or notebook paper in half crosswise. Lay one half on top of the other and fold. You now have an 8-page book. Staple or stitch the folded side so the pages won't fall out.

You can put on a cover made of construction paper if you like. You can also add pages to make a longer book.

Have your child tell you a story and you write it in the book. Leave room for illustrations. The child can then draw pictures to go with the story, or cut pictures from old magazines or newspapers.



You can also do the book the other way around. Have the child draw pictures or cut them out for the book. Then she can tell you a story to go with the pictures.

Ant House

It may be hard to believe, but it's a fact. More than 900,000—yes, nine hundred thousand—insects are known to science. And more are being found all the time.

They are everywhere, and we treat most of them as pests. But they can be fascinating for children to watch. And they help arouse curiosity in youngsters that will be useful later when they study science.

One project you and your child might enjoy together is an ant house. You will need:

- a clear glass or plastic jar (a short, fat one is best)
- soil and a piece of old wood or twig
- food (crumbs, sweetened water)
- a piece of black paper that will wrap around the jar
- ants

Let your child do as much of the ant house as possible. Put the soil in the jar. Add the wood, food, and ants. Put the lid on the jar. Cover the jar with the black paper.

When you want to watch the ants work, take off the black paper.

You will probably be amazed at how long your child will watch the ants at work.

> How far that little candle throws its beams!
> So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
>
> —*Shakespeare*

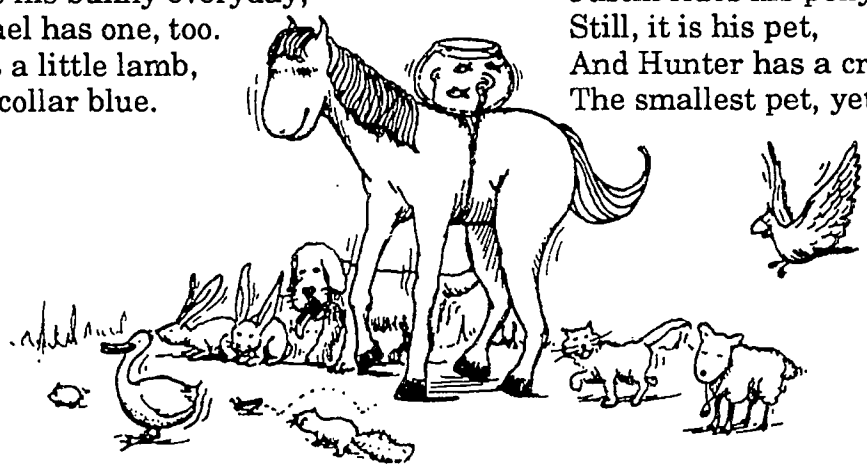
Parade of Pets

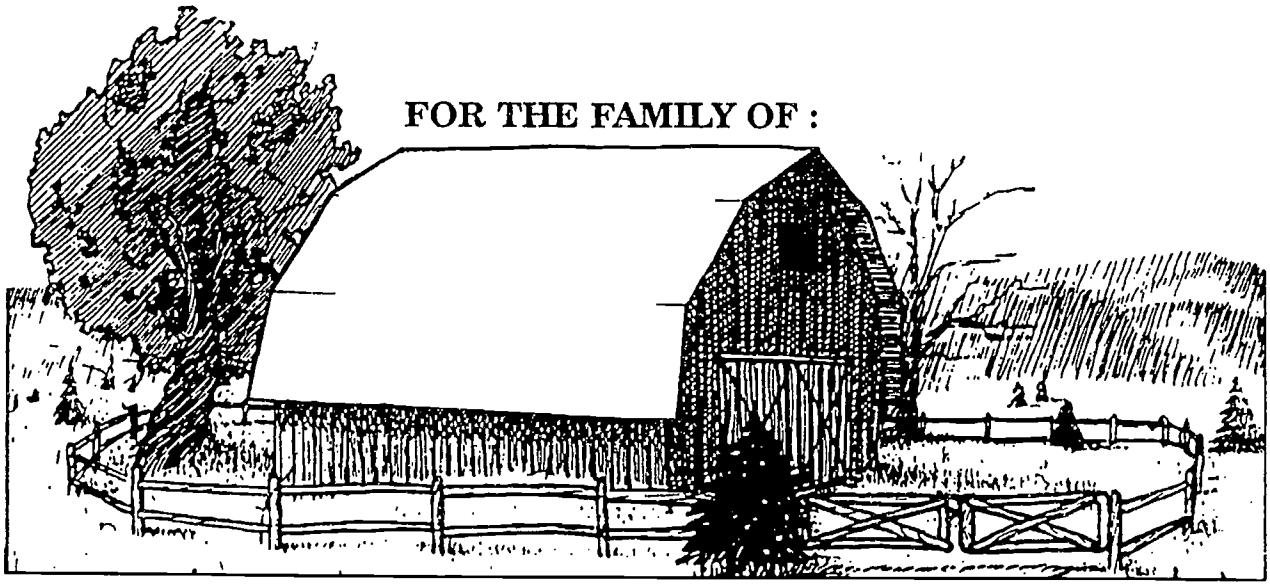
Mollie has a dog named Dad,
Tim, a cat called Percy,
Mara has three goldfish,
Jon, a gerbil, Mercy.

Chris feeds his bunny everyday,
Now Michael has one, too.
Bianca has a little lamb,
It wears a collar blue.

Kendra's parrot talks to her,
Jamie loves his duck,
Brett thinks his squirrel, Burl,
Brings his family luck.

Justin rides his pony,
Still, it is his pet,
And Hunter has a cricket,
The smallest pet, yet.





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Family Connections

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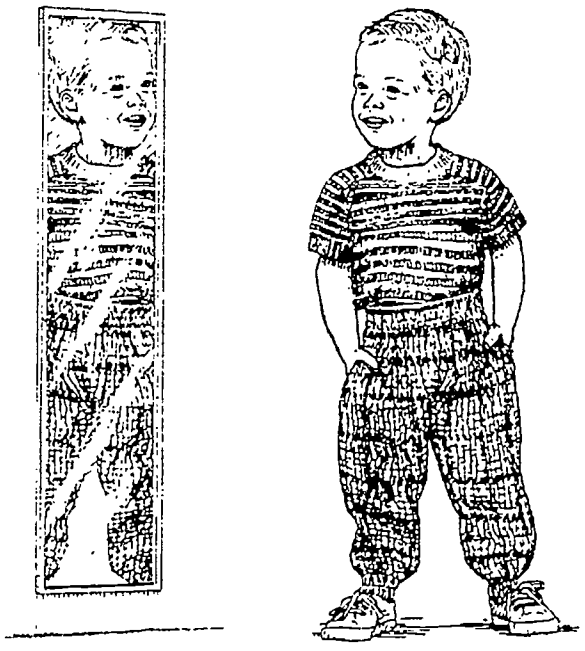
Chances to Choose

Making choices is important to children for several reasons. Choosing is a way to develop confidence in the ability to do something. Young children need to have success, and it must be their own. When they choose to taste a new food, for example, you will praise them for trying something. That's a way for your child to build self-confidence.

Choosing can also help children feel powerful. Let your child decide what to wear today. Let him wear what he chooses, even if you think a green striped shirt and red plaid pants look awful together. If you aren't prepared to support his choice, offer a limited one. "Do you want to wear the blue shirt today or the green one?"

Don't give your young child choices that are too hard to make. Choosing whether to go out for ice cream or have pizza delivered may take so long you will wish you hadn't asked. But it is important to give him chances to consider likes and dislikes. "Would you rather have tomato soup or chicken noodle soup for lunch?" is a reasonable choice when he is first learning to choose. "What do you want for lunch?" can come later.

Choosing how to spend money can cause real grief. If you tell your child he can spend his birthday money from Aunt Sue any way he likes, don't back out when he chooses something you think is not a good idea. Better for him to learn for himself that a toy won't hold up than to lose his trust in your word.



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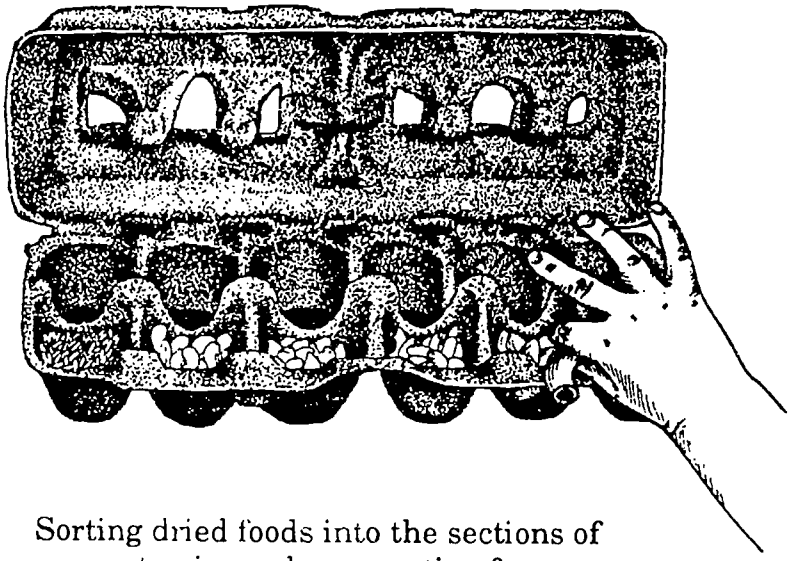
Sorting Things



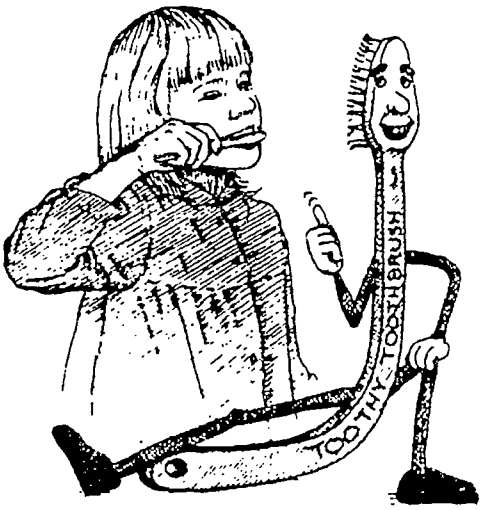
Sorting dried foods into the sections of an egg carton is good preparation for your youngster's later math skills. It also develops her finger dexterity.

You will need a container for the dried foods. A plastic oleo tub or a whipped topping container will do. Put in a spoonful or two of as many of these as you have on hand, uncooked: popcorn, pinto or other beans, macaroni or other pasta shells, and rice.

Ask her to sort the different foods into sections of the egg carton. Give her just enough so she can complete the task without becoming bored or discouraged.

Toothy Toothbrush

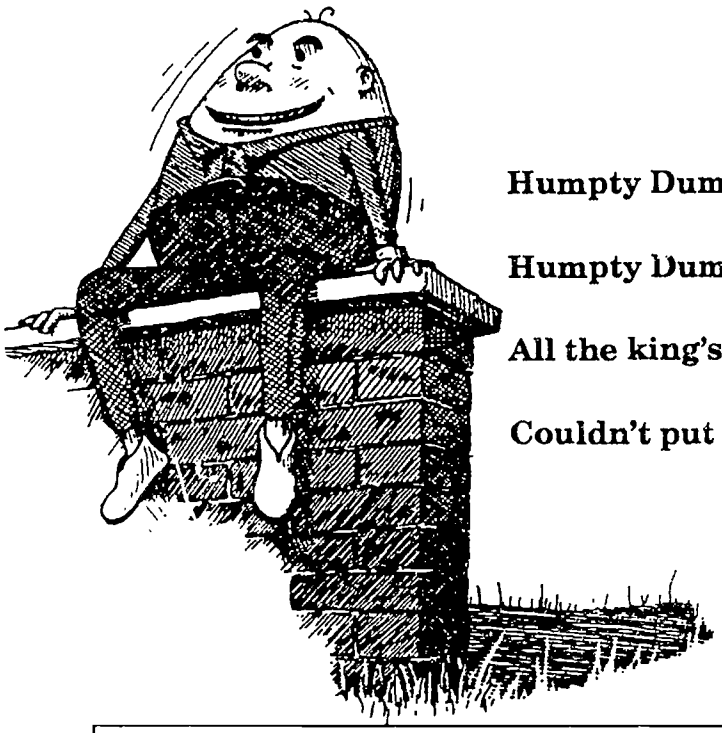
One of the things children should not be allowed to choose is whether to brush their teeth. To have healthy, strong teeth and gums, children should brush at least twice a day. After breakfast and just before going to bed are good times.



It is important to take care of the baby teeth, even if children don't keep them long. A visit to the dentist during early childhood is a good way for your child to learn how to brush correctly.

Make tooth brushing a game. "Let's go visit Toothy Toothbrush. He can tickle your mouth and make you smile." Let your child choose what color toothbrush to get. Brush your teeth together. Give hugs for a good job of brushing.

Poor Humpty Dumpty



Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

All the king's horses and all the king's men

Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

Your child may already know how to recite this nursery rhyme. Read it or say it together. Then ask these questions:

- Where was Humpty sitting?
- How do you think he got there?
- What do you think made him fall off the wall?
- Who tried to put him together again?
- Why couldn't they do it?
- Could you put Humpty together?

These questions will help your child learn to express her ideas. It isn't important that she give correct answers. (In fact, there may not be any correct answers.) You will have a good time talking together.

—A READ-ALOUD

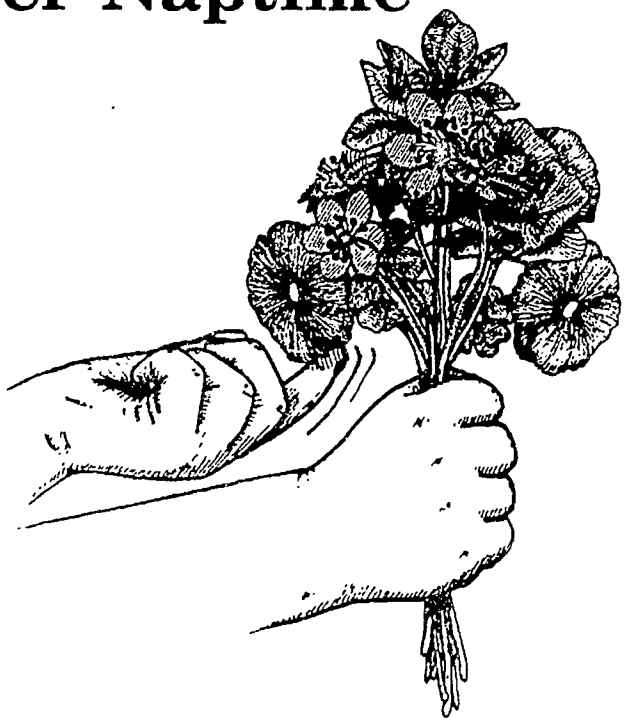
Wildflower Naptime

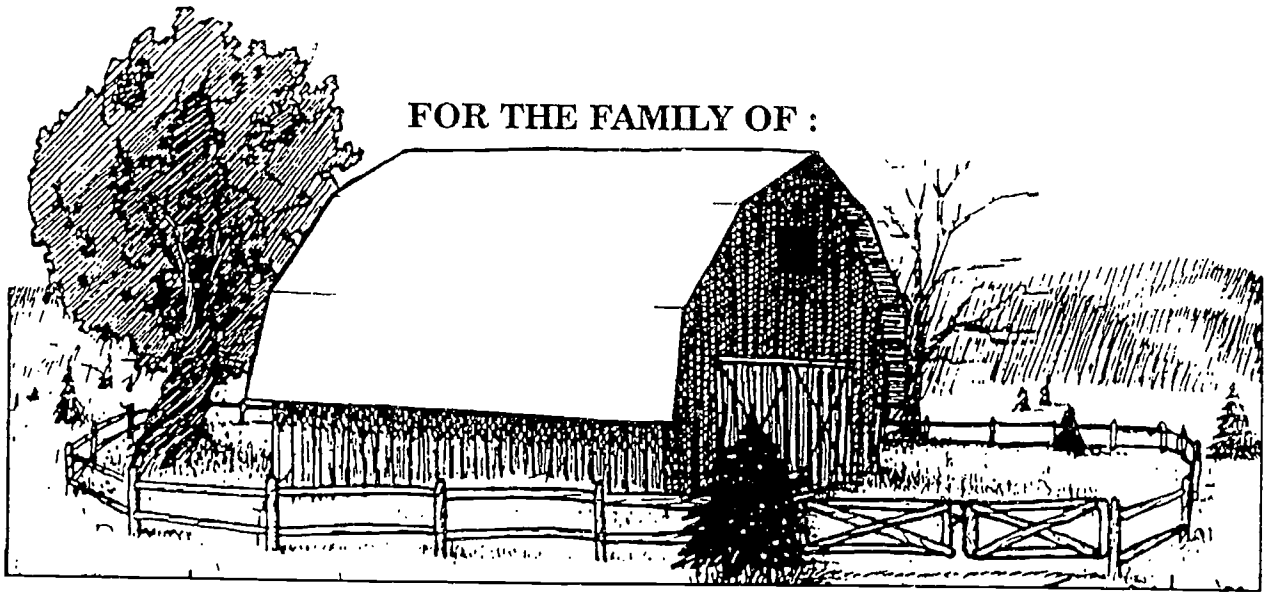
The flowers nod
like sleepy grandmas
dozing in the grass.

In wind, they bend
on long green stems,
and brush me as I pass.

I like to pick them
and pretend
I'm tickling grandma's chin.

—*Carla Thomas McClure*





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Family Connections I

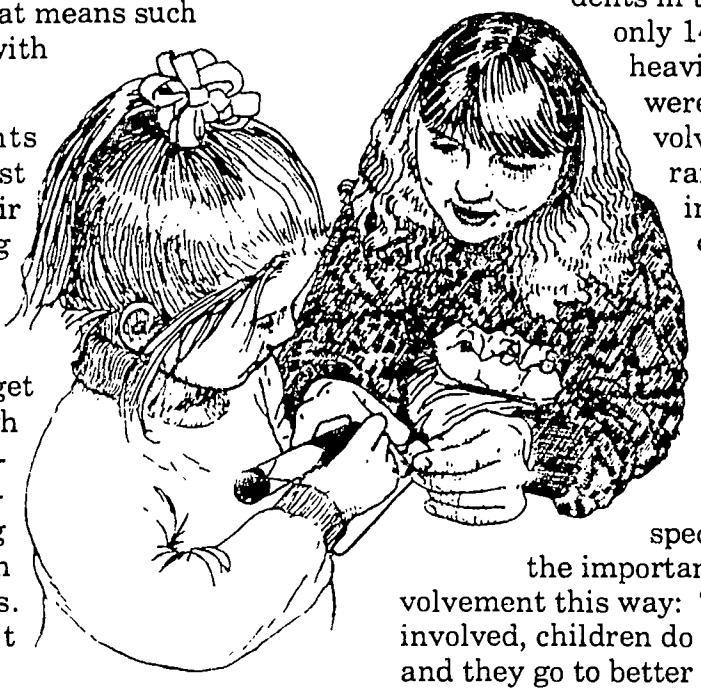
Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Are Parents Involved Enough in School?

High school juniors and seniors said in a recent survey that parents are not very involved in preparing their children for school. The president of the company that conducted the survey called it "an indictment of parents by their own children." He said the students had given their parents a "D."

Students said the most important way for parents to be involved with their children's schooling was home-based activities. In the case of high-school students, that means such things as helping with homework.

Many parents show their interest and concern for their children's learning when the children are young, but do not continue to be involved as they get into middle and high school. Some parents are not comfortable helping their children with advanced courses. Some just don't know what to do.



You know. You are an involved parent. You are reading **Family Connections**, and you will do some or all of the activities with your child. You read aloud to your son. You let your daughter know that you are interested in what she thinks. You pay attention to your child's questions. You encourage your child's curiosity and imagination. You listen.

Right now, your child would give you an "A" for parent involvement. Students in the survey said only 14% of parents were heavily involved; 44% were somewhat involved; 30% were rarely or never involved. If you continue to be as involved as you are now, those numbers will change when your child is in high school.

One education specialist described the importance of family involvement this way: "When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools."

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Popcorn Pictures

You can have a good time with your child making pictures with popcorn. Any kind of plain popped corn will do. If you pop your own, don't put butter or other seasoning on it.

Draw an outline of a simple picture. Put paste around the outline. Your youngster will be proud to do this for himself. Then have him put pieces of popcorn on the paste. Outlines of lambs, bunnies, ducks, and snowpeople are easy to do.

You can do this activity with cotton balls, too.

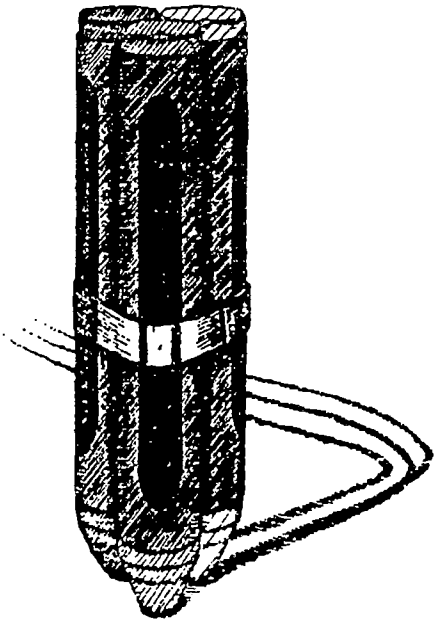
> **The ultimate economic and spiritual unit of any civilization is still the family . . .**
>
> --*Clare Boothe Luce*

Crayon Machine

Your child might enjoy drawing with a crayon machine, because the pictures are unusual.

Have your child choose three crayons any color she wants. Tell her to hold them together so the points touch the table. Tape the crayons together around the middle. As the child moves the machine around on a sheet of paper, interesting pictures appear.

Once she gets the hang of it, she may want to make a machine of four or more crayons.



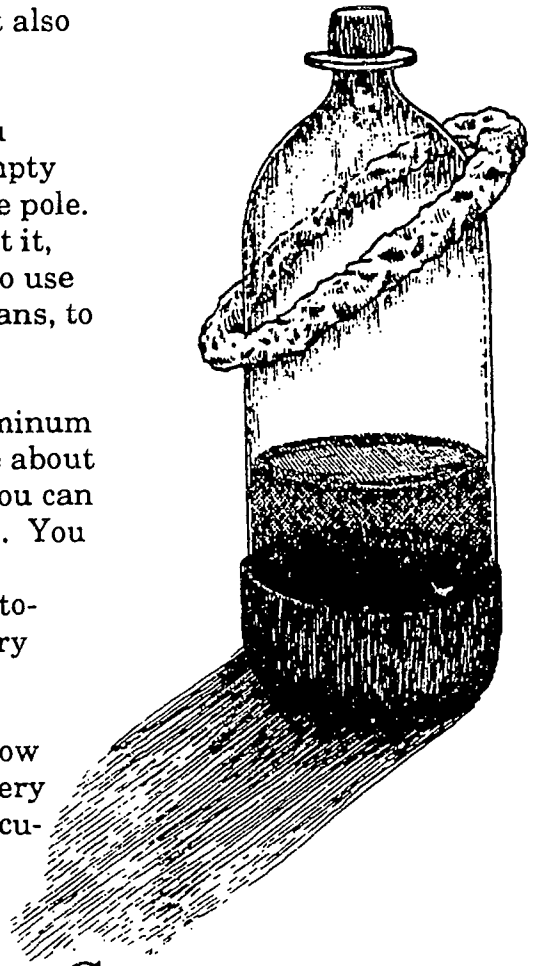
Ring Toss

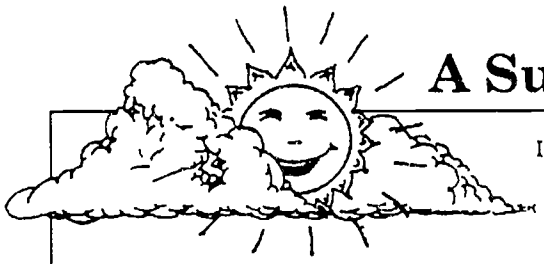
A game of ring toss is fun for children. It also helps them develop muscle coordination.

You can make a game with materials you probably already have in your house. An empty two-liter, or smaller, plastic bottle can be the pole. Put just enough water in the bottle to weight it, and screw the cap on tightly. (You could also use sand or other dry material, such as dried beans, to weight the bottle.)

Let your child help make rings from aluminum foil twisted into circles. The rings should be about twice as big around as the pole. Of course you can use foil that you have saved from other uses. You don't have to have one long piece of foil; two shorter pieces can be overlapped and rolled together to form a ring. If you have embroidery hoops, they make wonderful rings.

Give your child three or four rings to throw onto the pole. Let younger children stand very close to the target. As they become more accurate, they can move farther away.





A Sunshine Gram

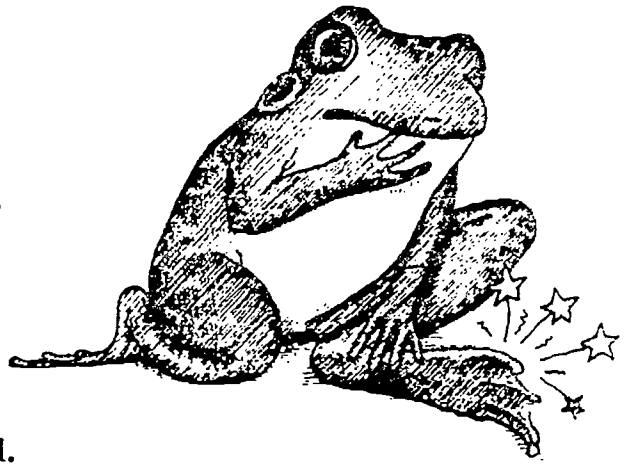
If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

—A READ-ALOUD

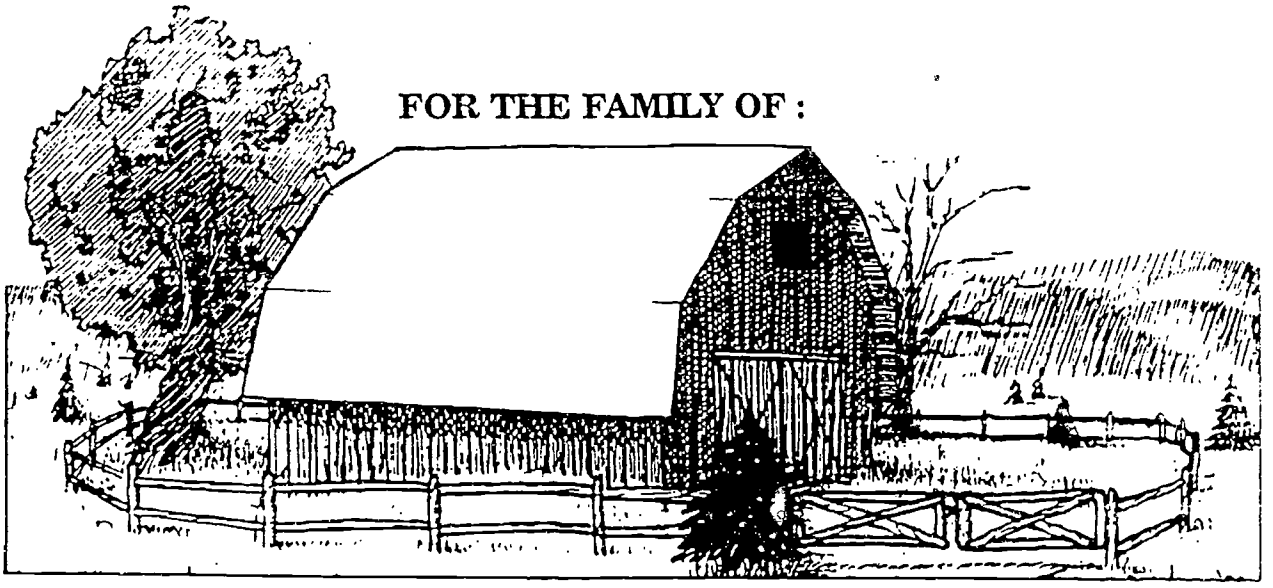
This Little Froggie

Read this finger play with your child and show him how to do the motions. Then ask him to make a face at each line to express that frog's feelings.

You can ask an encouraging question: "What do you think your face might look like if you fell and got hurt?"



This little froggie hurt his toe.
(Hold up thumb.)
This little froggie cried, "Oh, Oh!"
(Hold up first finger.)
This little froggie said, "That's bad."
(Hold up middle finger.)
This little froggie said, "How sad."
(Hold up ring finger.)
This little froggie, helpful and good,
(Hold up little finger.)
Ran for the nurse as fast as he could.



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Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

How Children Learn Language

Children learn an amazing number of words before they go to school. They learn words from family members, from friends, and from watching television. And they learn from having all kinds of experiences.

Expose your child to as many new situations as you can. Take her to stores with you. Go to the library with her. Take her to visit the local fire department or police station. Talk about what you are seeing. Encourage her to ask questions.

Listen to her words. If you observe adults with young children, you may be surprised at how little they actually listen. Check yourself to be sure you really hear what your child is saying.

All learning depends on past experiences that children bring to new situations. Everyday happenings add to their understanding of the world. Their knowledge grows through new experiences. They add new words to their word banks by talking with you about those experiences. They come to understand words by doing things that give meaning to the words.

You can enjoy building language skills. This issue of **Family Connections** has activities that let you and your child have fun with words.

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Practice Rhyming

Ask your child to listen while you say two lines from a nursery rhyme she knows. Explain which words rhyme. Say them and let her hear how they sound alike. For example:

Jack and **Jill**
Went up the **hill**

Little Bo **Peep**
Has lost her **sheep**

Now read these short rhymes and ask her to tell you which words rhyme.

Let's have some **fun**
We'll play in the **sun**.

The great big **cop**
Made the traffic **stop**.

The little red **hen**
Got out of her **pen**.

I saw a **toad**
Hop onto the **road**.

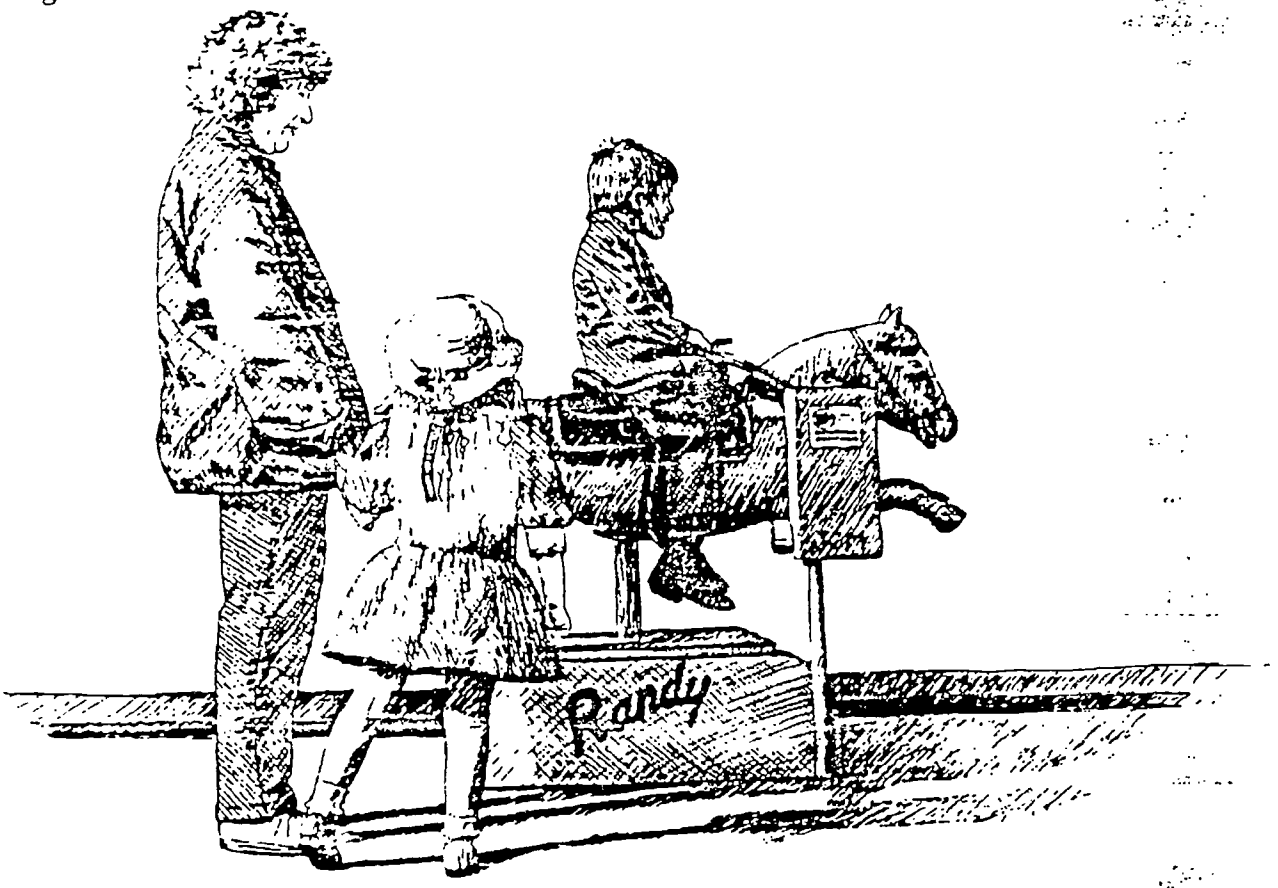
Encourage your child to make up her own rhymes. It doesn't matter if the words are not "real." The rhyming sound is what's important.

Tell Me A Story

Look at this picture with your child. Ask him to tell you about the picture. You might need to ask some questions to get him started. Examples of questions you might ask are these:

1. What is happening in the picture?
2. What do you think the little girl is thinking about?
3. What do you think will happen next?
4. What do you think happened before?

This activity is good practice for your child in using words to tell you his thoughts.



> Childhood should be a journey — not a race
>
> — *Unknown*

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Run and Say

This is an activity your child will think of as a game. It also helps build facility with words.

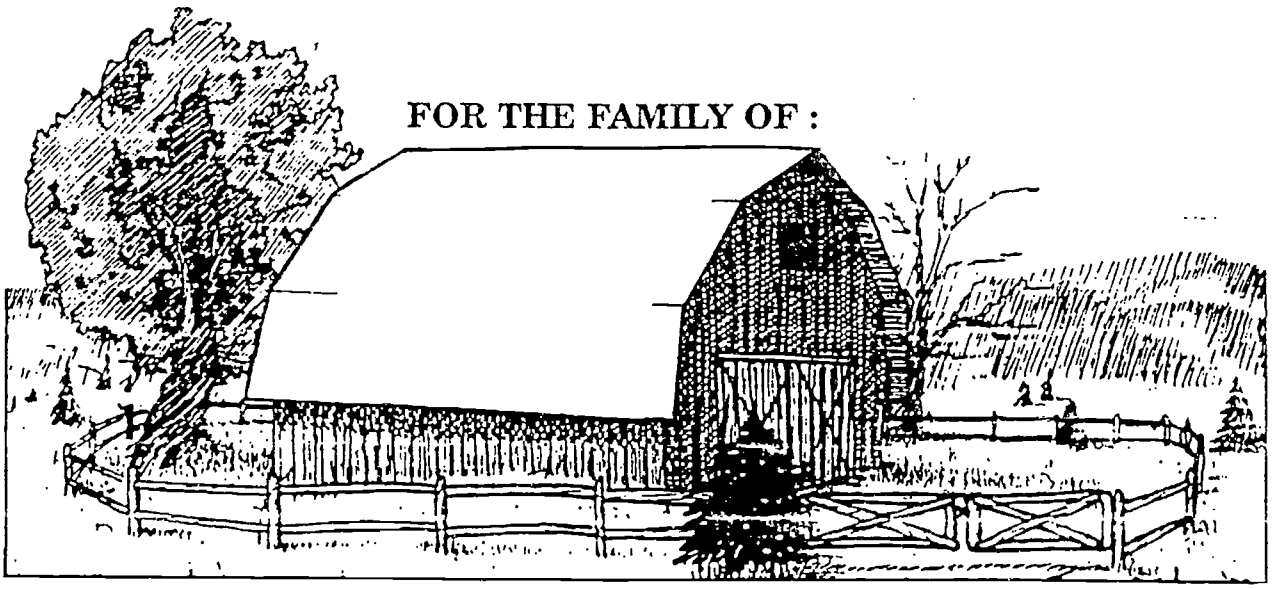
Make up a silly sentence. "Red mice eat green cheese" is one example. Say the sentence to your child. Ask him to repeat it after you. Then have him run out of the room, come back, and say the sentence to you again.

It's fun to make up silly sentences. Children like to make them up, too. Here are some more examples.

"Nutty never knows a thing."

"That hippo hugs every giraffe he sees."

"Look! It's raining pink pickles."



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Family Connections

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Don't Forget: Children Learn by Playing

Young children do not separate play, learning, and work. When young children are playing, they are learning. And they are enjoying every minute of it.

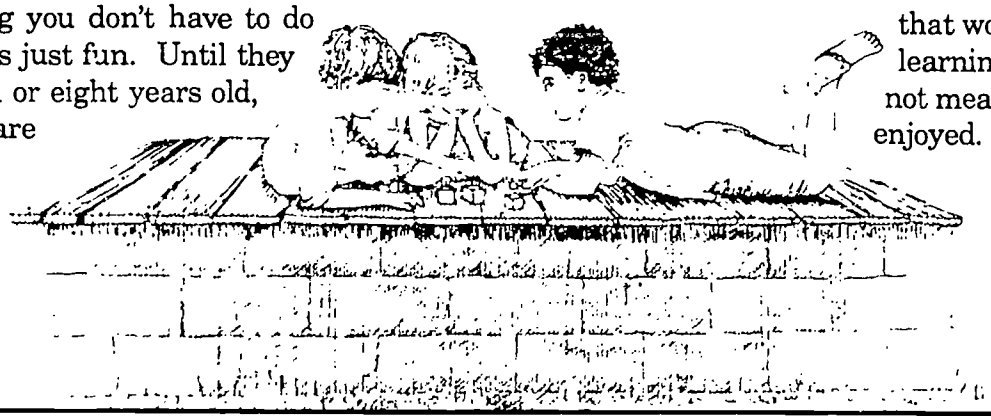
Young children's play is spontaneous. They are so eager to learn, it seems that their curiosity can't be satisfied. All too soon that curiosity and spontaneity seem to disappear. Children don't seem so eager and enthusiastic about school. We begin to hear questions about how to motivate them to learn.

How does this very sad thing happen? We make such comments as: "Quit playing around and get to work." "You can't play until you finish your work." With these comments, we teach children that learning isn't enjoyable.

From a child's point of view, play is something you don't have to do well. It is just fun. Until they are seven or eight years old, children are more interested in what they are doing than how it turns out. They play at something until they become skilled. Then they make the activity more challenging. That way, they get to experience success and build their feelings of competence.

Adults are likely to see play as a means to an end. We insist that children do a thing the correct way before they have time to explore and enjoy the means. For example, we give children coloring books and teach them to stay in the lines. Better to give them paper and crayons and let them discover the possibilities.

When you do activities in **Family Connections**, encourage imagination and creativity. Don't insist on pursuing something that isn't fun for your child. Children naturally love learning. They will continue to love it if we don't teach them that work and learning are not meant to be enjoyed.



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See What I Mean?

Children like to think of ways to deliver messages without saying anything. Ask your child to think of ways to do these without talking:

- Come here, please.
- Go away.
- Take my hand.
- I don't know.
- I'm sleepy.
- My tummy hurts.
- I love you.

If some of the messages are too difficult, do them yourself and let the child guess what you are saying.

What A Reaction!

For this simple experiment that has dramatic results, you will need baking soda and vinegar. Fill a glass with hot water. Fill another glass with cold water. Ask your child: "What do you think will happen when we add baking soda to the glasses?" Speculate together. Then let her add a teaspoon of soda to each glass.

The volcanic reaction will interest her. She may notice that the action is faster in the hot water. When the bubbling stops, add a teaspoon of vinegar to each glass. Have her smell the contents of each glass. Encourage her to talk about the experience. This activity may arouse her interest in science.

Water Play

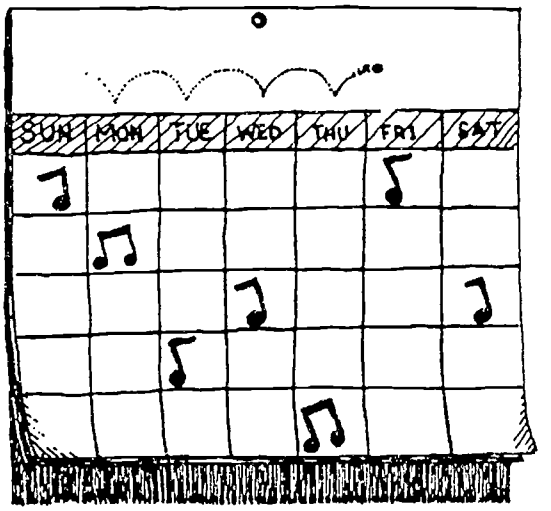
Fill the bath tub about half full. Give your child several objects of different weight and composition. A sponge, a woodblock, soap, rocks, a styrofoam cup or plate are possibilities.

Ask the child to predict which objects will sink. Which will float? Ask: Why do you think so? Listen, without judging, to the answer. Encourage guesses about what might happen. A child's natural interest in science grows with a simple activity like this one. You can do this one at bath time. When you're finished experimenting, just add warm water and apply soap to child!

Sing the Week Days

Remember the song "Yankee Doodle"?

Yankee Doodle went to London,
Riding on a pony.
Stuck a feather in his cap,
And called it Macaroni.



It's a tune that most children love. If your youngster doesn't know it yet, you will enjoy learning it together. Then you can use the tune to learn the days of the week:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
Friday, Saturday, Sunday.
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

See how well the days fit that tune? Familiar tunes are a great way to learn information like days of the week and telephone numbers.

Pink Pickles

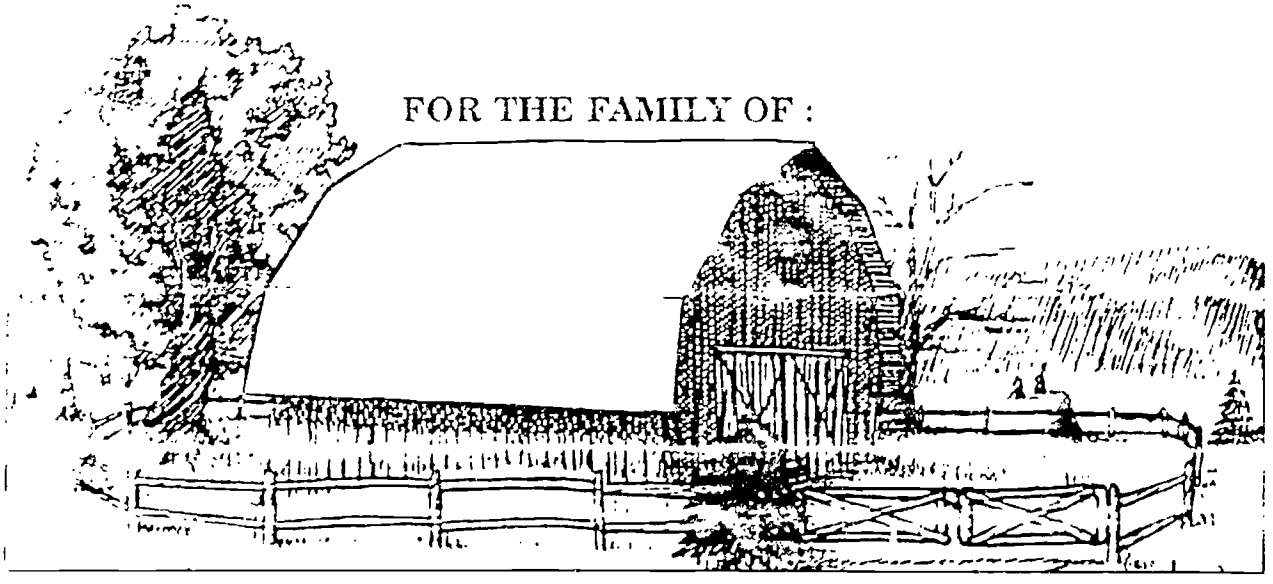
When it's raining pink pickles,
What should you do?

You could go outside,
And catch rain in your shoe.

Then you would have a shoe
Full of pink pickles.

But wait, you say.
Pickles are green.

And what if they aren't?
What if pickles are really. . .blue?
Then what should you do?



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Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

You Can Help Your Child Resist Bias

Research tells us that between ages two and five, children become aware of gender, race, and physical disabilities. They recognize the differences. They also adopt values about which differences are positive and which are not. They get those beliefs and values from us.

The negative values attached to gender, race, and handicaps make many adults uncomfortable. We hide these negative feelings from ourselves. We may avoid them by the way we answer our children's questions. W teach them it is not polite to notice c. ask about differences.

But when we avoid these issues, we deny children information they need. We don't mean to, but we actually teach them that some differences are not acceptable. "Why is that girl in a wheelchair?" If you say "Shh! It's not nice to ask" the child may think that being in a wheelchair is shameful. Better to answer, "She is using a wheelchair because her legs are not strong enough for her to walk. The chair helps her get around."

"Why is his skin so dark?" If you say, "It doesn't matter. We are all the same underneath" you deny the child's question. You may create suspicion in her mind about skin color. Tell her we have something called melanin in our skin that determines how dark we are. Let her know that many of us have ancestors from Africa, where people have more melanin to protect their skin from the hotter sun there.

"Different" doesn't mean "good" or "bad." It just means "different." Teach your child to appreciate and value differences.

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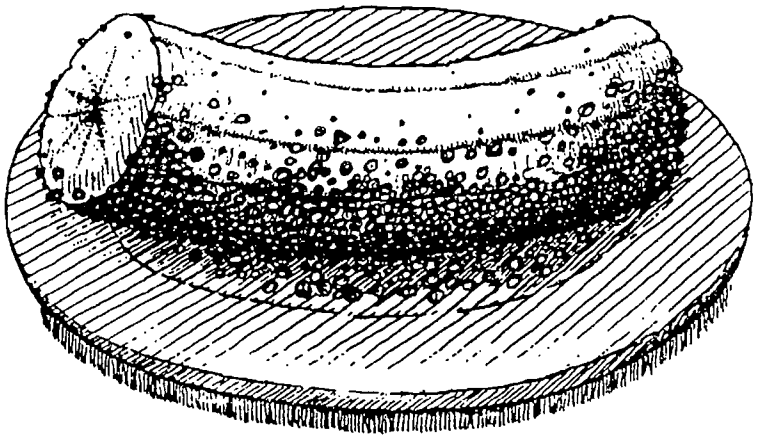
Crunchy Bananas

Bananas are an ideal snack. They are easy for young children to peel. They are packed with vitamins and minerals that children need every day. They are almost always available in the market.

Bananas are also delicious rolled in Grape-Nuts cereal, or in Cheerios. It's good for your child's small-muscle development to press the Cheerios onto the banana one at a time. The banana should be quite ripe.

You and your child will enjoy a different way of serving bananas. You can prepare this tasty snack together. Crush some unsalted, dry-roasted peanuts. It's fun for a child to put some nuts in a plastic bag and roll them with your rolling pin. Then roll banana halves in the crushed peanuts to make a crunchy banana. If the banana is very large, break it into thirds.



Get Ready To Cook

When you and your child are preparing to cook together, talk with him about how important it is to have clean hands when working with food. Do the steps to good handwashing together.

1. Wet your hands with warm running water.
2. Rub soap on your hands and rub them together to make a lather.
3. Be sure to wash fronts and backs of hands, between fingers, and under fingernails. Wash for about 15 seconds.
4. Rinse well under warm running water.
5. Dry thoroughly.

More Choices from the Library

Here are more books that children's librarians suggest for reading aloud to preschool children. If these are not available at your local library, ask the librarian to recommond others. As you know, there are many excellent books for you and your youngster to read together.

Pigs Say Oink by M. Alexander

My Five Senses by Aliki

Messy by B. Bottner

The Little House by V. Burton

Olive and the Magic Hat by E. Christelow

Cars and How They Go by J. Cole

What Am I? by M. Hillert

Socks for Supper by J. Kent

Blueberries for Sal by R. McCloskey

The Quiet Farmer by M. McGee

By Day and By Night by K. Pandell

Mr. and Mrs. Pig's Evening Out by M. Rayner

Sam Who Never Forgets by E. Rice

I Can Read with My Eyes Shut! by Dr. Seuss

Oh, the Places You'll Go! by Dr. Seuss

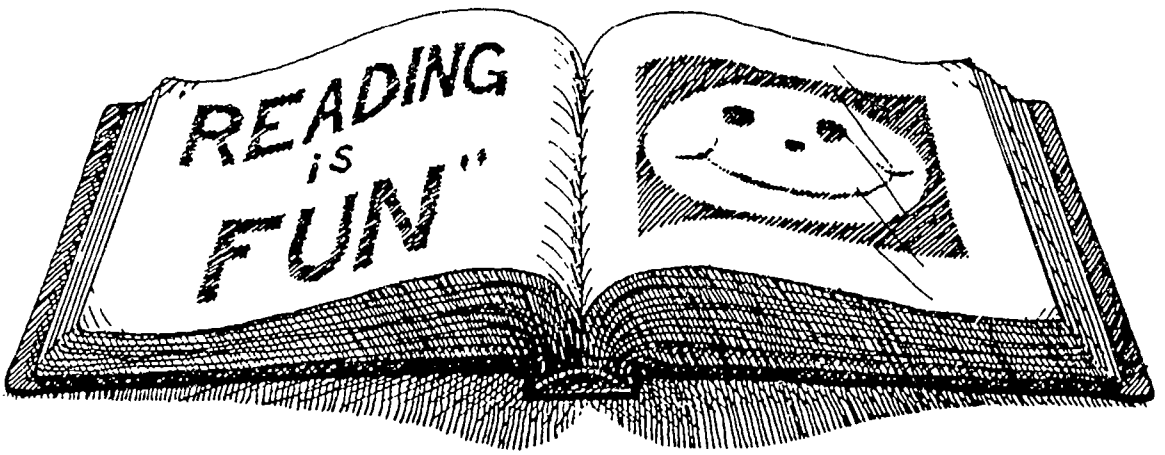
Thump and Plunk by J. Udry

The Silver Pony by L. Ward

Funny, Funny Lyle by B. Waber

Hazel's Amazing Mother by R. Wells

The Napping House by A. Wood



—A READ-ALOUD

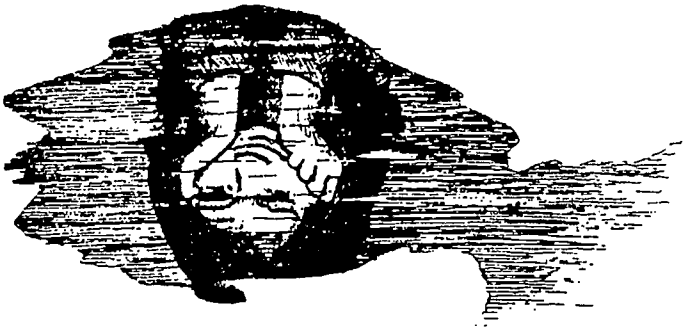
Reflections of Me

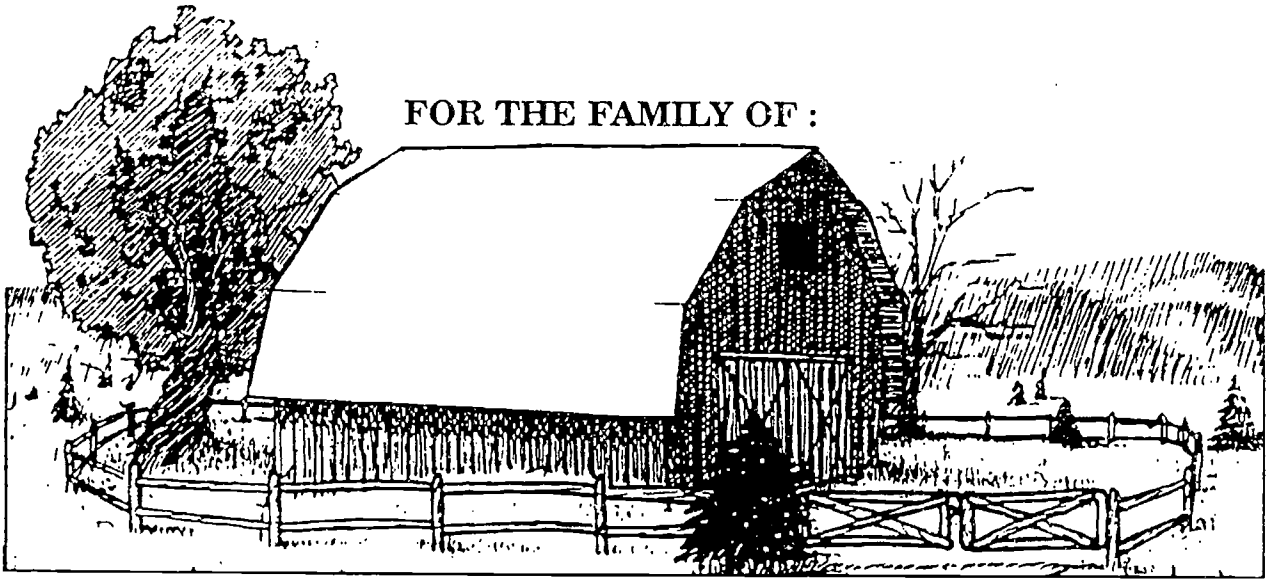
When I look in a mirror
What do I see?
I see me.

Mommy says it's an image of me.
Daddy says it's a reflection.

It looks just like a picture of me,
But it won't keep.

I can see a reflection of me
In other places, too.
Once I saw me in the cookie sheet.





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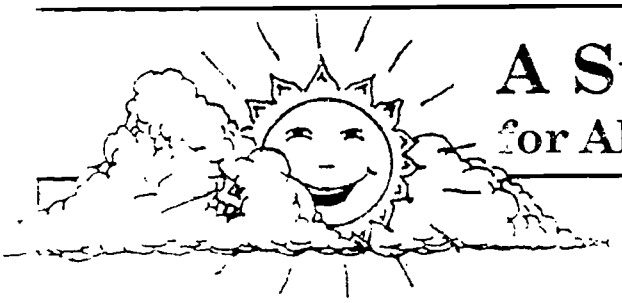
Family Connections I

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children



A Sunshine Gram
for All Parents-as-Teachers

You are your child's first and most important teacher. You have the future of our country in your hands. You are a successful and effective teacher for your child, because:

- You know that the amount of time you have to make an impact on your child is very short. You take the time to spend with your child, knowing that other things can wait.

- You read aloud to your child. You understand that when you read with your child you convey a critically important message: you think reading is important. Your child sees you reading. You know that reading with your child is a time for closeness and happiness.

- You listen to your child. You tune in to the child's interests, uniqueness, and needs. You realize that the beginning of learning to listen is having someone listen to you. You listen along the way, because you know that some of the best communication happens as you work together, play together, and walk together.

- You use discipline as a means of helping your child learn self-discipline. You aren't afraid to be in charge, because you know that children need to have adults in charge. You have reasonable rules that are appropriate to your child's age. You know that discipline is not the same as punishment. You are firm, but not harsh.

- You show your child love and approval because you know that when children live with love and approval, they learn to like themselves.

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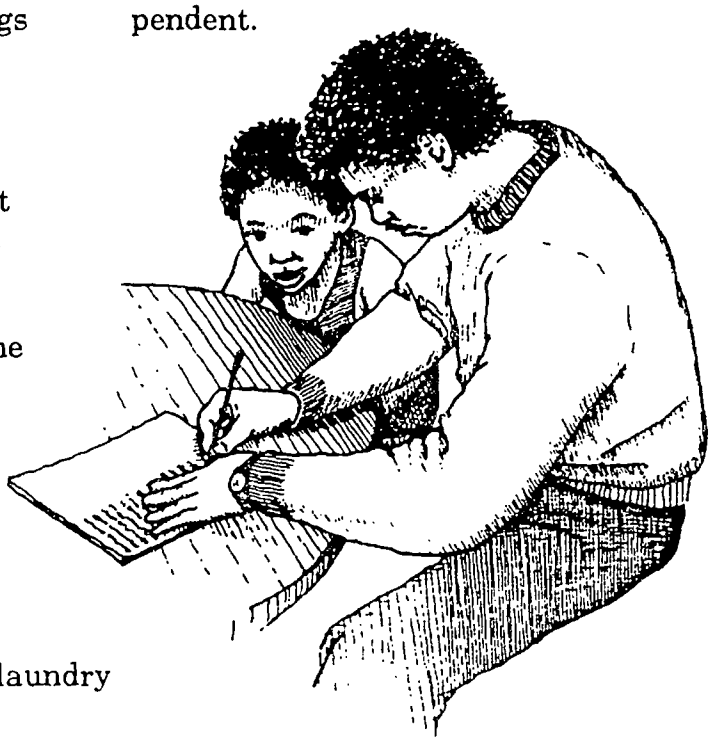
Getting the Job Done

There's always a lot of work to be done around the house. Take a house walk with your child. Talk about some of the jobs that must be done regularly. You can point out such things as washing dishes and making beds. The child will probably think of things he sees his parents do. He may also remember things you ask him to do, such as picking up toys.

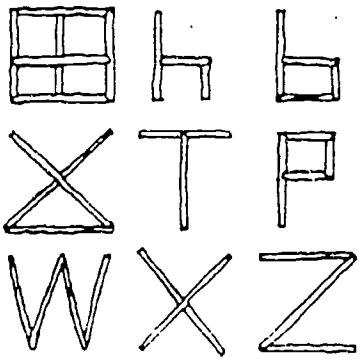
Sit down together and make a list of jobs. Talk with him about how all family members are responsible for their home. Help him choose some jobs on your list that he can do. Some examples:

- set the table
- feed the pet
- dust the furniture
- put away his clothes from the laundry

As skills grow, so will his feelings of competence. He will not do things as well or as quickly as you could do them yourself. Be patient. Recognize his efforts. He will come to value work well done. He will become more independent.



Toothpick Patterns



With toothpicks, you can create patterns for your youngster to copy. (Popsicle sticks are even better for making patterns. Start saving them to do this activity at a later time.) Cut or break some of the toothpicks in half for short parts of the patterns.

The examples here are just a beginning. Your child will enjoy creating her own original designs.

Happy Unbirthday

Of course you make a big fuss over your child's birthday. Birthdays probably come all too soon for you. For young children, it seems a long time from one birthday to the next.

Here's a way to let children know how special they are to you. Pretend you are in Wonderland. Have a very merry unbirthday. It's easy. Let your child decide what to have for dinner. Make a special dessert. It could be an unbirthday cake, with whatever number of candles the child wants.

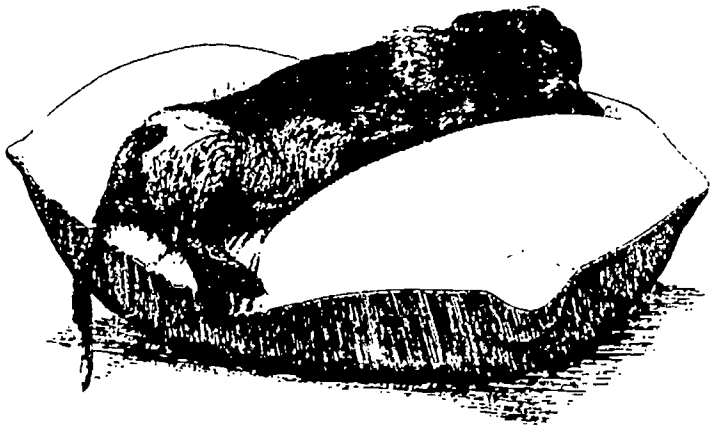
Spend extra time together. Read favorite stories and poems. Take a special walk. Sing "Happy Unbirthday to You." The theme for the day is: "I'm so glad you're my child."

Puppy's Lost Bone

You can see that there are blank spaces in the short-short story below. As you read the story to your youngster, pause when you come to the blanks. When you finish reading the story aloud, tell the child you are going to read it again. This time, you want him to find a word to fill each blank.

Puppy had a favorite toy bone. He liked to hide the bone in places all through the house. One day he hid the bone and forgot where he had put it. Puppy looked everywhere. He looked under the _____. He looked in the _____. He looked over the _____. He even looked behind the _____.

Finally he stopped to rest. He lay down on his favorite pillow. And then he remembered where he had hidden the bone. He stuck his head under the pillow, and pulled out his favorite toy—his bone.



—A READ-ALOUD

Dreaming Past Midnight

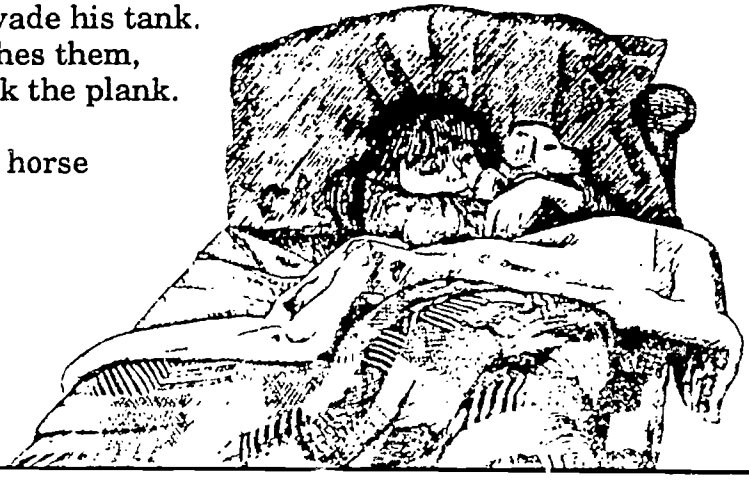
At night, my doll rides a pony
up marshmallow mountains,
shoots at trolls with golden arrows,
and saves a wagon train.

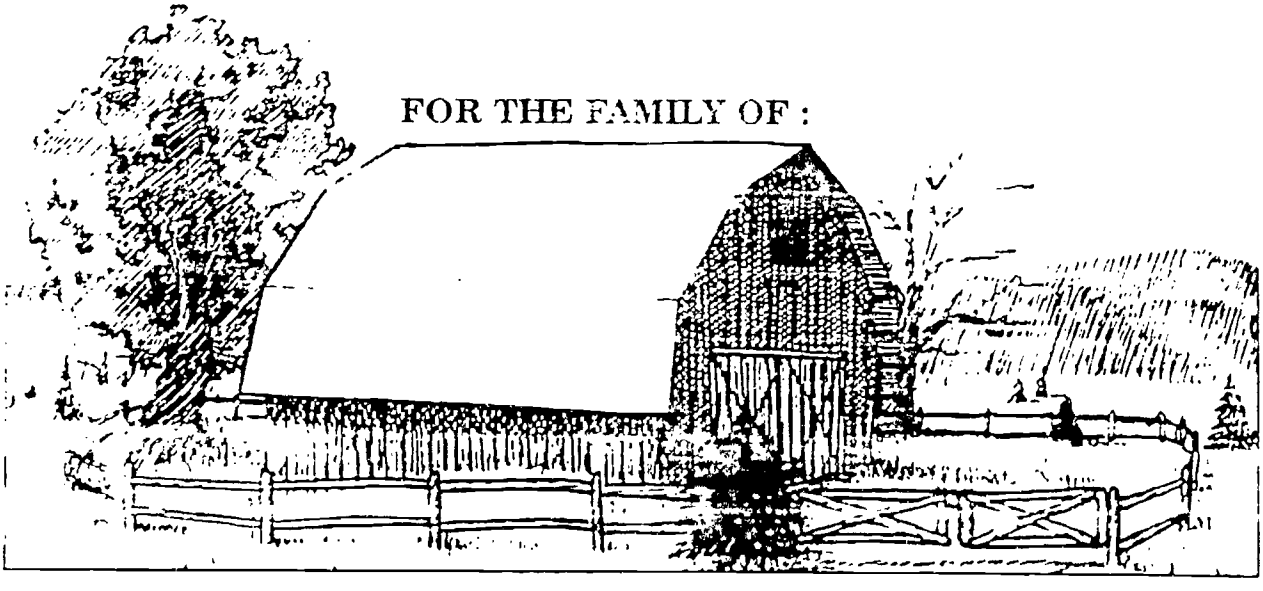
At night, my goldfish growls
when tiny pirates invade his tank.
The quiet turtle catches them,
and makes them walk the plank.

At night, my rocking horse
flies at the moon,
chasing witches
aloft on brooms.

At night, I snuggle beneath the quilt
with Tuffy, my little pup.
Together, we dream past midnight
of most amazing stuff.

— *Carla Thomas McClure*





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Family Connections 2

Parents Are Teachers, Too

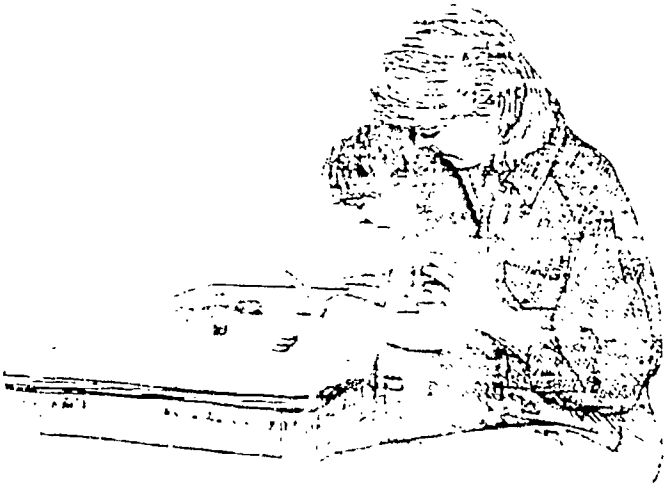
You have probably heard this before: you are your child's first and most important teacher. It's an awesome responsibility, and one that makes you feel proud. But, unless you are a teacher by profession, being told that you are your child's most important teacher might also make you feel uneasy. After all, people go to school for many years to learn to be teachers. How can you be expected to know how to do it?

You probably have in your kitchen something that you can use to help your child learn math, science, art, music, and language. Do you have some potatoes? If you do, you're ready to teach.

You will need something besides the potatoes, of course. You don't have to buy it, or take classes to learn it. You already have it. TIME. You may feel you don't have nearly enough time. You are busy, especially if you are a single parent, or if you have another job outside your home. But being part of your child's learning doesn't take a great deal of time. Much of it can be combined with things you are already doing.

Take those potatoes, for instance. You are going to cook them for dinner anyway. Including your youngster in your kitchen activities adds just a little time, and a whole lot of fun. One mother said, "I never thought of macaroni as a learning tool." She found out that her son learned all the time when he worked with her in the kitchen, and had a wonderful time, too. So did she.

So will you and your child. Potatoes are just one example of all the things in your house that you can use to help your child learn. In future issues of **Family Connections 2** you will find many others to enjoy together.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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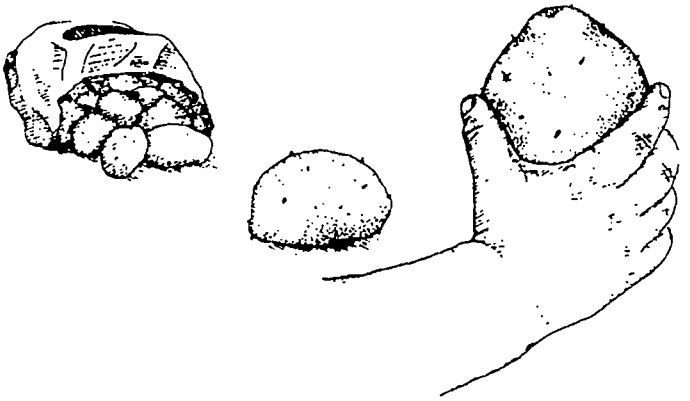
Count Potatoes

You probably remember this rhyme from your own childhood. Many of us used it as a way of choosing teams. Your child will think it's fun to say this rhyme as you actually count potatoes.

First, read the rhyme aloud to your youngster. (The kitchen table is a good place for reading aloud. Don't forget to have the child sit on your left side, so you can let him see you read from left to right.) Then, read the rhyme together.

One potato, two potatoes,
Three potatoes, four,
Five potatoes, six potatoes,
Seven potatoes, and more.

Now, put several potatoes on the table and let him pick them up as you say the potato verse together. When children handle objects as they count, they begin to put the number words together with the idea of quantity. Don't make this into work. It's math—learning the fun way.



Cook Potatoes

You can decide together how you want to prepare the potatoes. Of course you may not be cooking all of them. You can talk about how many you need, and do some more counting. "1 for your big brother. 1 for me. 1 for you and your little sister to share. How many is that? Let's count. . ."

Suppose you then decide to have french fries. When you cut the potatoes into pieces, there's another opportunity for counting. You could also point out that one potato can become a large number when it is cut into many pieces.

As the potatoes cook, encourage your child to think about what is happening to them. They are changing from hard to soft. They are turning a different color. She may ask questions you can't answer. Don't worry. Tell her you can find answers together. A trip to the library could result.

The most important thing you can do here is encourage her curiosity. The more questions children ask, the better—even if you don't know all the answers. That's how science happens.

Turn Potatoes Into Art

Your child can make a wonderful painting using potato slices instead of a brush. Just wash a potato and cut it into slices crosswise. You don't even have to peel it first. If you supervise closely and don't use too sharp a knife, the child can do the cutting.

Then let her dip a slice into finger paint and lay it on a sheet of white or colored construction paper. She can use different sized slices and different colors to form her own patterns. Just throw away the potato slices when she's finished. That's easier than washing a brush, isn't it?

You can buy finger paints or make your own. Pour bottled liquid starch into small jars. Baby food jars are fine. Put a few drops of food color into each jar.

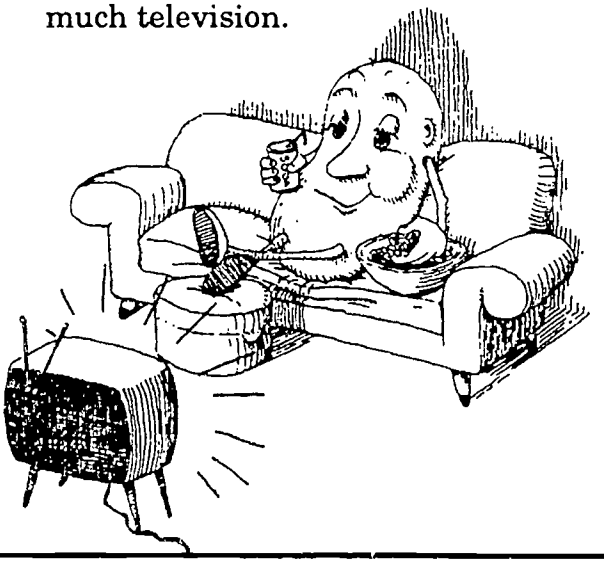
Let your child mix with her finger to get the desired color. Start with red, blue, and yellow. She will discover combinations: red and yellow for orange; blue and yellow for green; all three colors for brown.

Help her print her name on her finished painting. Display it for family and friends.

Grow A Potato

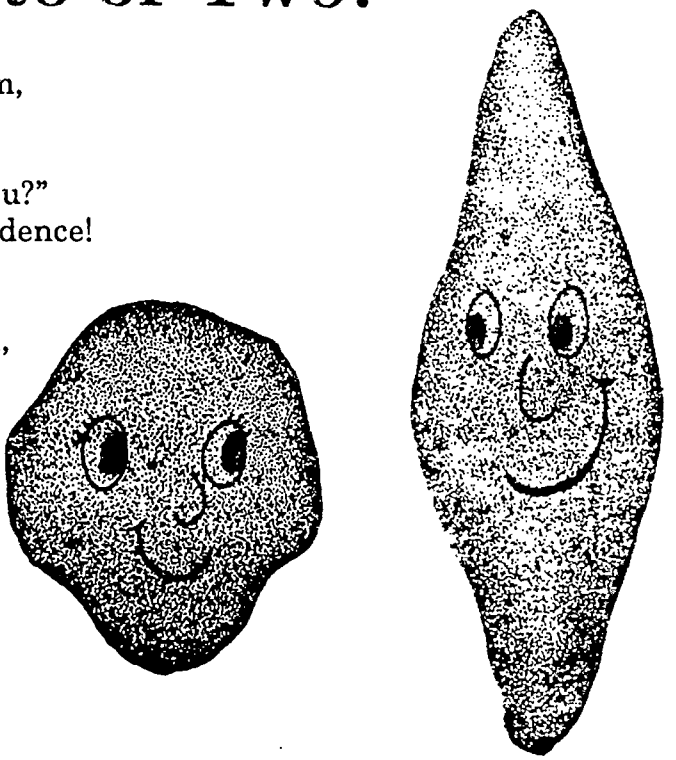
Watching a sweet potato grow is exciting to a child. Have him put a sweet potato in a jar with enough water to cover about half the potato. Set it in a place where it will get plenty of light. If you have a see-through container to use, your child will enjoy checking the potato's progress. The part under water will grow roots; the other part will produce a vine.

One kind of potato you don't want in your house is a "couch potato." They just plant themselves and get fat. Be sure you and your child get plenty of exercise. Many children are overweight because they watch too much television.



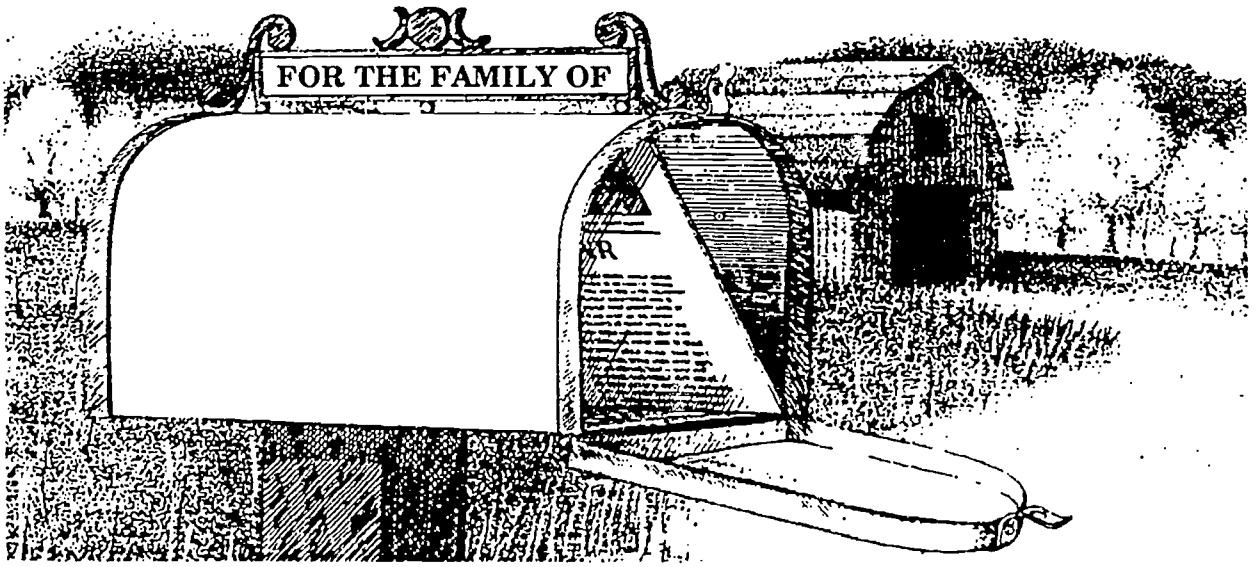
One Potato or Two?

When Polly Potato met Yerkimer Yam,
They both said "How do you do?"
Then Polly said proudly,
"I'm a potato. Who, may I ask, are you?"
"Well," said Yerkimer, "What a coincidence!
"I'm a potato, too."



Polly responded, with some confusion,
"Yerky, how can that be?
"I'm round, and brown.
"If you're a potato,
"Why don't you look like me?"

Now it's true that Yerky was orange,
And long, instead of round.
But he was still a potato,
And Polly and Yerky found,
That potatoes, just like people,
As different as they might be,
Can get along with each other,
Taterifically.



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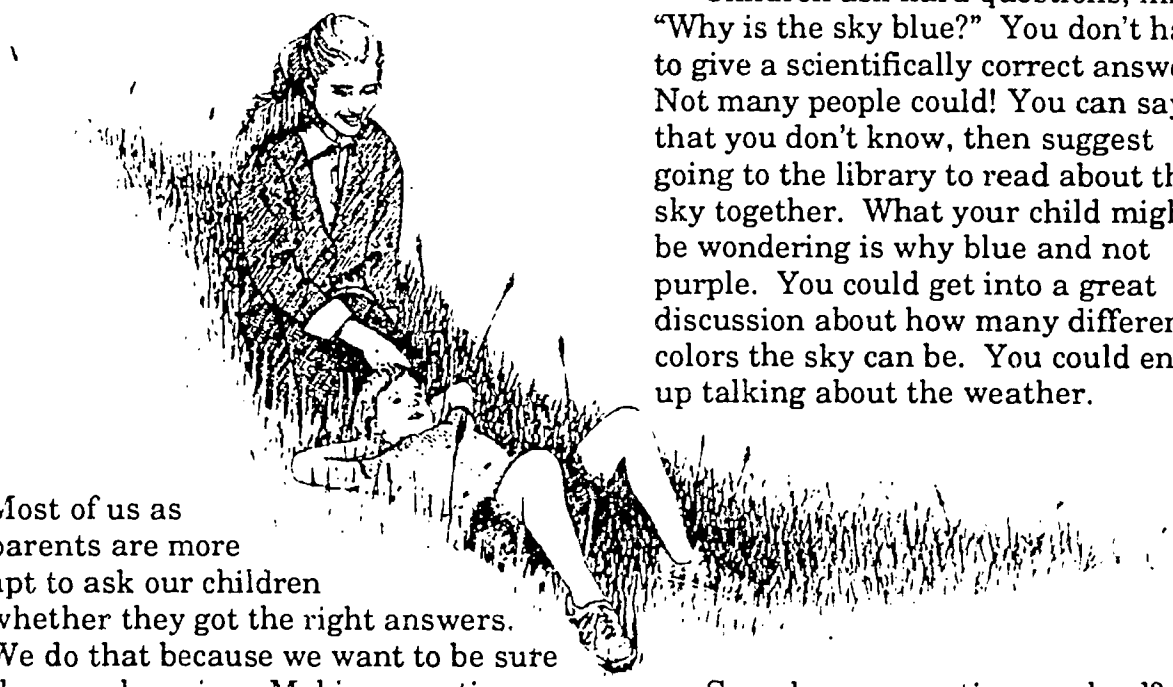
Family Connections 2

Ask A Good Question Every Day

An interviewer asked a Nobel Prize scientist how he became interested in his chosen field. "Every day when I got home from school," the scientist responded, "my mother said to me: 'Did you ask a good question today?' "

Just think of that. What a powerful influence you can be on your child's life, just by encouraging questions.



Most of us as parents are more apt to ask our children whether they got the right answers. We do that because we want to be sure they are learning. Making questions more important than answers is a better way to do it.

You may wonder why you should want him to ask more questions. It seems he is already asking hundreds every day. But the way you respond is important. Be as patient as you can. If you tell him not to bother you, because you're busy, he will stop asking. Then his surest path to learning with you will be closed.

Children ask hard questions, like "Why is the sky blue?" You don't have to give a scientifically correct answer. Not many people could! You can say that you don't know, then suggest going to the library to read about the sky together. What your child might be wondering is why blue and not purple. You could get into a great discussion about how many different colors the sky can be. You could end up talking about the weather.

See where a question can lead? You may be surprised at how much you can enjoy talking with your child.

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Sink or Float

Children may resist taking a bath, but they love to play in water. Water and everyday household objects provide many opportunities for discovery.

You can make this a daytime activity by filling a dishpan with water. Or, on warm summer days fill a child's pool. Then gather up as many of the following as you can find: a paper clip, a penny or other coin, a jar lid, plastic or rubber balls, a cork, a clothes pin, an apple, a spoon. You will think of other objects to use. A hard-boiled egg is a good choice. It can be a snack later.

Ask your youngster to guess which items will float. Talk about why he thinks an item will sink or float. This activity is not about getting the right answer. It will help him to raise questions and observe. That's how an interest in science begins.

Water play like this can also make taking a bath fun.

Sort and Count

You can also use the Sink or Float activity for math. Have your child put the items that float in one group. Put the ones that sink in another group.

Now have her count each group. If you have found several objects to use in the experiment, she may need help with the counting. It's a good idea to have her talk about what she is doing: "This cork floats. This penny sinks."

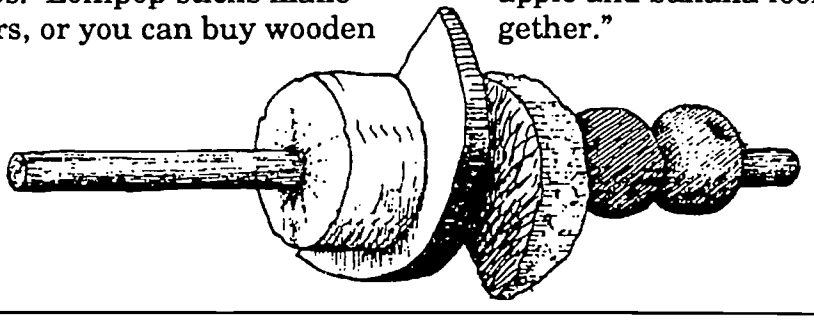
Of course she will count aloud. Help her to summarize what she has counted. "Tell me how many things you counted that float." Show your pride when she answers in sentences: "I counted 7 that float and 9 that sink."

Fruit Treats

Fruit is a fat-free, nutritious snack. Apple slices with peanut butter add protein, but also fat. You will want to slice the apple until your child is able to use a sharp knife. But he can get good practice using small muscles by spreading the peanut butter.

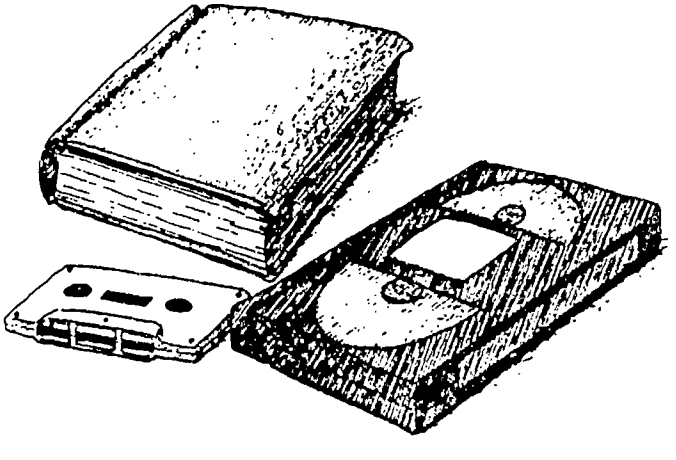
For a special fruit treat, let him make kabobs. Lollipop sticks make good skewers, or you can buy wooden ones. Use fresh fruit when it is available: thick banana slices, seedless grapes, unpeeled apple cubes. Any firm fruit will work.

He will enjoy putting fruit on the skewer in his own personal pattern. Again, talk together as you work. "What will you put on first? Yes, the apple and banana look pretty together."



Library Time

Your public library is worth many thousands of dollars to you. Very few people could afford to buy all the benefits you and your family get free from the library. Books are still the first treasure in store for you at every visit. And there are so many that your child will love.



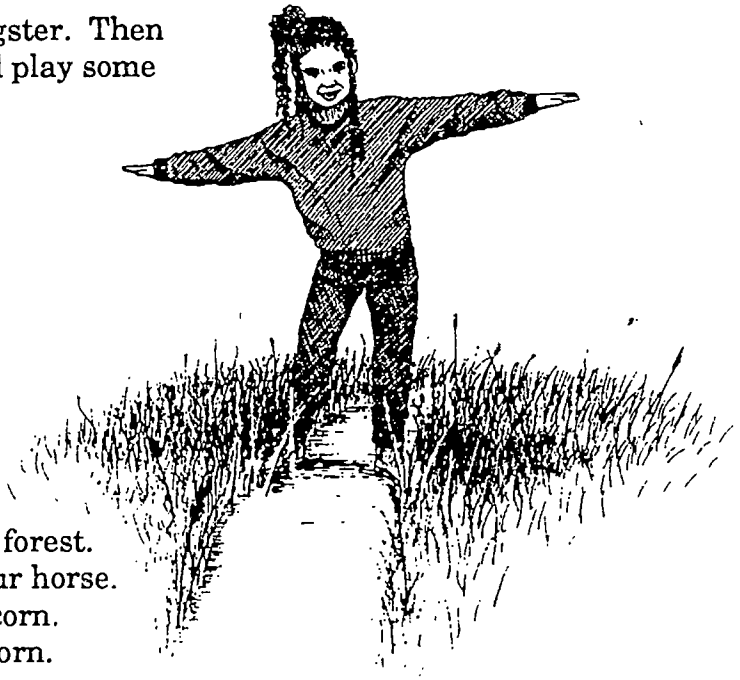
But today's library offers other treats. Audio tapes are available for both adults and children at most libraries. Many now have videotapes as well. Many also regularly schedule special events for children, such as story hours.

Get to know your library. Your child will love having a personal card. Librarians are there to help, and most are especially delighted to serve children.

—A READ-ALOUD

Movement in Nature

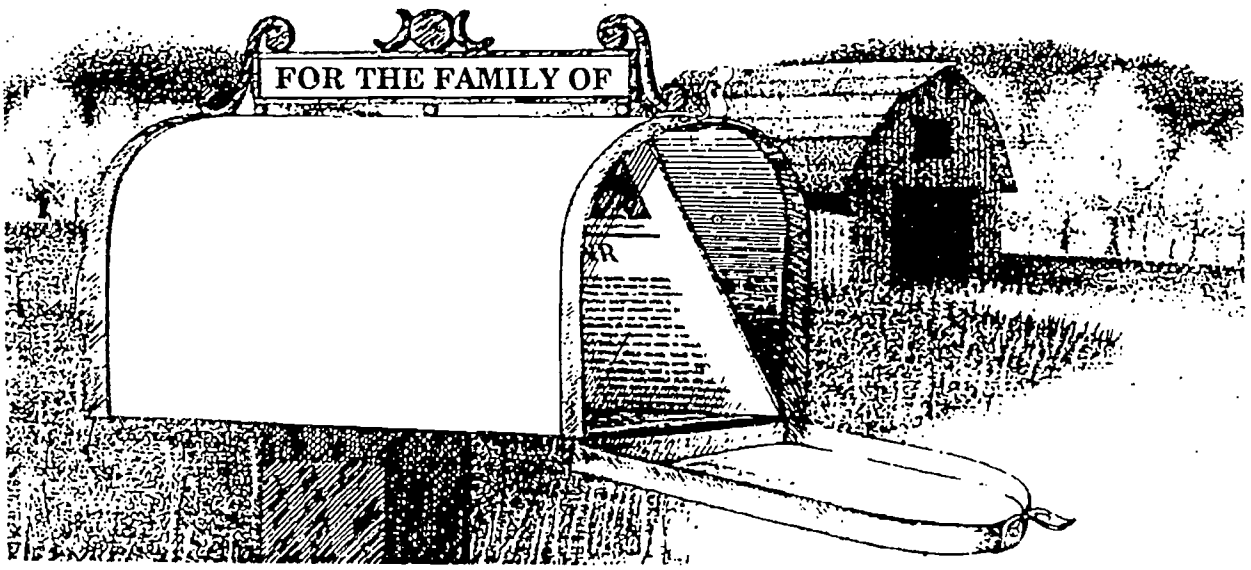
Read this verse aloud to your youngster. Then do the movements together. You could play some music to accompany the movements.



Soar like an eagle,
Sway like a tree.
Swim like a dolphin
  Deep in the sea.
Hop like a bunny,
Flit like a fly,
Dart like a bird
  High in the sky.

Leap like a deer through the green forest.
Now hold on tight as you gallop your horse.
Scamper like a mouse in a field of corn.
Stretch like a kitten in the early morn.

—*Lana Thomas*



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Family Connections 2

Succeeding Is Important To Your Child

From earliest childhood children try to master their world. They are eager to be able to do things well. They need to succeed, and on their own terms. They may need help with a new task, but parents must be careful not to help too soon. Sometimes all you need to do is show your child that you are interested and available.

It is important for her to learn not to give up when she is learning something new. Sticking to a job is easier if the job is within her ability. The hard part for you as a parent is to steer her to something that she is ready to achieve. You don't want to discourage her from a challenge. You do want to help her avoid too much frustration.

For example, she might try to do a puzzle that has too many pieces for her ability level. Help her finish it with encouraging words. "This one is pretty hard to do. With practice, you will be able to do it all by yourself." Such remarks as "I told you this was too hard for you" cause her to doubt herself.

Praise her in a specific way when she completes a job. Knowing that you are there when she needs you helps her succeed. In building self-esteem, nothing succeeds like success.

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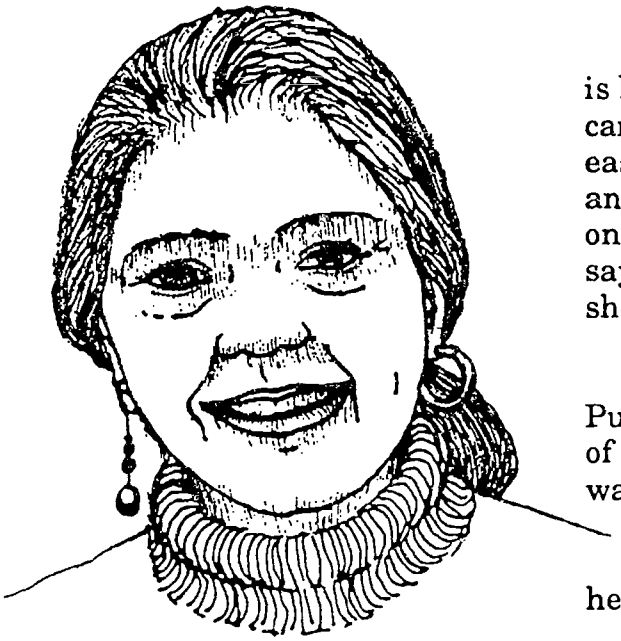
Look Carefully



One of the most important skills in science is being a good observer. Be alert to ways you can help your child learn to observe. One easy way is to do something to your appearance. For instance, if you wear earrings, put on two different ones. If your child doesn't say anything about the odd pair, ask her if she notices anything unusual.

Other ways to help her practice seeing: Put your shirt on wrong side out. Wear socks of two different colors. Comb your hair a new way.

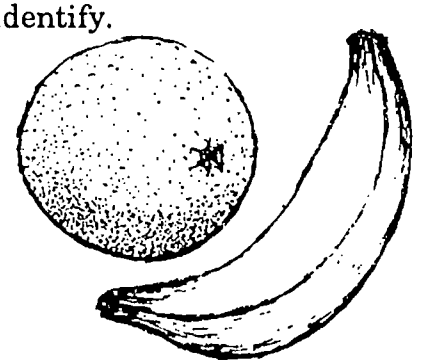
Ask her to do something unusual about her appearance to see whether you will notice.

Try Touching

You can also help your child develop his sense of touch. Your house is full of objects that feel very different to the touch. Start in the kitchen with vegetables or fruit. Have your child touch several and tell you how they feel. He may say that bananas feel smooth. Oranges feel slightly bumpy. He would use other words to describe both fruits if you peel them for him to eat.

He might use "smooth" and "bumpy" to tell you how onions and potatoes feel, too. Encourage him to use a variety of words to describe things: fuzzy, scratchy, rough, slick, soft. You will think of many others as you work together. Talk with him about how some things feel alike and others feel different.

Help him discover how he can use his sense of touch to guess what something is without seeing it. Put a familiar object in a pillowcase and close the top. Have him try to tell what it is by feeling its shape. Put more than one item in and let him see how many he can identify.

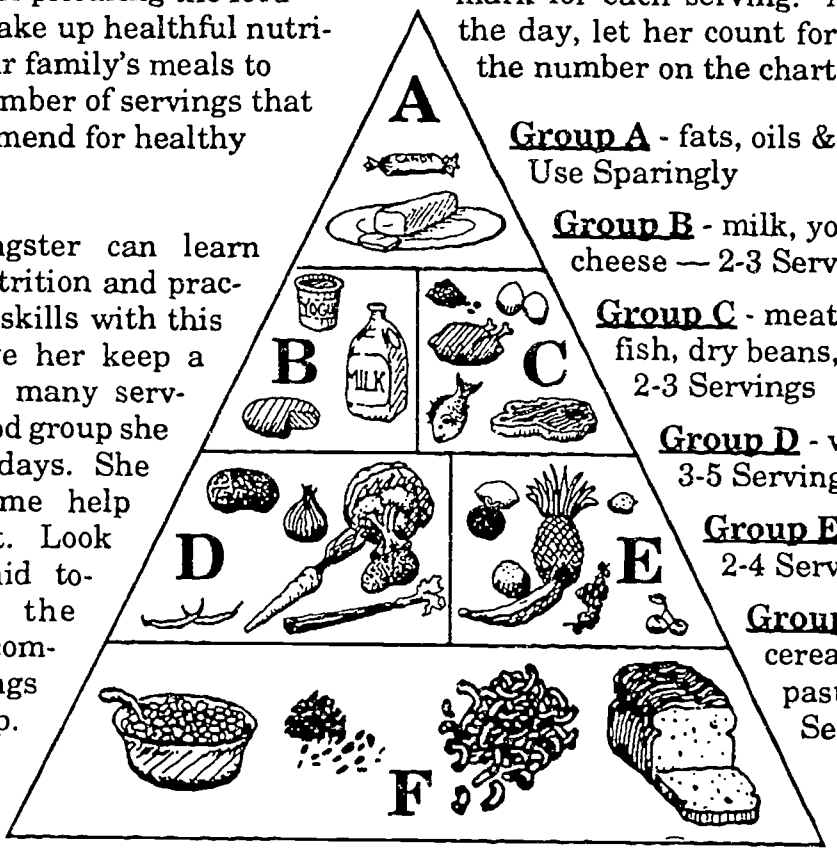


Count for Nutrition

This pyramid (another new word for your child's rapidly growing vocabulary) is a way of picturing the food groups that make up healthful nutrition. Plan your family's meals to include the number of servings that experts recommend for healthy eating.

Your youngster can learn about good nutrition and practice her math skills with this activity. Have her keep a record of how many servings in each food group she eats for a few days. She may need some help with the chart. Look at the pyramid together and the number of recommended servings in each group.

Write the numbers on the chart under the heading. Show her how to put a mark for each serving. At the end of the day, let her count for you and put the number on the chart.



Group A - fats, oils & sweets
Use Sparingly

Group B - milk, yogurt & cheese — 2-3 Servings

Group C - meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs & nuts
2-3 Servings

Group D - vegetables
3-5 Servings

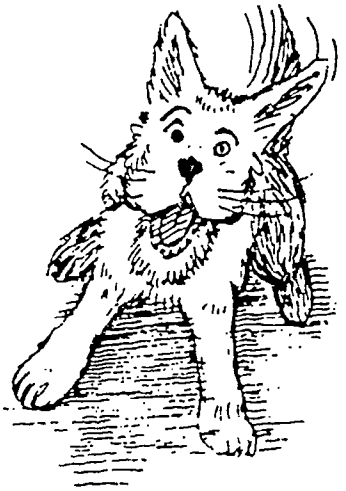
Group E - fruits
2-4 Servings

Group F - bread, cereal, rice & pasta — 3-5 Servings

See the example in the shaded area before filling in the chart.

Food Group	Recommended Daily Number of Servings	Number of Servings I Had				
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
F	3-5	II 2	IIII 4	III 3	~~IIII~~ 5	III 3

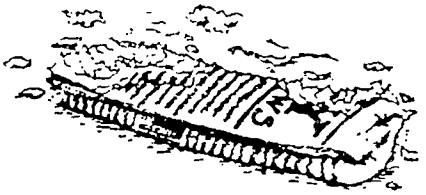
A Pesky Puppy

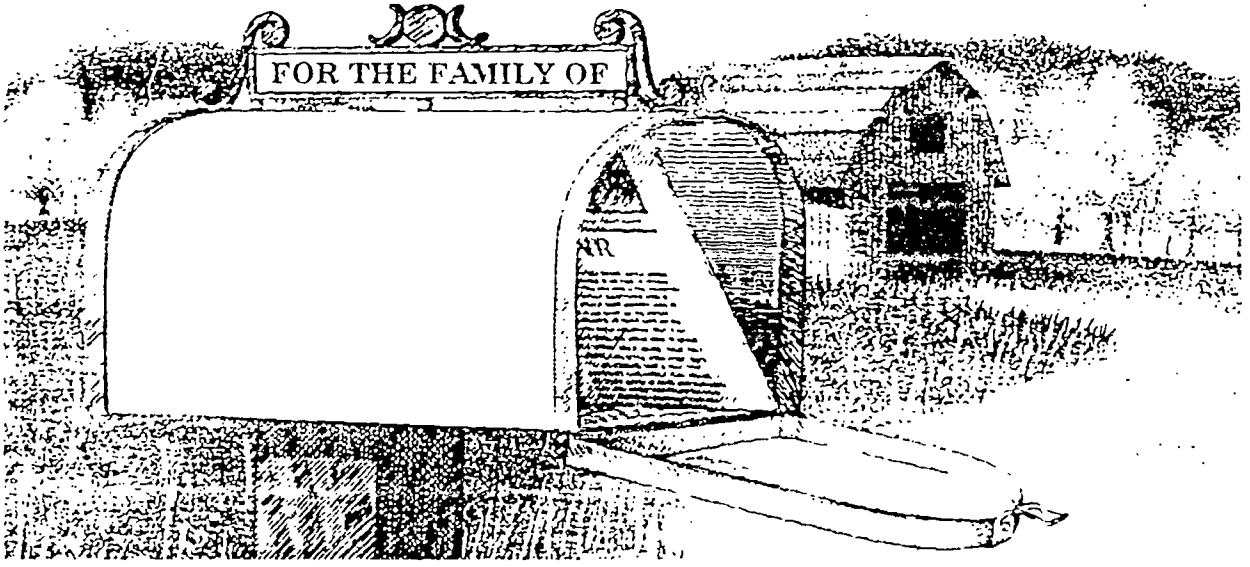


My puppy is a bigger pest
Than girls, or mice or flies.
He chews my shoes
And eats Mom's news
Then through the night he cries.

He digs up Grampa's flower bed,
And keeps me from my chores,
He plays in muddy puddles,
Then walks across clean floors.

But even when he's ornery
I love him every day.
My puppy thinks I'm wonderful.
In every single way.





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Family Connections 2

Read, Read, Read

Of all the things you can do to help your child be successful in school, reading to him is probably the most important. It's also very important to let him see you reading. **What** he sees you read matters less than **that** he sees you and others read in the home.

Read aloud from things that catch your interest: newspaper articles, letters, something from a magazine that you enjoy, a little joke. Jim Trelease, an expert in children's reading, says one of the most widely read items in a home is the back of a cereal box. Read that aloud to your young child.

Help him participate in all the reading and writing that you do at home. Let him add something to your grocery shopping list. If he isn't printing yet, he can tell you what to write. Let him watch as you add to the list. When you look up a telephone number, show him what you are doing. These things help him see how we need written language all the time.

Reading children's books and stories to him can be one of the most enjoyable things you do together. Sitting beside you, on your left side so he can see how the words go from left to right, he can feel your warmth and closeness.

Let him choose books at the library. His reasons for selecting certain books can give you lots to talk about together. Appealing pictures can lead to him making up a new story, or to adding to the story in the book.

Buy books for him as often as you can afford to. Books of his own, that he can read again and again, become real treasures. If he sees that you think books are special gifts, he will value them all the more.

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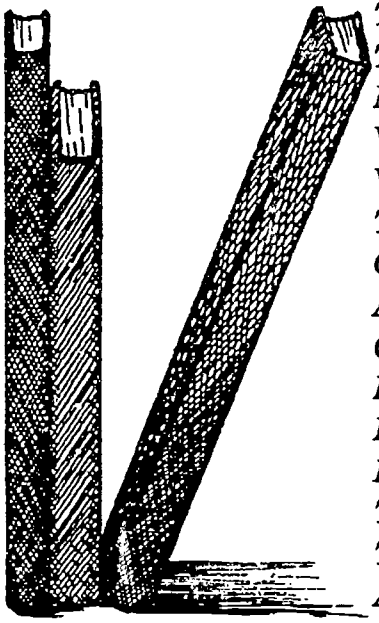
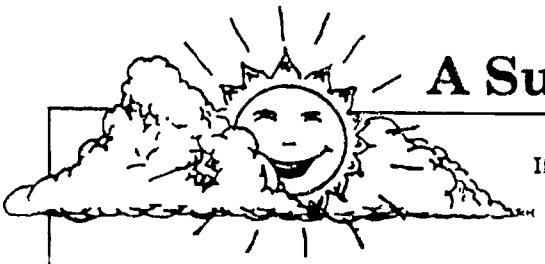
Books To Enjoy Together

Here are some books that kindergarten teachers recommend for youngsters in your child's age group. Your local librarian can suggest many others.



The City Mother Goose	Harry Allard
The Paper Crane	Molly Bang
The Man Who Could Call Down Owls	Eve Bunting
Mousekin's Golden House	Eve Bunting
Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle
Very Quiet Cricket	Eric Carle
The Enormous Crocodile	Roald Dahl
Growing Vegetable Soup	Lois Elhert
Ask Mister Bear	Marjorie Flack
Chickens Aren't the Only Ones	Ruth Heller
Harold and the Purple Crayon	Crockett Johnson
Leo the Late Bloomer	Robert Kraus
David's Father	Robert Munsch
The Paper Bag Princess	Robert Munsch
Timothy Goes To School	Rosemary Wells
A New Coat for Anna	Harriet Ziefert



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

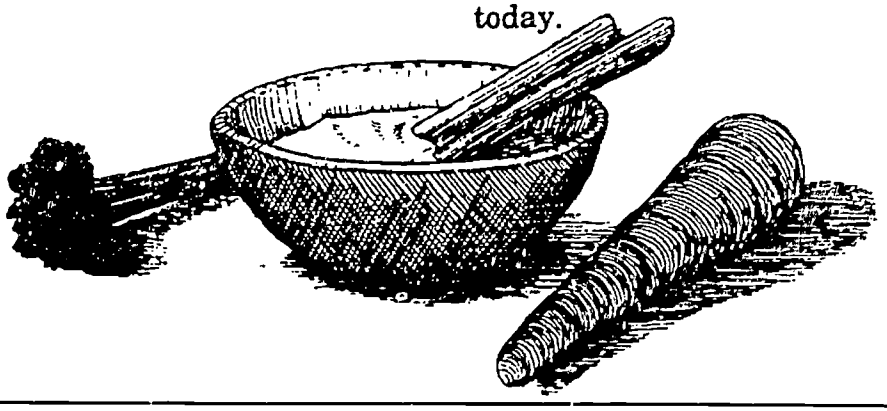
Veggie-Dip Snack

Raw vegetables make great snacks. They taste good. They are healthful. They are good for your child's teeth.

You probably give your family carrot and celery sticks often. Have you tried these other vegetables raw? Cauliflower pieces, broccoli flowerets, cucumber slices, green pepper rings, turnip slices, zucchini sticks—all are tasty.

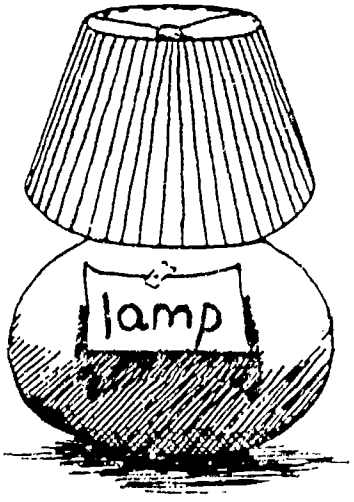
Offer them to your child one or two at a time. You can encourage taste tests by offering a dip with the vegetables. Let your youngster mix the dip. Use one cup plain low-fat yogurt, 2 tablespoons orange juice concentrate, and 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon.

Enjoy the snack together as you talk about what happened at school today.



Put A Name On It

As your child is starting to read, it helps to have labels on things all around the house. Together, make signs: table, chair, lamp, couch, door—you can do dozens. As you print the letters, say them aloud to your child: "L a m p—that spells lamp."



You can tape the signs to solid objects. Pin them on upholstered chairs. Spell out and say the words as you work together to put up the signs. Make additional ones as your young student learns to read the first ones. If you have some old magazines or catalogs, cutting out pictures to put on the signs is fun.

—A READ-ALOUD

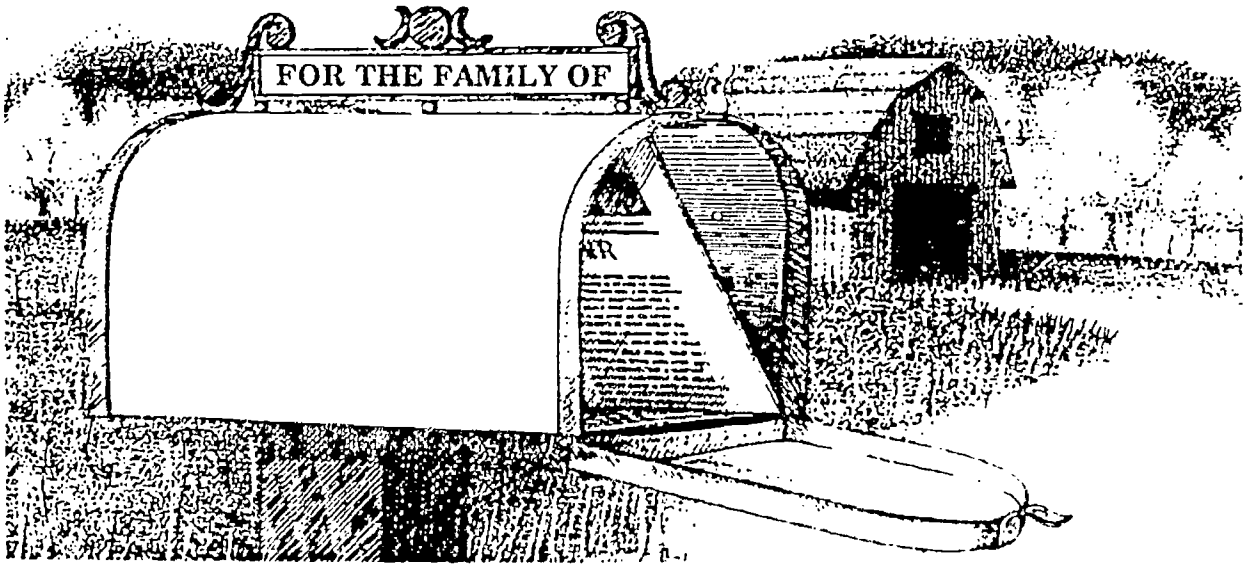
Blue Tuesdays for Belinda

On Mondays, Belinda was yellow.
On Tuesdays, she was blue.
For breakfast she ate sky muffins;
For lunch she had blueberry stew.

She used the same blue crayon
to color the sky and the trees.
When teacher offered green crayons,
Belinda said, "No, thank you, please."

On Wednesdays, Belinda was orange,
On Thursdays, she wanted greens.
But on Tuesdays she ate blue jello,
And put on her favorite jeans.

—*Carla Thomas McClure*



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Family Connections 2

Building Self-Confidence

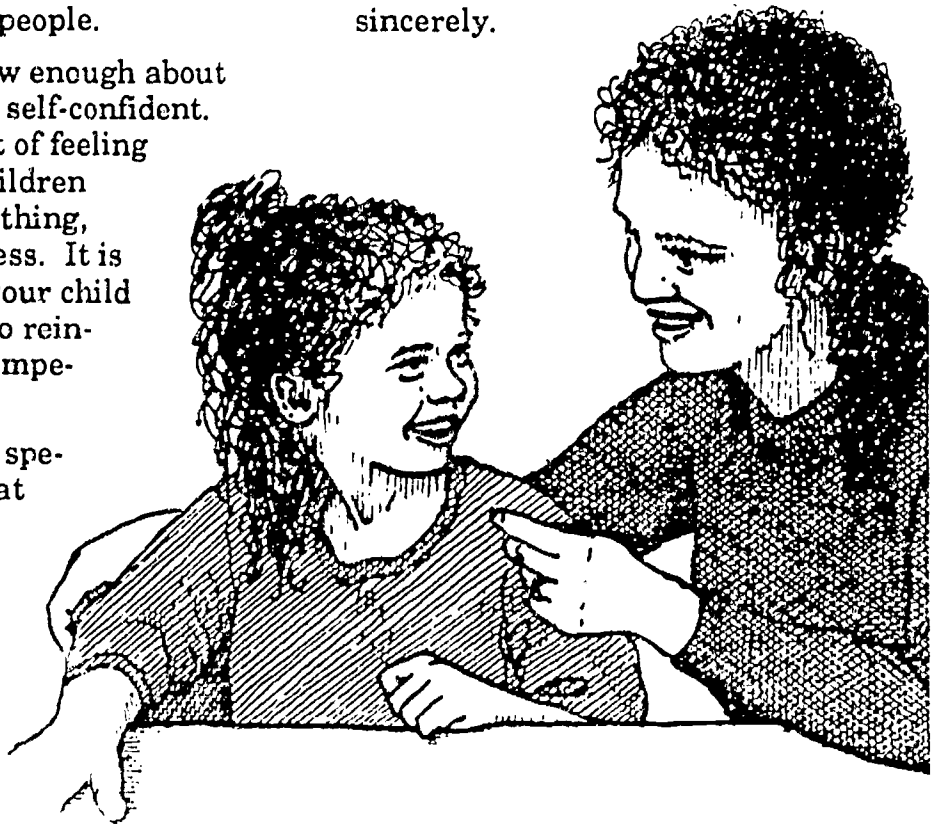
Should you praise your child? Of course you should. Can you praise your child too much? Yes, you can, say some experts in child development.

Parents hear a lot these days about self-esteem. We have learned that children who feel good about themselves are more apt to do well in school. They are also more likely to get along with others and to be aware of the needs of other people.

We still don't know enough about how children become self-confident. Confidence grows out of feeling competent. When children learn how to do something, they experience success. It is important to praise your child when this happens, to reinforce her feeling of competence.

Make your praise specific. Instead of "What a good girl you are!" when she eats a new vegetable, say "I like it when you try different foods." When she does a drawing for you, say something about how pleasing her colors are, or that the car she drew looks like it will go really fast.

Children who are praised too much learn to depend on the praise. If you use it to build their self-confidence, they begin to depend on themselves. Be sure to praise your child, and do it sincerely.



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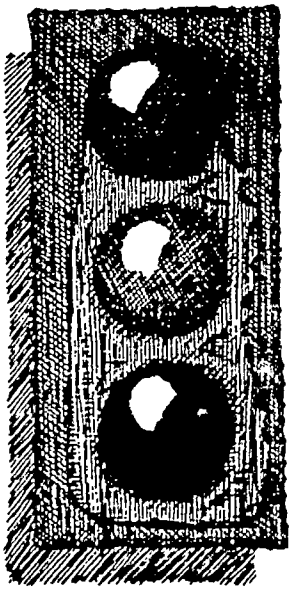
A Safety Snack



Here's a good lesson in safety for your child. When the learning is done, he will enjoy eating the lesson.

Use half of a graham cracker or some rectangular cracker. Spread the cracker with cream cheese or peanut butter. Use colored candies (M&Ms or spice drops) to make traffic lights: red on top, yellow in the center, green on bottom.

Explain that the colors stand for words. "Red" means "stop." "Yellow" means "caution" or "be careful." "Green" means "go." Talk about how the traffic lights help both people who are walking and people in cars.

If you can make some of these traffic signal crackers and then go for a drive, or a walk, your child will surely remember.

Beans In A Carton

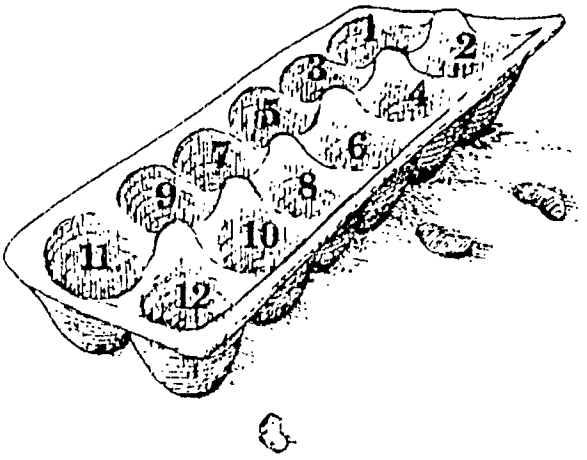
Save your egg cartons. They are great teaching tools. Just one example is bean counting. (Come to think of it, beans are also a great teaching tool.)

With a marking pen or crayon, label each section of an egg carton with big numbers from one to 12. Give your child a cupful of beans. Ask her to count the right number of beans into each section. Count with her if she needs help: one bean in the section marked 1, two beans in the section marked 2, and so on. She may not be able to count every section, and that's fine.

If she finishes, you can tell her that she used 78 beans, and explain why.

She will not be able to add the numbers the way you do, but she will begin to understand the idea.

Remember, this is not serious business. You're helping her to learn that math can be fun.



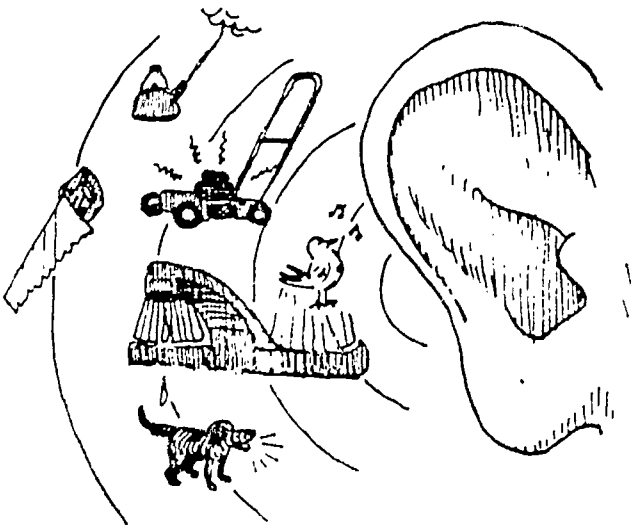
Listen, Please

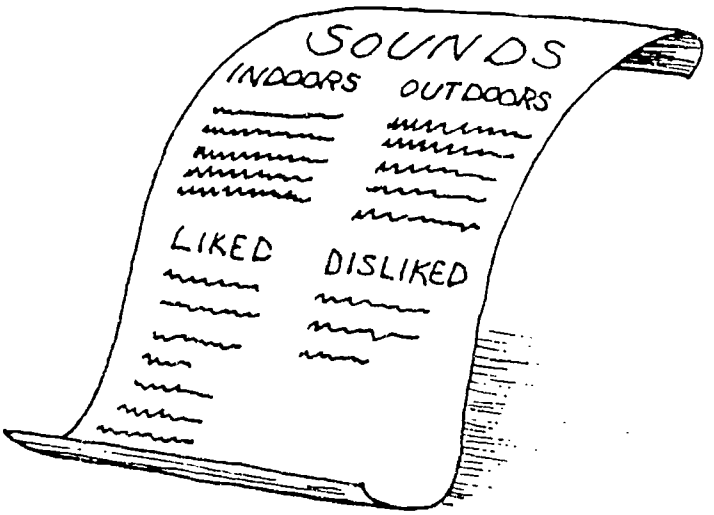
Sounds are all around us. Being able to hear how the sounds are different is important to your child's learning. He needs practice in describing what he hears, too.

Here's a way to practice listening. First, get a paper and pencil. Sit with your child in the kitchen. Close your eyes, and be very quiet. Listen for one minute. Ask your child to tell you all the sounds he heard. Make a list. Add some of the things you heard.

Now do the same thing outdoors. Talk with him about the indoor sounds and the outdoor sounds. How were they alike? How were they different? Did you hear more sounds outdoors or indoors? Which sounds were louder? Softer? Which did he like? Which did he dislike?

Be respectful of his answers. Encourage him to ask you questions, so he can practice paying attention to your answers.





About Family Connections Activities

The activities in Family Connections are for you to use in many ways. If you have other children, you may want to do some or all of the suggested activities with everyone together. All activities are suitable for both boys and girls. In Family Connections, we use "he" and "she" equally. We know that boys and girls alike can be good at math. Girls and boys both can be skillful readers. And both can enjoy learning in the kitchen!

—A READ-ALOUD

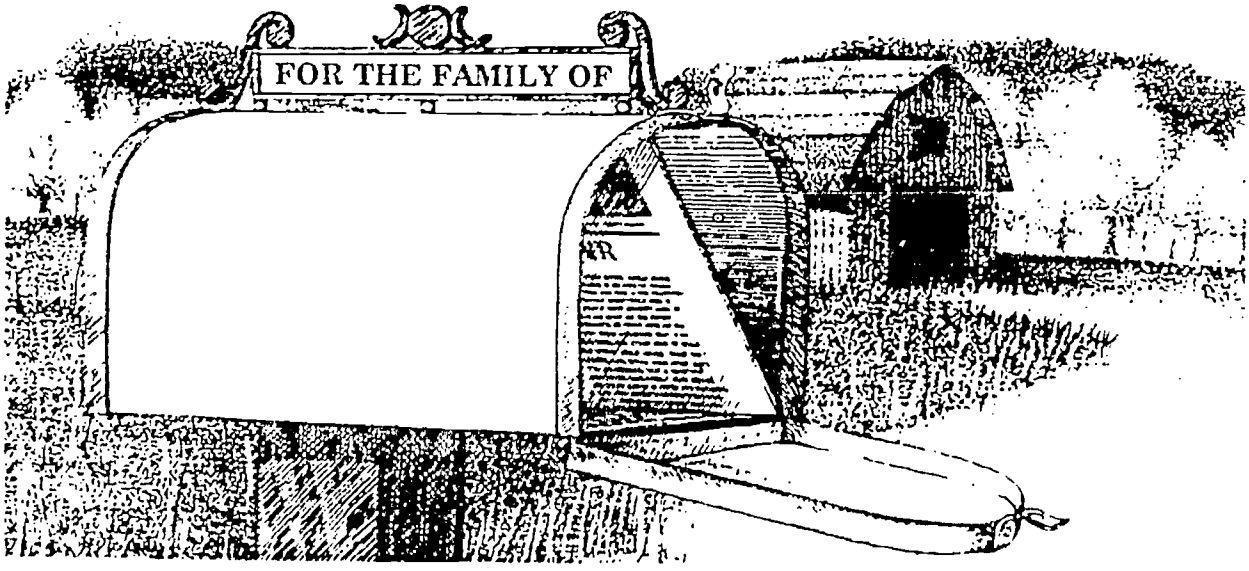
The Sounds of the Zoo

There are many sounds at the zoo.
You may like them, you may not.
The lion's roar rolls into your ear
And the brown bear growls a lot.

The camel hisses and spits,
As if its hump might hurt.
The zebra, which looks like a striped horse,
Neighs, in a voice that's curt.

Not all of them raise their voices—
That wild bunch at the zoo.
The snakes hardly ever say a word.
The giraffes are quiet, too.

But others speak to you loud and clear
As you find your way in the crowd.
Through the bark of seals,
And the chatter of apes,
And the trumpet of elephants loud.



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Family Connections 2

Show Me How You Feel

Children need to express their feelings. You can help by letting yours know it's okay to show emotion. Yes, even with tears. Yes, boys can cry, too. And sometimes children, like adults, don't want to talk about how they feel.

Words are just one way for children to get feelings out. They can also express emotion by painting or drawing. Give your child plenty of paper and crayons or marking pens. You don't need expensive materials. Wrapping paper, brown paper bags, and ends of shelf paper are fine for young artists.

Drawing pictures can be a child's way of doing something no one else can do in just the same way. A child's drawing can tell you how that child sees himself, his family, and his world. He may want to tell you about the drawing, but shouldn't be made to feel that he has to.

Moving to music is another way of conveying feelings. Suggest that your youngster turn on a radio to music of his choice. Or put on a tape, record, or compact disk. Encourage him to move to the music, or sing along. The choice of music can reflect his feelings.

When children are learning and growing rapidly, we sometimes forget that they are still young. It's important not to rush them through childhood. They have to be grown up soon enough.

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Valuable Letters

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z		

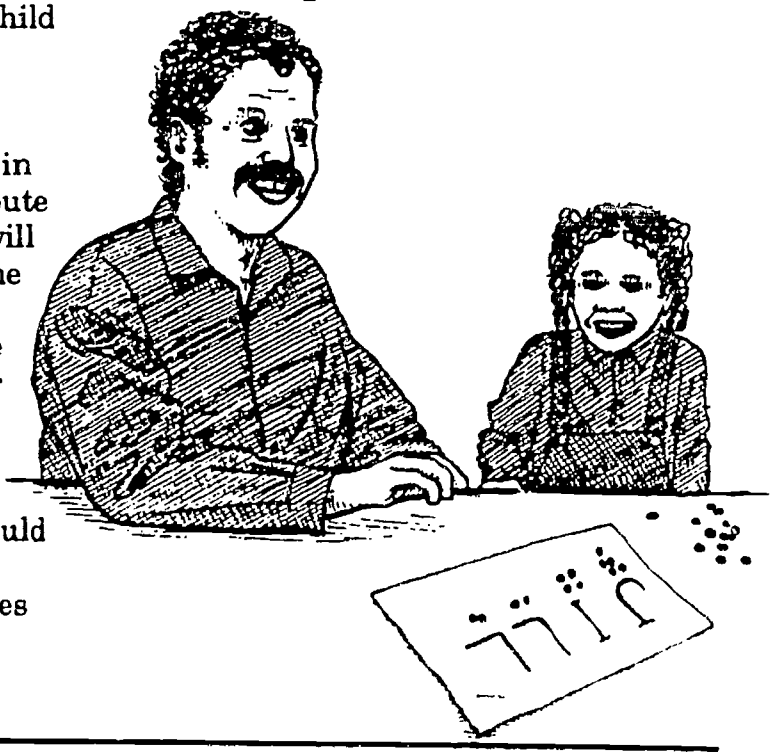
Most young children like money. You can use that love of cash to create interest in the letters of the alphabet. The letters are on this page. Each letter has a number value pictured in pennies. You could also use beans or buttons, if you have room to spread out on a table or the floor.

If you can get the whole family together, everyone will enjoy playing this game. But just you and your child can have fun doing this activity together.

Have your child find the letters in her first name. Then she can compute how many pennies (or beans) she will have if she gets one penny each time she uses A, F, K, P, U, and Z; two pennies for B, G, L, Q, and V; three pennies for C, H, M, R, and W; four pennies for D, I, N, S, and X; and, five pennies for E, J, O, T, and Y.

For example, the name "Jill" would collect 13 pennies. That's 5 plus 4 plus 2 plus 2. If you use real pennies or beans, she will be able to handle them as she counts. More experienced counters could use both their first and last names to work with larger numbers.

You and your family will think of other ways to play the letters game. One variation is to find the total for little words like "cat" and "hat." As your child gains skill, she can find the value of big words.

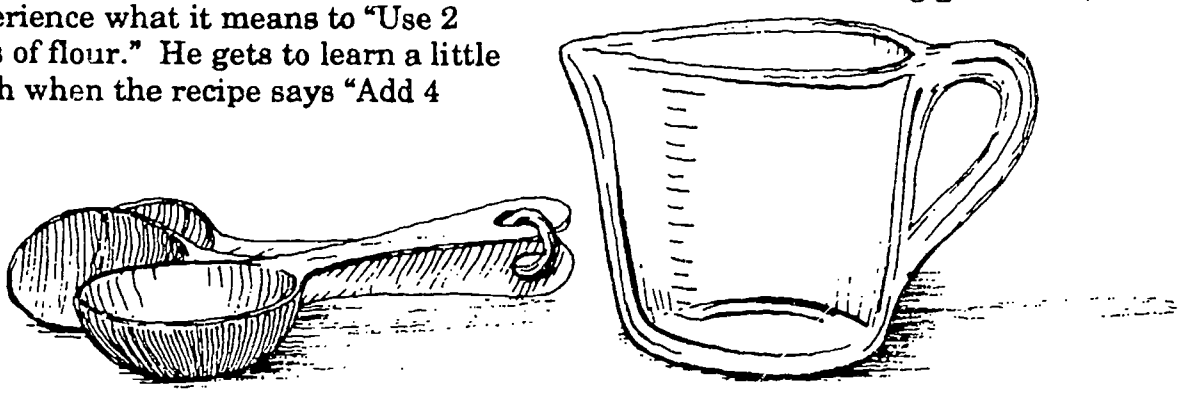


Recipes for Learning

Even before your child learns to read, he can see how important reading is in everyday life. Working with you as you follow a recipe is a useful activity. It's really fun if you are making something he likes a lot—such as cookies.

Let him measure for you. He can experience what it means to "Use 2 cups of flour." He gets to learn a little math when the recipe says "Add 4 tablespoons of oil." "Mix in 3 teaspoons of salt."

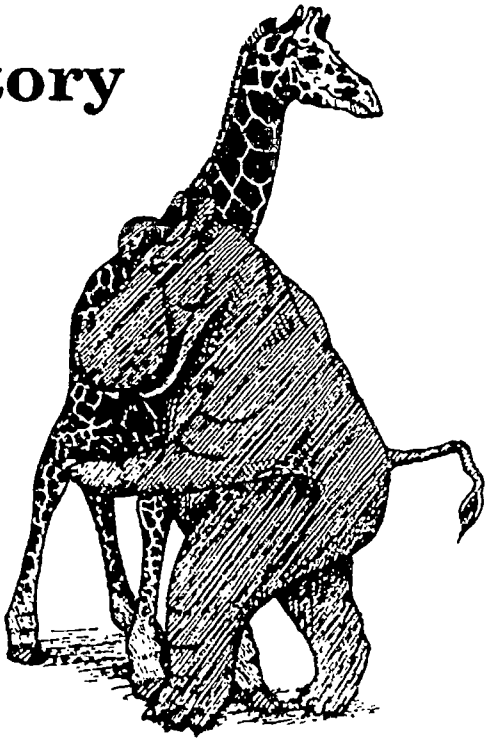
You can also work in some science. Help him discover how things change when they are mixed together and cooked. It's pretty amazing to a child to be involved in turning a list of words into something good to eat.



Tell Your Own Story

Look at the picture with your child. Ask her to tell you a story about the picture. If she needs help getting started, ask her a question: "What do you think has just happened?" You could ask her to describe some feelings: "Do you think the giraffe is happy about being hugged? Is the hippo happy?" Children like to name things. Suggest that your child name all the characters in her story.

Offer to write the story on paper for her. You could get a notebook to start a collection of her stories if she likes this activity.



—A READ-ALOUD

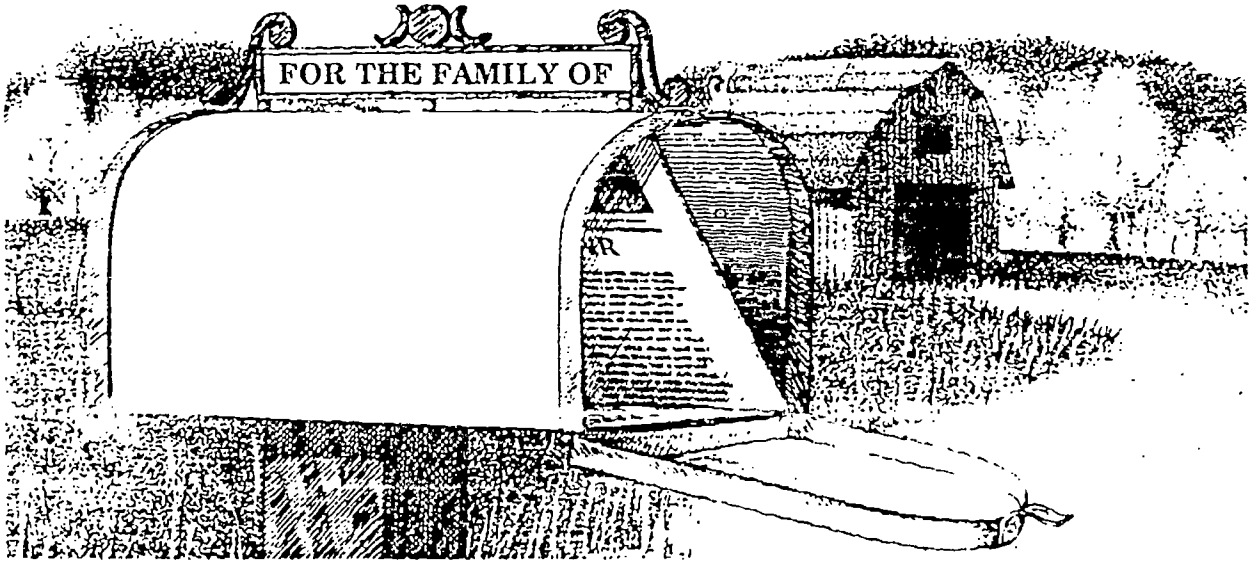
When I Learn To Read

As soon as I learn to read,
There'll be no stopping me.
I'll go where I want to go,
And be what I want to be.

I'll sail aboard the biggest ship.
I'll climb up Mt. Rainier.
I'll even go to outer space
And not need special gear.

I'll know what causes birds to fly,
And how whales swim so far.
I'll learn to bake the biggest cake,
And how to build a car.

It's magic when you learn to read.
There's no place you can't go.
For on the pages of some book
Is all you want to know.



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Family Connections 2

Children Learn As They Play

Unlike adults, children don't distinguish between work and play. Their play is their work. Play gives them ways to try out new ideas. It lets them express emotions. It allows them to take on many different roles. Play is learning, and it should be joyful.

Children enjoy learning, until we teach them not to. They want to discover. They are natural and fearless explorers. They are trying to make sense of their world.

Watch your child when she is playing at something that captures her interest. She can concentrate for a long time. But children are not empty boxes waiting for adults to fill them with things we think they need to know. Telling isn't teaching. What children need from adults is help in making new discoveries.

Observe her. Watch with the idea of trying to understand what she is experiencing. Try to see her from the inside out. Look at the world from her point of view. Accept her as she is, where she is. And, above all, listen to her. She will let you know in many ways what she is eager to learn more about.

Children develop at different rates. Your daughter may not know as many letters as her brother did at her age. But she might understand numbers better than he did. Youngsters just go about learning different things in different ways at different stages in their development.

And play is one of the most important ways they have of learning.

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Can Corn Hear You?

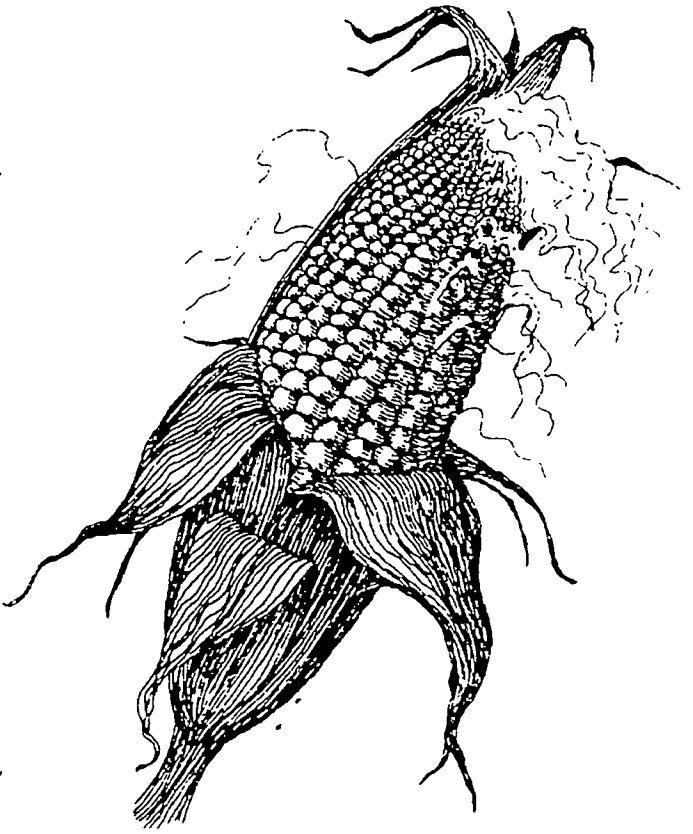
If corn has ears, why can't it hear? Now there's a good question for you. Corn is an especially interesting vegetable. It can be a good example for your child of how many forms a product can have.

Show him how many different forms corn takes. Fresh from the garden on the cob, corn is still dressed in green, adorned with silk. It's a kind of silk he may not know about. Show him frozen corn, canned corn (both whole and cream-style), dried corn, popped and unpopped.

Look at corn meal, and talk about how it is used to make bread. You could even make some corn bread together. Show him some corn syrup, corn oil, and corn oil margarine. Talk about taco shells as a form of corn. Snack on some corn chips.

Help him develop language skills. Ask him to tell you how the forms of corn are different from each other. Let him guess what you do with corn oil, for example.

Finish this corny conversation by having a bowl of corn flakes together.



Up and Down

Can your child find something in her closet if you tell her it is "over the the light switch" or "behind the door"? Spend some time demonstrating what these comparative words mean.

Use two familiar items, such as a sock and shoe. Ask her to show you how to put the sock: **over** the shoe; **under** the shoe; **in** the shoe; **behind** the shoe; **on** the shoe; **in front of** the shoe; **beside** the shoe.

Let her give you directions, too.

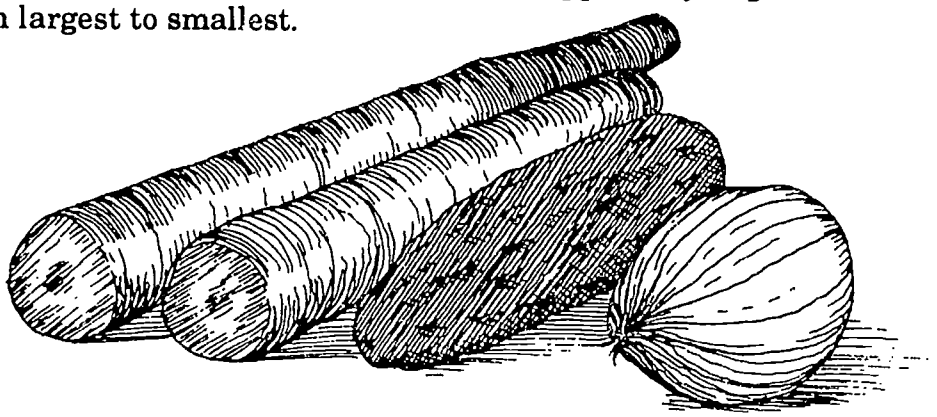
Largest and Smallest

When you are getting ready to make vegetable soup or a tossed salad, use the opportunity to help your youngster learn about comparisons. Ask her to bring you the largest carrot, the smallest onion, the longest carrot, the shortest cucumber.

Now have her put all the items in a row from largest to smallest.

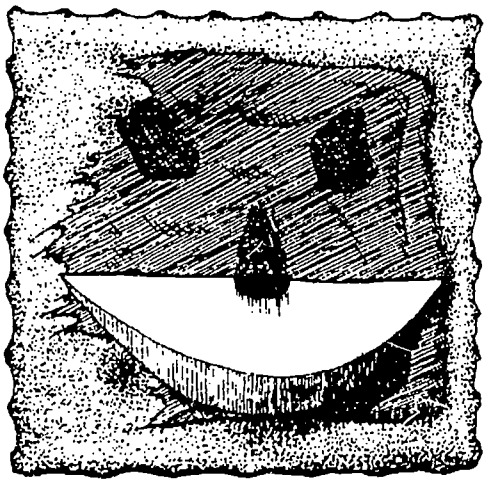
You will think of other ways to give her practice in comparisons. There are many in the kitchen. Pots and pans are useful in looking at different sizes. Cans are, too.

Be sure to praise her efforts. Part of becoming competent comes from the approval you give for her work.



Smiling Crackers

You can combine nutrition and art for a healthy snack. Your child will enjoy both preparing and eating his creation. He might like to make Smiling Crackers for other family members, too.



Spread cream cheese on graham crackers or peanut butter on soda crackers. He can do the spreading with a small, not sharp, knife. Then let him make a face on each cracker. Use raisins for eyes and noses.

Thin apple wedges make smiling mouths. If you use unpeeled red apples, the skin adds color to the faces.

—A READ-ALOUD

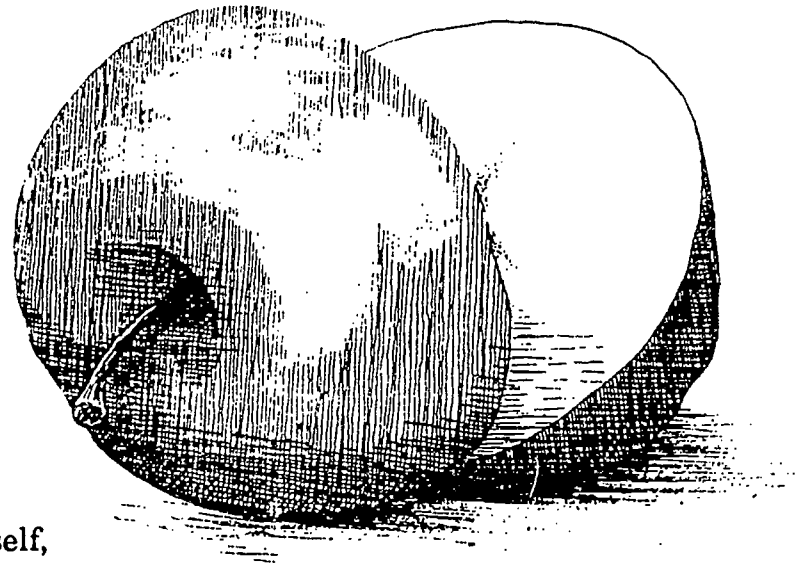
An Apple Surprise

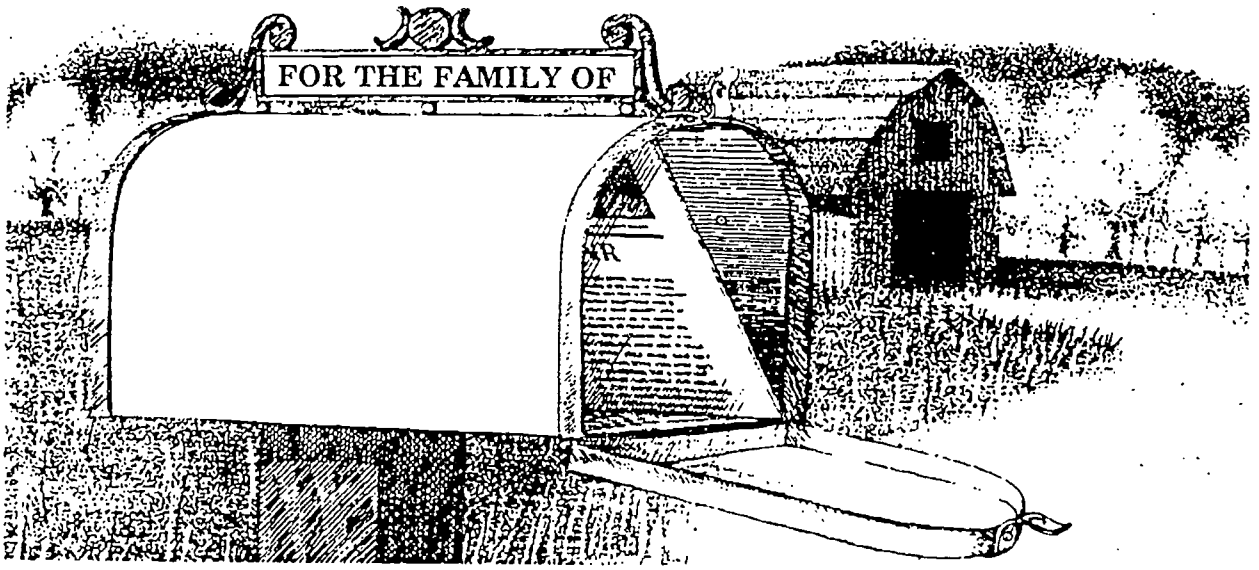
There's something about apples,
Not many people know.
In every apple there's a star,
It's right there as they grow.

Before you slice that apple,
To see if I speak true,
You have to stop and think about
A different thing to do.

If you cut from top to bottom,
The star you will not see.
But slice across the middle
And before you it will be.

Now you, a very special child,
Have a star inside of you.
As you learn, and grow, to be yourself,
That star will shine right through.





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Family Connections 2

Words Can Break The Spirit

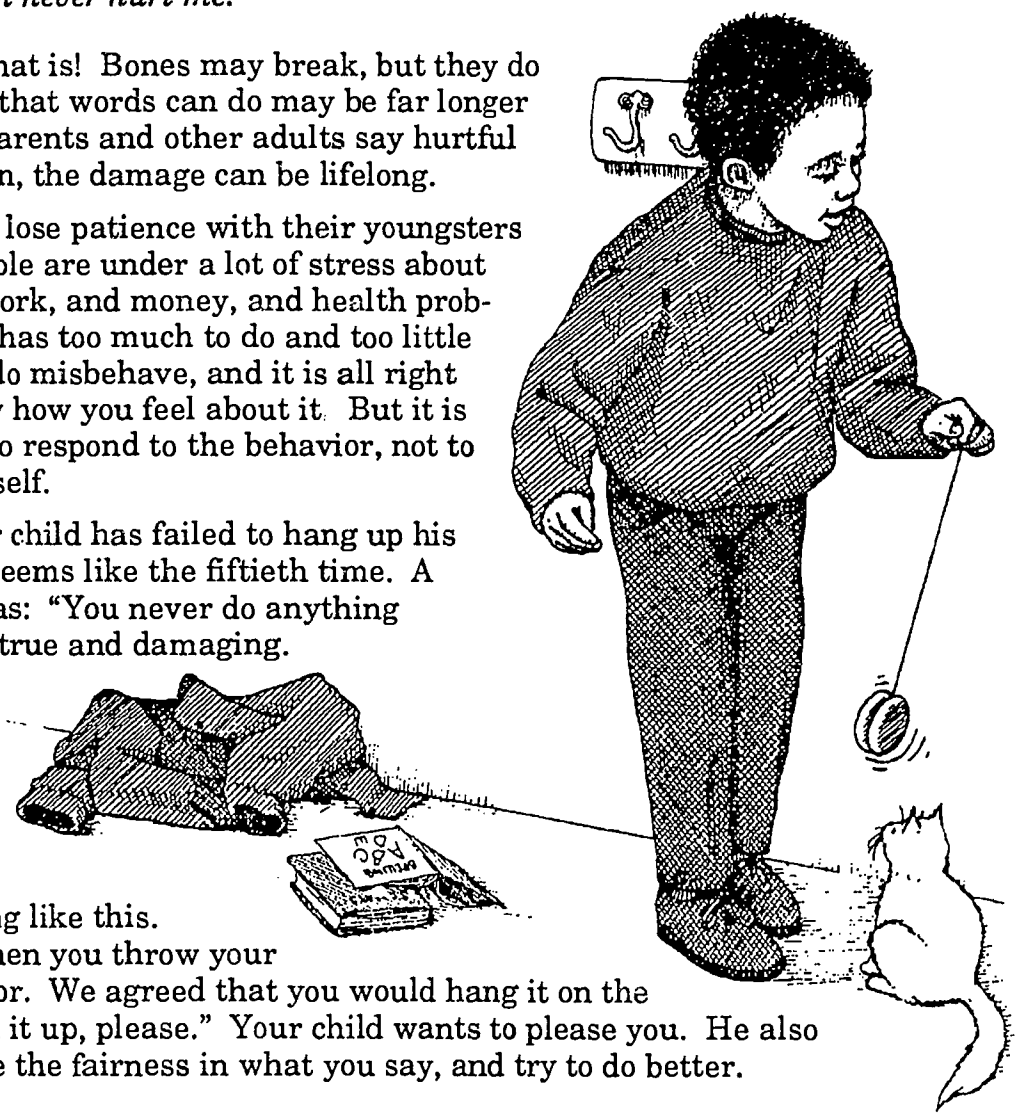
Remember the old rhyme children used to chant?

Sticks and stones may break my bones
But words can never hurt me.

How wrong that is! Bones may break, but they do heal. The harm that words can do may be far longer lasting. When parents and other adults say hurtful things to children, the damage can be lifelong.

Most parents lose patience with their youngsters sometimes. People are under a lot of stress about such things as work, and money, and health problems. Everyone has too much to do and too little time. Children do misbehave, and it is all right to let them know how you feel about it. But it is very important to respond to the behavior, not to the child's total self.

Suppose your child has failed to hang up his jacket for what seems like the fiftieth time. A statement such as: "You never do anything right" is both untrue and damaging. It is unlikely to change the behavior; it is very likely to make the child feel worthless.



Try something like this. "It upsets me when you throw your jacket on the floor. We agreed that you would hang it on the hook. Now, pick it up, please." Your child wants to please you. He also will probably see the fairness in what you say, and try to do better.

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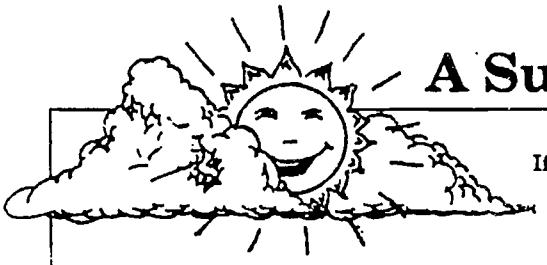
Your Friend the Toothbrush

Taking care of those first teeth is vital to your child's dental health. She is likely to keep up the good habits she learns now about caring for her teeth. Your good example is her best guide.

Brushing after every meal is ideal, but not always possible. Talk with your child about why brushing is important. The substance that forms on teeth after eating is what causes decay. Brushing removes it. Show her how to rinse her mouth with water if she's out and can't brush.

Make brushing a pleasant activity. Colorful toothbrushes encourage brushing; they are available with favorite story characters on them.

Your youngster might enjoy drawing on her brush handle or putting her initials on it. Any toothpaste that your child likes to use is fine.



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

ERIC

Two Riddles

What did the letter say to the stamp?

Stick with me and you'll go places.

Why did the suspenders get arrested?

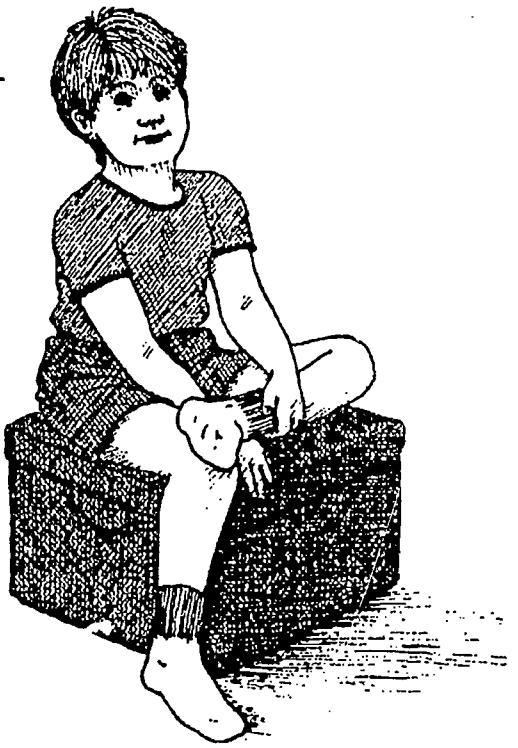
For holding up a pair of pants.

Your Moving Parts

Your child is still learning about his body parts. This game of touch is fun, and a good activity to practice following directions. It's good exercise, too. Take turns with him in doing the movements. Let him give you instructions part of the time.

Say to him: Please touch your—

- nose to your knee
- chin to your chest
- elbow to your hip
- toes to your nose
- elbow to your leg
- chin to your wrist
- wrist to your ankle
- ankle to your knee
- wrist to your waist
- knee to your chest
- wrist to your hip



If this is too easy for your child, add some variations. Ask him to touch his **right** hand to his **left** ankle, for example. Or have him touch his elbow to his **opposite** knee. This will give him practice with left and right and with the idea of opposites.

Don't forget to enjoy your time together!

—A READ-ALOUD

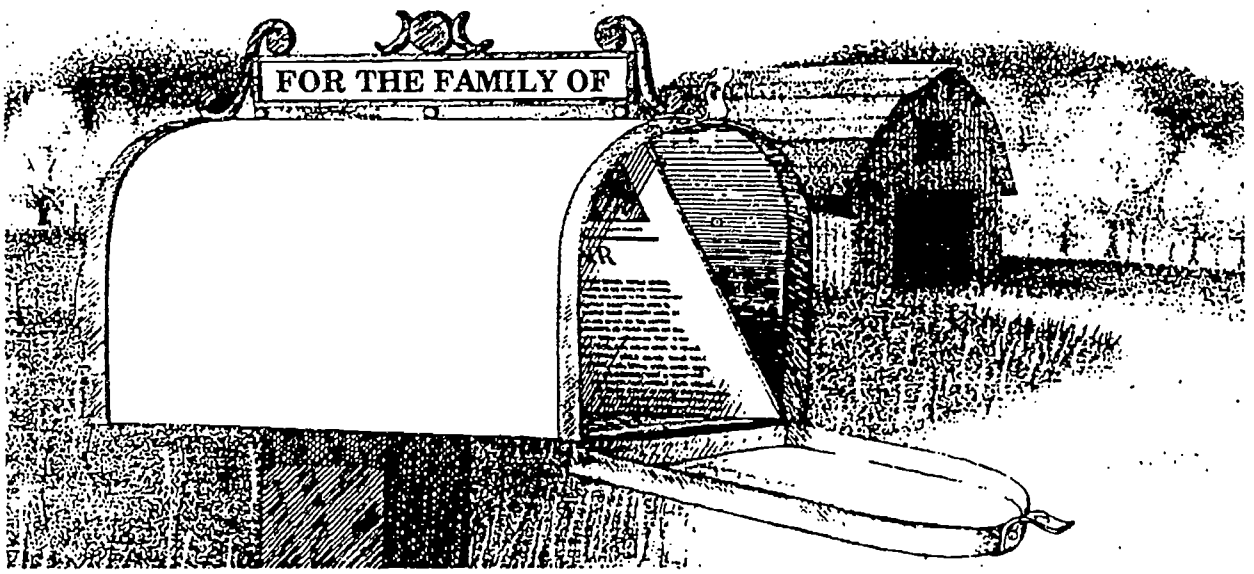
Another Czar Nicholas

Czar Nicholas is the cat that owns me.
He behaves royally
Most of the time.

He eats daintily,
And washes fastidiously,
And lets me scratch under his chin,
Occasionally.

Other cats are not allowed in his kingdom.
He hates cats.
He loves to play fetch.
I believe he thinks he's a dog.

I see no reason to tell him
He isn't.



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Family Connections 2

How Was School Today?

You would probably really like to know what your child did at school today. So you ask her, "How was school today?" Or, "What did you do at school today?" And you get little or no information. The answer is likely to be "Fine" or "All right."

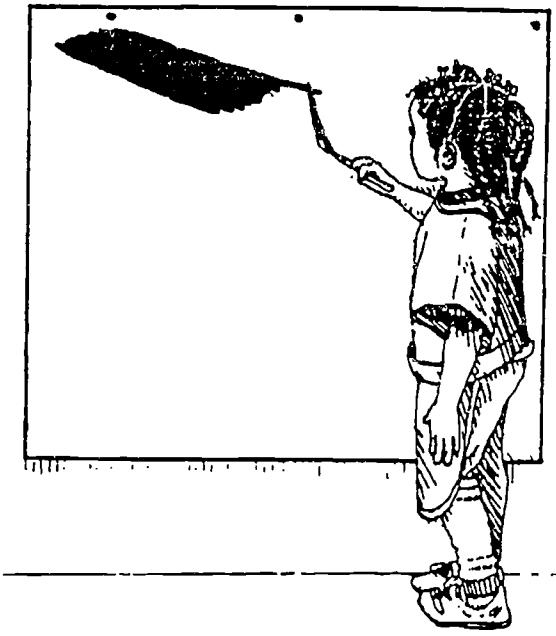
What you hoped for was something like: "It was fun. We learned about turkeys. We got to see a tractor, and learned how to be safe."

Try this as a way to find out what is happening in all that time she's away. Ask an open question such as: "What was the most interesting thing you found out today?" Even if the answer is that her best friend has a new baby brother, you will have started a conversation with her. Children need lots of experience in using language.

Another helpful question: "What did you learn today that you would like to know more about?" Her response could result in a trip to the library for the two of you, or some kind of outing for the whole family.

Ask your child to play school with you, and let her be the teacher. Teaching someone else is a powerful way to learn. The way she plays school may not look like school as you remember it. In the best early school programs, children learn through experiences, not with paperwork. The teacher she plays might use a recipe, or read to you, or draw pictures with you.

She will love the attention you pay as she teaches. And you may be amazed at what your young learner can teach you.



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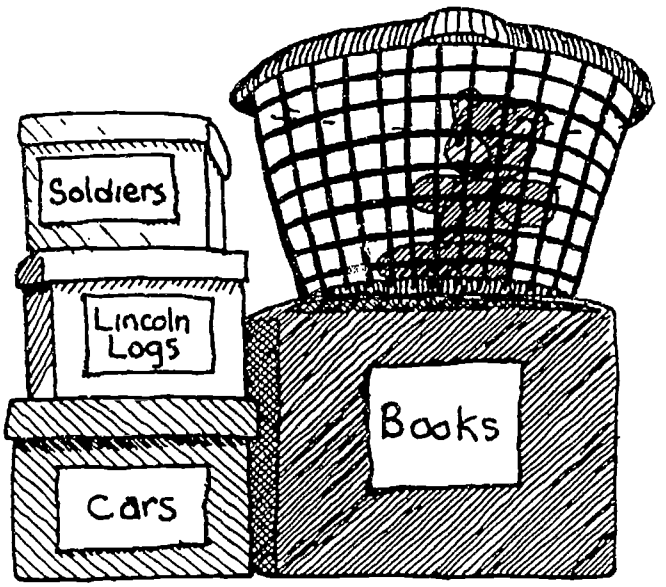
A Place for Everything

At school, children have a place where they can keep their own things. It may be a cubby or a locker where they store their coats and other belongings during school hours. You can transfer to your house what your child is learning at school about keeping track of his things. Help your child organize his space at home.

You can use boxes of any kind, small enough for him to handle. Shoe boxes are excellent for small toys and art supplies. Larger boxes or baskets will handle the big items. A laundry basket is great for the stuffed animals.

Together, label the boxes. Print in large letters with a marking pen. He may be able to do some of the printing with your help. Having words on objects he uses daily will help him learn the words. He will also see how written language is useful in his life.

He could also decorate the boxes. Drawing pictures or cutting them from magazines and pasting them on the boxes will be fun to do together. You get many benefits from this activity: language skills, art, and maybe a neater room for your child!



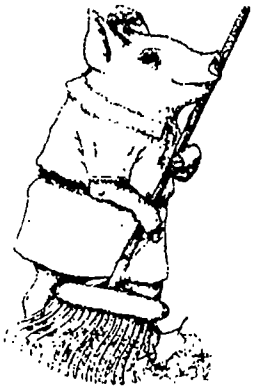
More Books To Read Together

Flossie and the Fox	Frederick McKissack
The First Forest	John Gile
Ruby	Maggie Glenn
Ornery Morning	Patricia Brennan Demuth
Two Bad Ants	Chris Van Allsburg
The Reason for a Flower	Ruth Heller

These Little Piggies

This little piggy went to market

and had a wonderful time helping his mom shop for oatmeal
and melons
and much, much more.

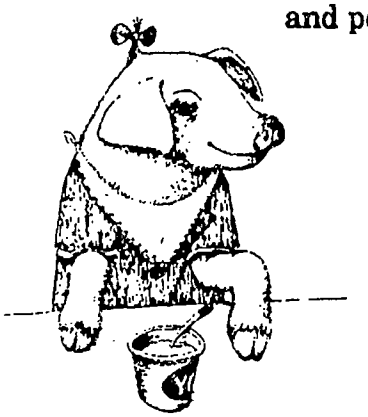


This little piggy stayed home

and had fun helping her dad wash the car
and rake the yard
and eat up all the strawberries.

This little piggy had roast beef

with mashed potatoes
and gravy
and pecan pie.



This little piggy had none

because she preferred yogurt
and fresh veggies
and very low cholesterol.

This little piggy cried wee, wee, wee

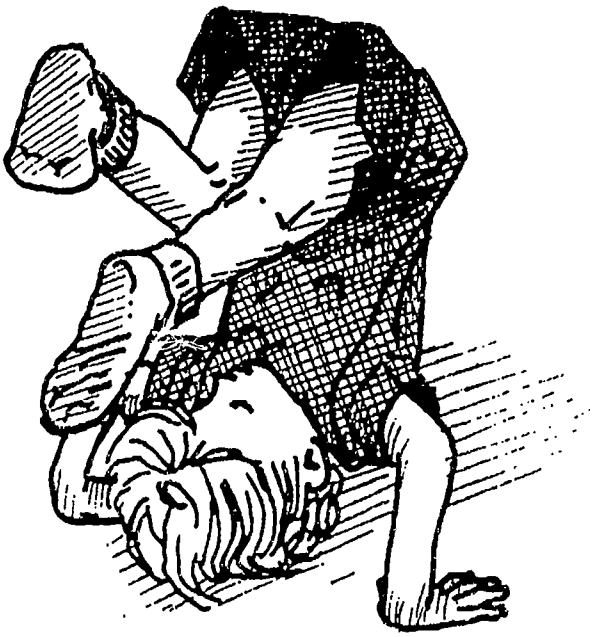
all the way home
because she lost her mittens
and it was the third pair this year.

But she felt better after her mom gave her a hug.

Think About This

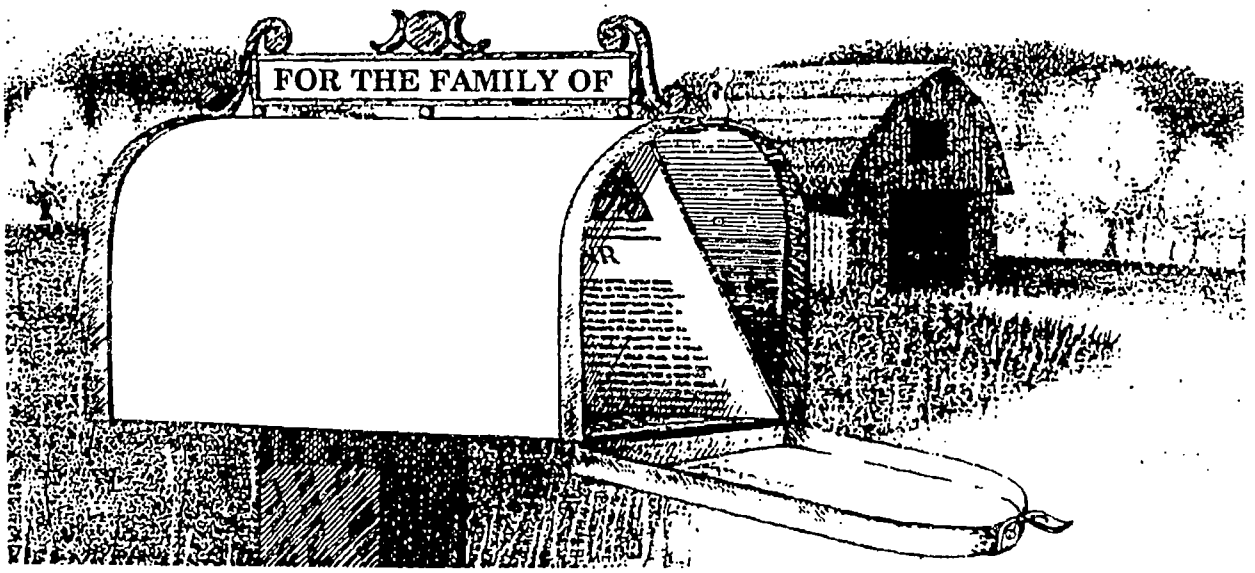
This little poem is a chance for your child to use his imagination. Read it aloud first. Then go back and talk about the questions. Encourage all kinds of answers.

Some of the questions may be difficult for younger children. Just remember that there are no right answers.



What if people walked
upside down?
What if there were
no music?
How would we manage with
no light switch?
What if all numbers were
odd?
What if we didn't have
scissors?
What if the stars didn't
twinkle?

What if we couldn't
imagine. . .



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Family Connections 2

Never Too Old for Hugs

It's true that actions speak louder than words, at least sometimes. Your child will react to your body language and facial expressions as much as to your words.

Some of the non-verbal language we use comes from our eyes. Look your child in the eyes to reassure him that you're paying attention. If you say, "That's interesting, son" and look someplace else, you are mixing your message.

To look children in the eye, adults have to move down. Kneel, or sit down with your child when you talk with him. Listen carefully. Show that you are listening. If he asks a question, think about it. Give him the same respect you show your friends and other adults.

Touch him. Touch signals concern. Give hugs, not just to show approval, or as a greeting. Give hugs for no reason at all. Give kisses, too. Good-night kisses are the most common, but kids love good-morning kisses just as much.

It's sad that we grow out of hugging our children. Remember when your child was a baby? Didn't you urge him to give hugs and kisses? "Give Daddy a kiss." "Gramma wants a kiss." "Show Auntie what good hugs you give." Chances are that when he gave hugs, he got hugs in return. That message is good for a lifetime.

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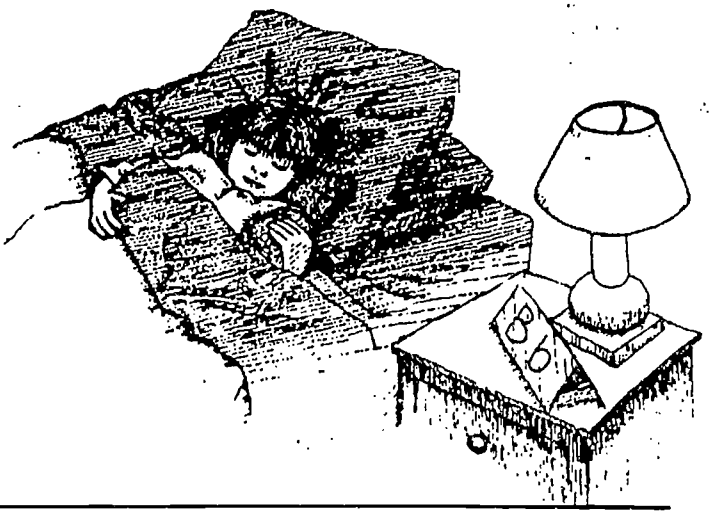
Look For A Letter

You can increase your child's interest in letters with this game. Just before she goes to bed, have her choose a letter from the alphabet. Together, print the letter on a piece of cardboard. Suppose the letter is B. Do a capital B and a small b. Put it beside her bed, so she will see it when she wakes up.

That will be her letter of the day. Have her look for Bs all day. She can see Bs on the cereal box. She might find a B on a calendar. She could look at cans in the cupboard and find lots of Bs.

You can tell her words that begin with a B, like "bed," so she can hear the sound. Suggest places where she might see Bs during her school day. Ask her to remember some of the Bs so she can tell you about them after school.

At bedtime, she can choose a new letter for tomorrow.



Big and Small Voices

Children sometimes have trouble knowing when it is okay to use a loud (big) voice and when to use a soft (small) voice. Spend a little time to make clear what you expect.

First, practice "loud" and "soft." Ask him to say something to you in a loud voice. "Can you hear me?" is a good test question. After he says it loudly to you, have him ask the same question in a soft voice. Show how "soft" can be different: he can speak in a whisper or in a voice that you can hear across the dinner table.

Now, talk about when to use a loud voice. One example is speaking loudly to call for help. Another is calling the dog—or calling a child in from play outdoors! He might use the example of a loud voice to show anger.

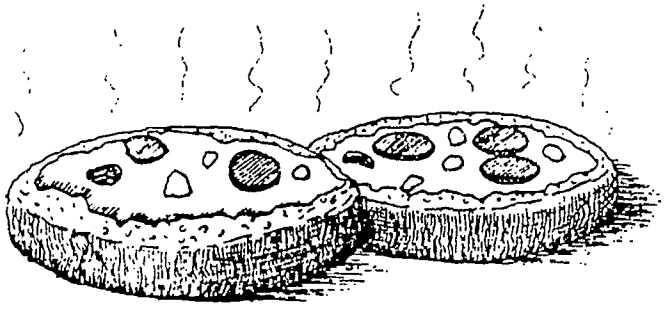
Ask him to think of times when it is important to use a soft voice. For instance, using a soft voice is important when the baby is sleeping.

Some families use the description "small voice," as in: "We're going into the library. Use your small voice, please." Or, "We're going to the football game tonight; you can use your big voice there."

Quick-and-Easy Pizza

This pizza-type snack is easy to prepare and nutritious. Children love it, because each child can have an individual pizza just her size. Let her help you prepare them.

You need: English muffins, prepared spaghetti sauce, and thinly sliced cheese. Mozzarella cheese is the kind used on real pizza. You can use your child's favorite cheese of almost any type: cheddar, Swiss, or longhorn will do just fine.



Toast as many muffin halves as you need. Let your little helper spread spaghetti sauce on each half. Cover with the cheese. Put these mini pizzas on a cookie sheet. Cook in a 400-degree oven until the cheese melts and browns lightly.

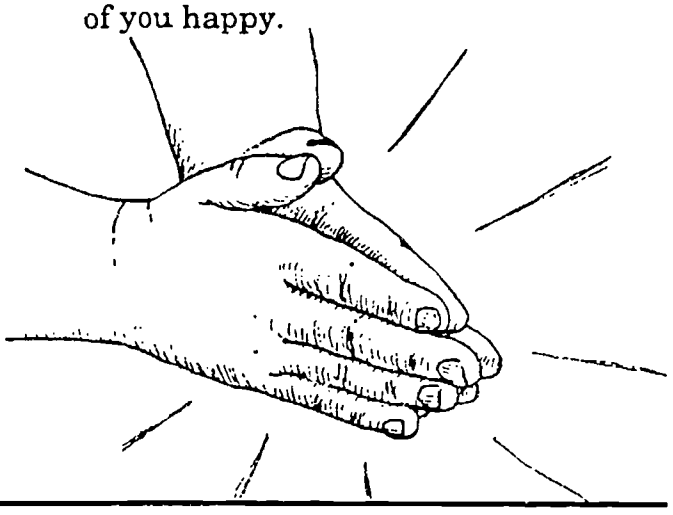
A good way to get your child to eat some extra vegetables is to slice them onto the pizzas. Use green or red peppers, onions, broccoli, or any other veggies you have on hand. Precook the vegetable slices if your family doesn't like them pretty crisp. You can put the veggies under the cheese or on top of it, as you prefer.

If You're Happy

Just for fun, here's a song for you and your youngster to sing together. Sing the verse through, then ask your child to sing with you. Both of you can think of many other movements to add verses: rub your chin, pat your tummy, pull your ear. If you don't know the tune, make one up.

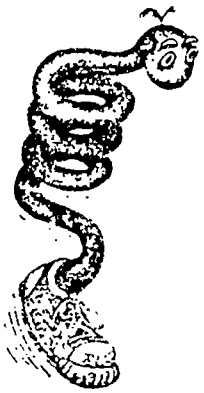
If you're happy and you know it
clap your hands [clap, clap].
If you're happy and you know it
clap your hands [clap, clap].
If you're happy and you know it,
And you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands [clap, clap].

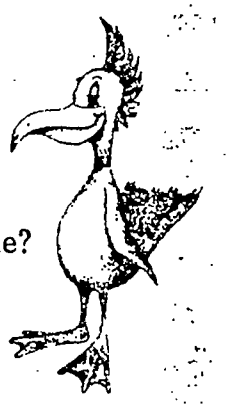
This is a good song for the whole family to do together. Everyone can suggest new verses. After you have done as many verses as you want, talk about what kinds of things make each of you happy.



—A READ-ALOUD

Silly Somethings



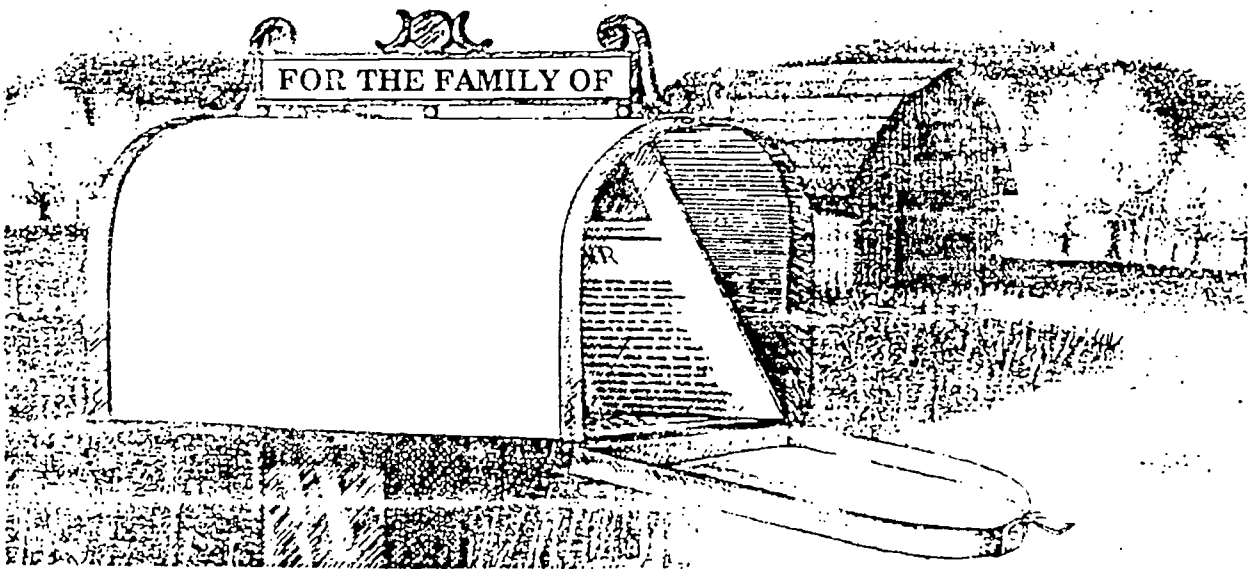


Justin has fifty-six jibbelers
Brett has forty-four.
If you would like some jibbelers,
We could probably find some more.

You don't know whether you'd like some?
You don't know what they are?
Then how about some iggalets
We have more of those by far!

Oh, you don't know about iggalets?
Well, why don't you choose a sloo?
Jibbeler, sloo, and iggalet
Or maybe a winoo.

The thing about Silly Somethings is,
They come right out of the blue.
So if none of these appeal to you
Just think up some that do.



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Family Connections 2

What Children Need Every Day

Every day children need encouragement to explore, to gather information about their world, and to discover things that are new to them.

You can encourage your child.

Every day children need to celebrate what they accomplish. They need to spend time with adults who are interested in them and care about them.

You can celebrate with your child.

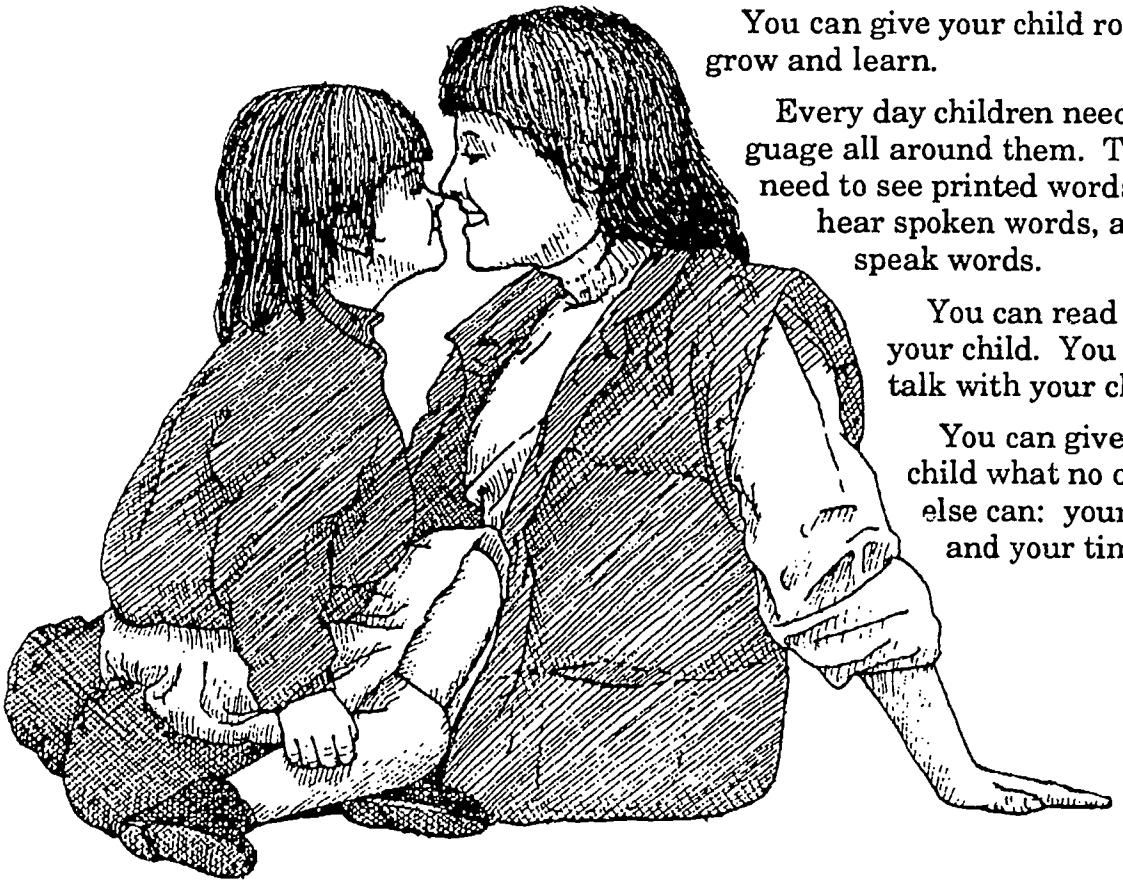
Every day children need to be protected from harsh punishment, from too much disapproval. They need room to be curious, room for trial-and-error learning.

You can give your child room to grow and learn.

Every day children need language all around them. They need to see printed words, and hear spoken words, and to speak words.

You can read to your child. You can talk with your child.

You can give your child what no one else can: your self and your time.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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A Fill-the-blanks Story

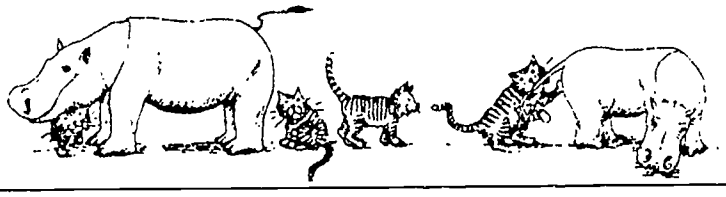
This is a story for your child to complete any way she likes. Explain to her that she may decide what words go in the blank spaces. As you read aloud, pause to give her time to decide what she wants to say.

If you read the story with more than one child, let them take turns filling the blanks. You and your child could also do the story together. Or you can do all of these variations.

Once upon a time, I knew a purple_____.
He lived in_____, and shared everything
with a_____. Together, they
built_____and started a_____.

When spring came, they_____.
I don't know why the purple_____.
That's what happened. If I ever see another purple_____,
I will be sure to_____.

She may like one of the stories so much she will want you to write it down for her. Let her choose a title for the story and print her name on it.



One version of the story goes like this. Read it to your child after she has done one of her own.

The Purple Hippopotamus

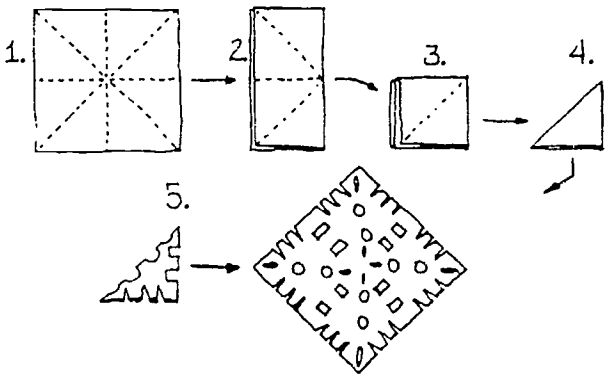
Once upon a time, I knew a purple *hippopotamus*. He lived in *West Waterfall*, and shared everything with a *grandma hippo and four young tigers*. Together, they built *a tree house*, and started a *banana cake business*.

When spring came. they *decided to add turnip cake to their business*. I don't know why the purple *hippopotamus thought his customers would like turnip cake. They didn't like it, and didn't buy it, and the business closed*. That's what happened. If I ever see another purple *hippo*, I will be sure to *warn him about turnip cake*.

Summer Snowflakes

This is an activity that looks like art, but is also related to math. It helps young children begin to get a sense of geometric patterns. You will enjoy doing this with your child. Have fun, and keep it simple.

You will need paper and safety scissors. Newspaper works well because it is not too heavy. If you want plain white paper, don't use a kind that is heavy.



1. Start with a six-inch square piece of paper.
2. Have your child fold the square in half.
3. Fold it in half again.
4. Fold it in half again, on the diagonal.
5. Cut out simple shapes.

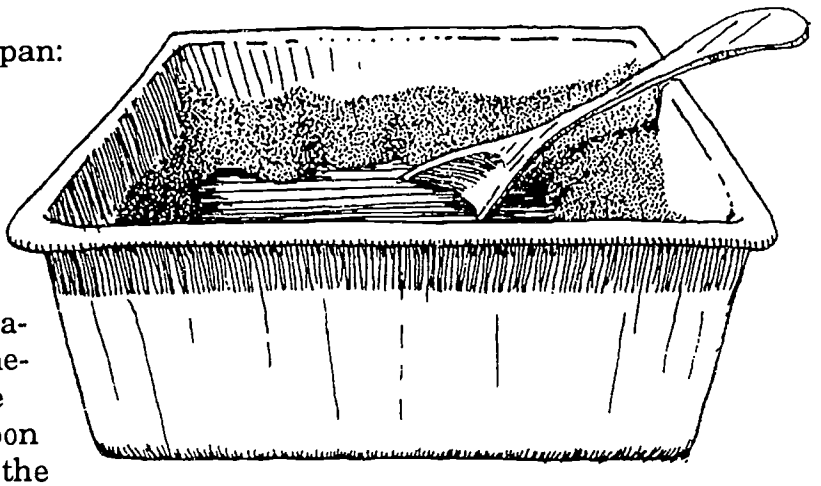
When you unfold the paper, there—as if by magic—is a snowflake. Your child will love making them. Talk about how every child, like every snowflake, is different and special.

Bake A Puddle Cake

Here's an easy recipe with a funny name that your child will enjoy helping you bake. Let him do the measuring.

He can practice his numbers by cutting a serving for each family member's dessert.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Sift into an ungreased 8 x 8 x 2 pan:
- 1 and 1/2 cups sifted flour
- 3 tablespoons cocoa
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon soda



Make a puddle in the center by adding 6 tablespoons salad oil, 1 teaspoon vanilla, and 1 tablespoon vinegar. Pour 1 cup cold water into the puddle. Let him stir with a big spoon until the mixture is smooth. Bake the cake for 35 to 40 minutes.

—A READ-ALOUD

Those Perfectly Wonderful Pandas

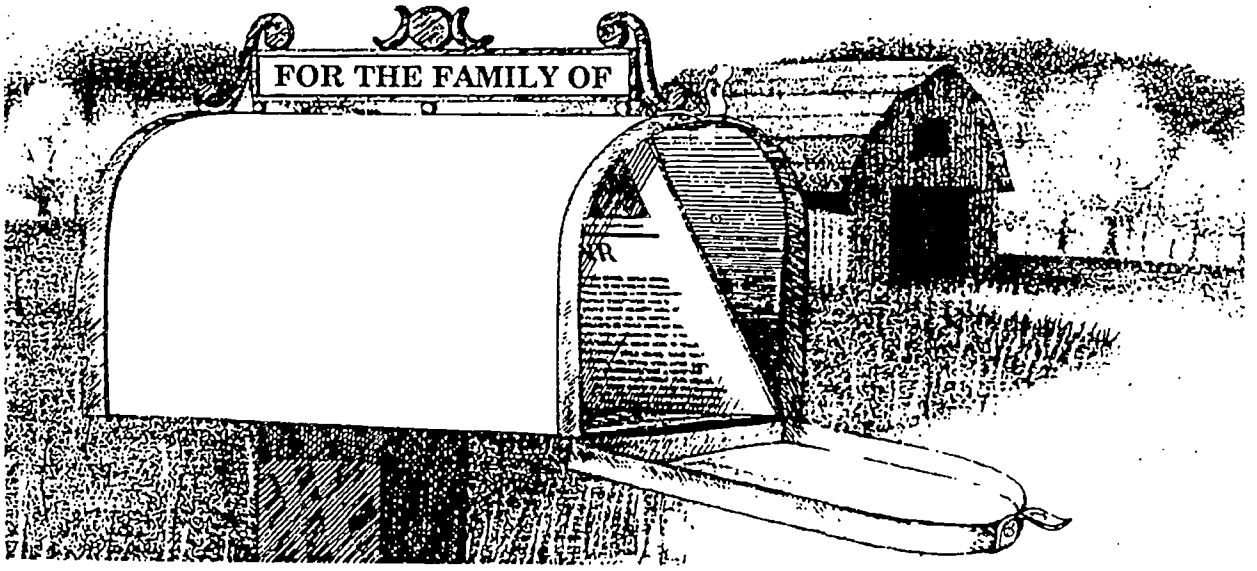
If ever you see a Panda bear
I know you won't forget.
As big as they are—
And they are big—
They're the dearest bears yet.

They don't eat meat.
They don't eat grain.
You'll laugh at what they crave.

They eat bamboo.
It's true, they do.
They eat bamboo.

They strip each branch,
And chew the leaves
And then they crunch the rest.

They sit and eat so nicely,
Their manners are the best,
And when they're done,
You'll wish that one,
Could come and be your guest.



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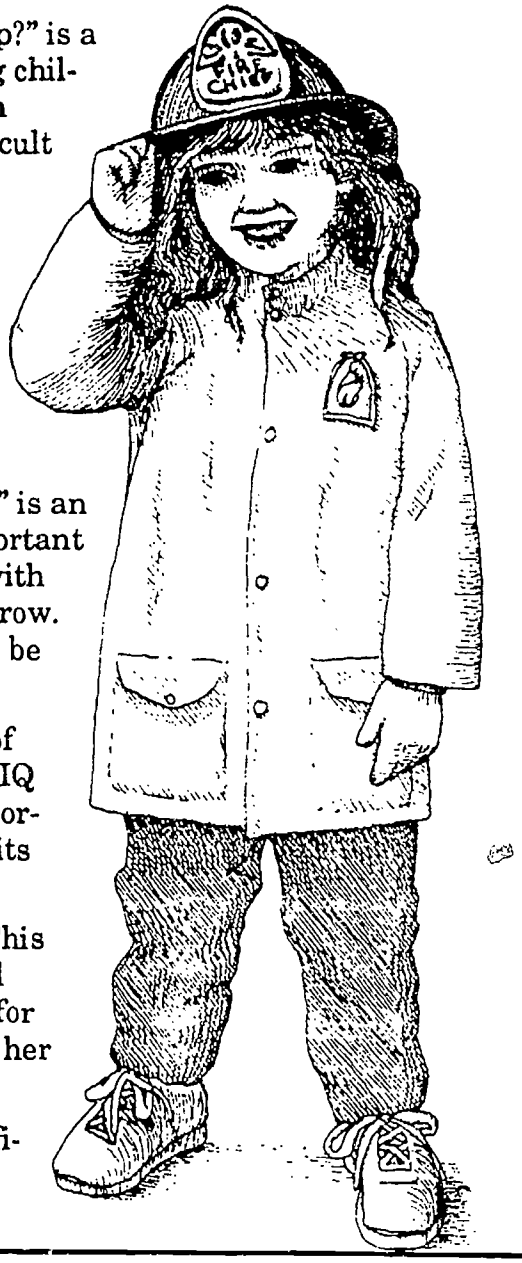
Family Connections 2

When They Grow Up



"What are you going to be when you grow up?" is a question children hear often. Many very young children welcome the question, and enjoy giving an answer. Later, it is harder to answer that difficult question.

Young children will, in most cases, change their answers often—weekly, or even daily. Your child may want to be an astronaut on Monday, a firefighter on Tuesday, and a basketball player by Friday. She may not understand what goes into being any of these things, and it isn't important at this stage.

"What do you want to be when you grow up" is an important question, though, and it is very important that you treat her answer seriously. Treat it with respect, even if it is going to be different tomorrow. Having dreams for the future helps children to be successful learners.

Some research shows that having a vision of their future is more important than children's IQ in predicting their success. It is also more important than how much money the family has, or its social standing.

Encourage your child to want to succeed. This doesn't mean pushing her to achievements and hurrying her childhood. Time for play is time for learning. But let her know that you believe in her ability to be what she dreams of being.

Your confidence in your child gives her confidence in herself.

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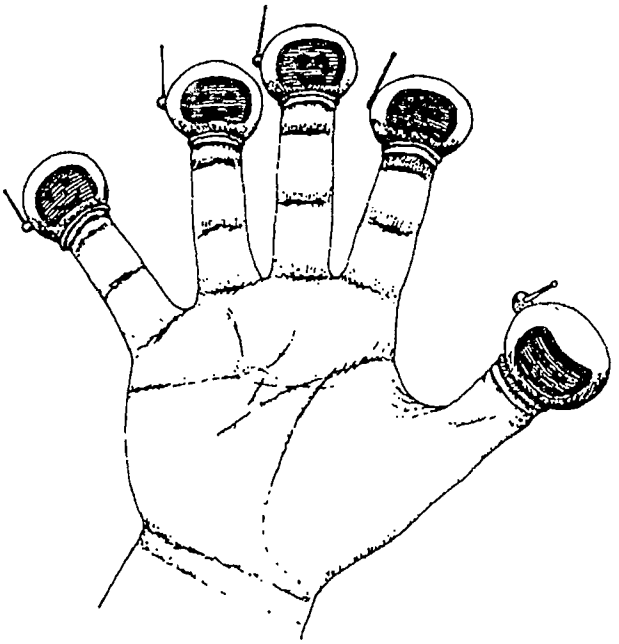
One Little, Two Little

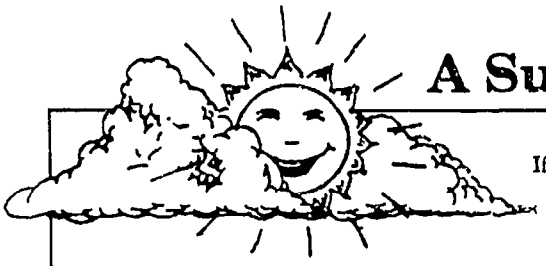
The **One little, two little, three little** tune may be a familiar favorite. A variation you and your child will enjoy uses names of jobs people do.

Let each finger be one of whatever occupation your child chooses. **Astronaut** is an example. Do the song with your child. Start with a thumb and wiggle each finger in turn as you sing or chant.

One little, two little, three little
astronauts. . .
Four little, five little, six little
astronauts. . .
Seven little, eight little, nine little
astronauts. . .
Ten little astronauts.

You can use many other job titles: doctor, lawyer, miner, and firefighter are a few possibilities. Let your child think of as many as she wants. If you need an extra syllable to complete the rhythm, just add the word "here," as in "Ten little doctors here."

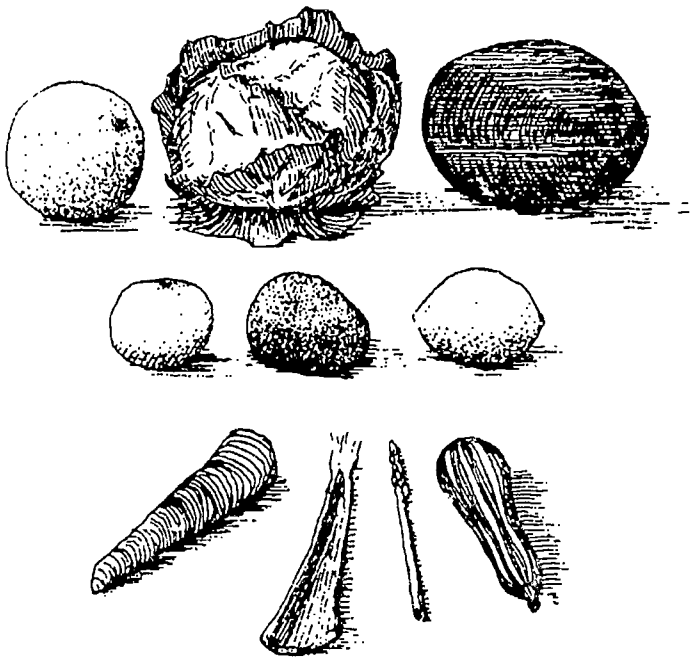




A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Shopping for Shapes and Sizes



Next time you and your youngster go to the grocery store, look for shapes in the produce section.

What is round and big? Grapefruit, cabbage, and melon are some choices.

What is round and small? Look for oranges, some potatoes, some limes.

What is long and thin? How about carrots, celery stalks, asparagus, and young zucchini?

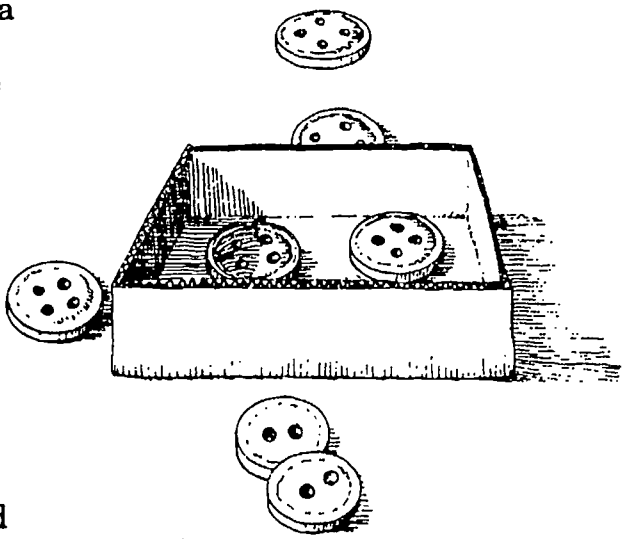
He will enjoy looking for unusual shapes: bananas, string beans, and pea pods are a few. You might discover a vegetable that is new to you, such as jicama, which comes in many strange shapes.

Buttons in the Box

This game makes giving and taking directions fun. To play, you need a small box with a lid and several buttons. (If you don't have a button collection, use beans, pennies, or bottle caps.)

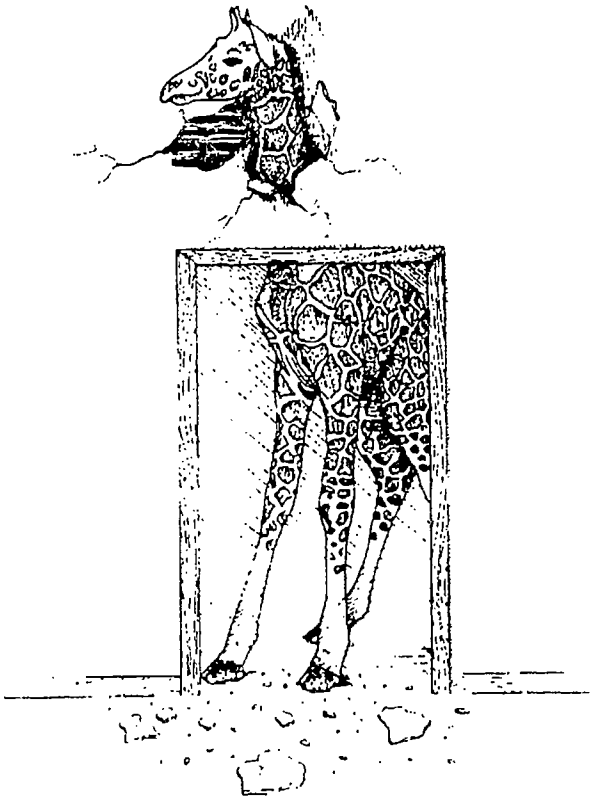
You can begin by giving the first direction. "Put the button **in** the box." You can use **on, over, under, in front of, behind,** and **beside**. Take turns giving and following directions.

To add variety, use different numbers in the directions: "Put 6 buttons in the box" or "Put 3 buttons **under** the box." To make the game more of a challenge, give two or more directions: "Put 1 button **behind** the box, and 2 buttons **in front of** the box."



—A READ-ALOUD

About Being Tall



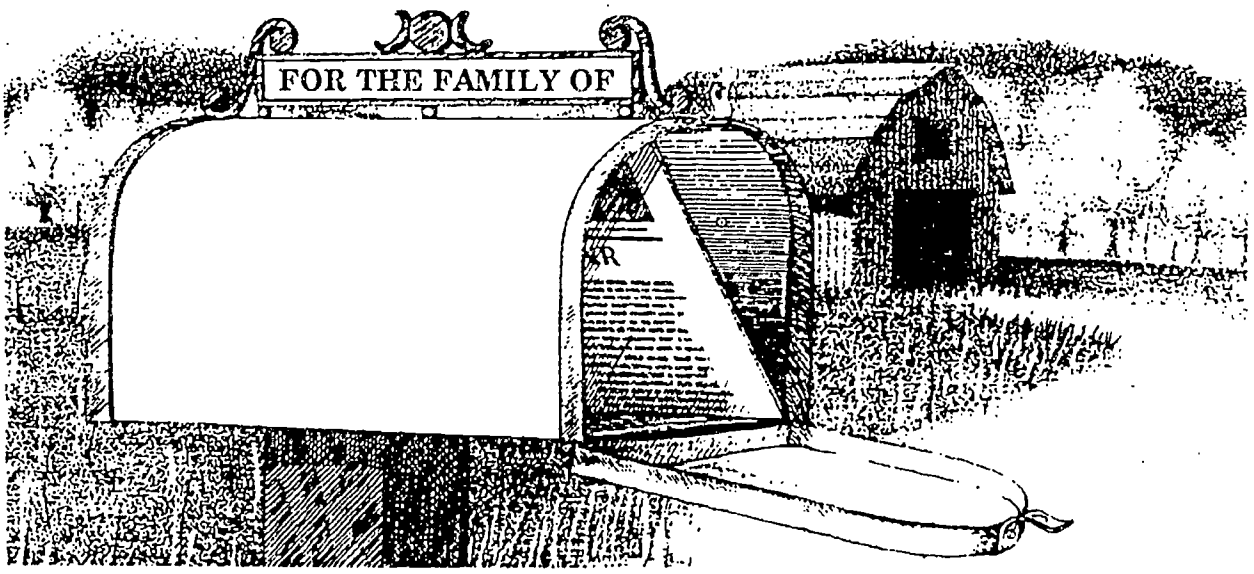
When you're wishing to be tall,
Consider the giraffe.

He can't get through a door
without bumping his head.

He gets caught in tree branches,
and ceiling fans,
and the longest ladders.

It's just about impossible
for him to hide
from his mama.

It isn't always easy,
being tall.



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Family Connections 2

The Apple of Your Eye

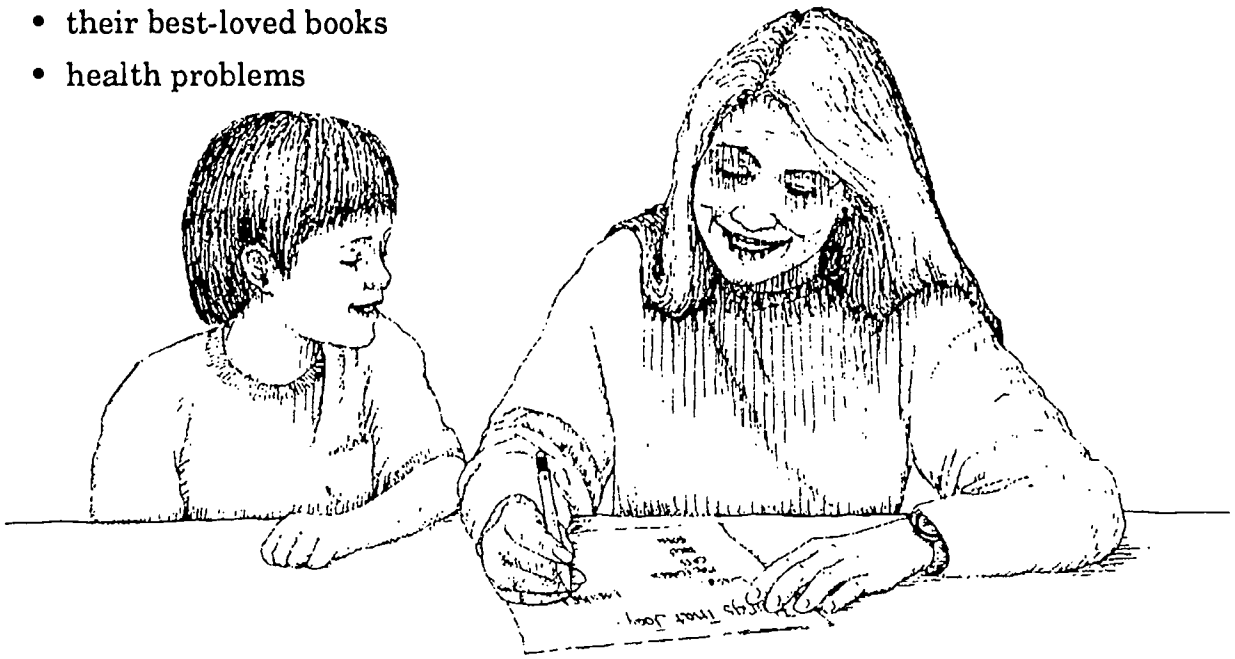
You know your child—the apple of your eye—better than anyone else does. You can make your child's experiences in school happier by letting his teacher know important things about him.

Some of the things teachers say they like to know about children:

- their likes and dislikes
- things that make them sad or afraid
- things that make them happy
- their favorite toys
- their best-loved books
- health problems

Another thing that is helpful for teachers to know is what time of day your child is at his best. Some of us are most efficient and productive early in the day. Others start more slowly and last longer.

You may know all these things about your child without needing time to think about it. Some you may not have considered. Spend some time with your child talking about those things. Then take time for a visit with his teacher. Everyone will benefit—especially the apple of your eye.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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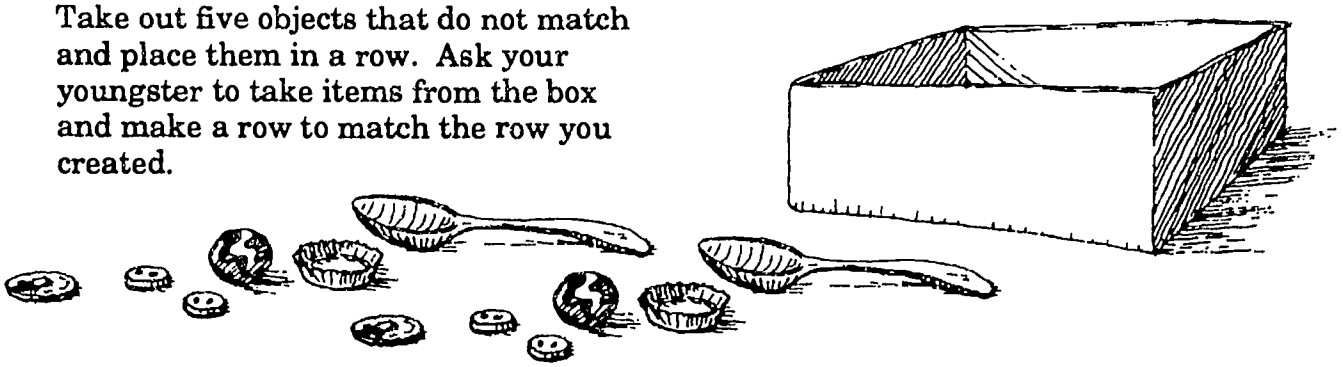
Fun With Numbers

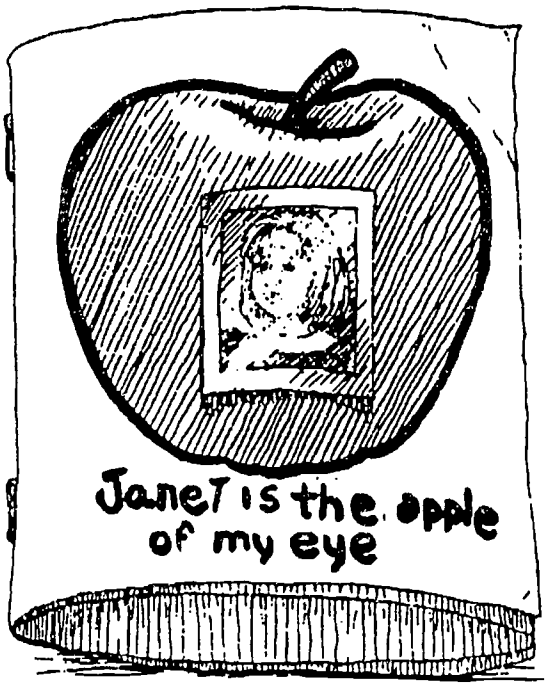
You can help your child get ready for math and learn to enjoy it. This activity uses matching pairs of objects. You and your child can do this numbers game with bottle caps, buttons, marbles, spoons, coins—whatever you have on hand.

Put a pair of each object into a box. Take out five objects that do not match and place them in a row. Ask your youngster to take items from the box and make a row to match the row you created.

Have him talk about each item as he puts it in place: "The first item is a bottle cap. The second item is a spoon." For variety, pick up the items and create a new model for him to complete. Then let him make a model for you to follow. Be sure you also describe each item as you put it down.



Apple-of-my-eye Book

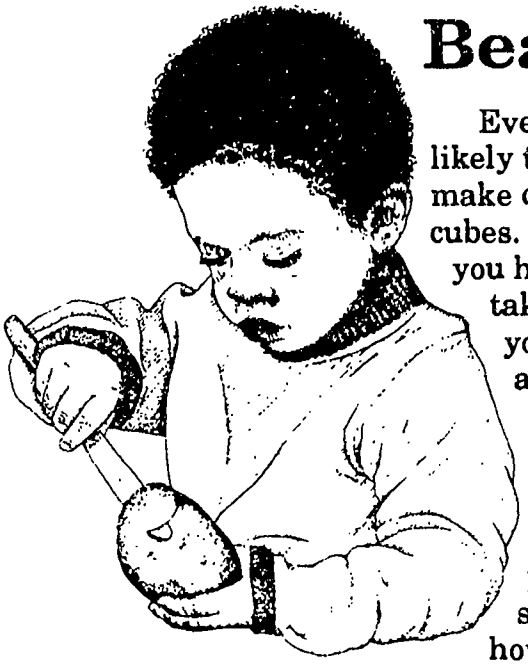


Your child would cherish a book that you can make together about her. You can make a blank book as a merry-unbirthday gift for her. Fold a few sheets of standard-size typing paper in half. Staple or stitch them on the folded side.

Draw a big red apple on the first sheet to make a picture frame. Glue a photo of your child in the frame. Print a title: "(your child's name) is the apple of my eye."

Set aside some time for the two of you to spend together. Ask her to tell you some of her favorite things so you can write them in the book. The topics listed on the front page of this issue of **Family Connections** will make an interesting little volume that both of you will love.

Beary Good Soup



Even children who turn up their noses at vegetables are likely to eat vegetable soup that they help make. You can make quick stock if you use some beef or chicken bouillon cubes. Your child can choose the vegetables from whatever you have on hand. Or have him help you make a list and take a trip to the market together. If you have a recipe you like, fine. If not, you can make up soup as you go along.

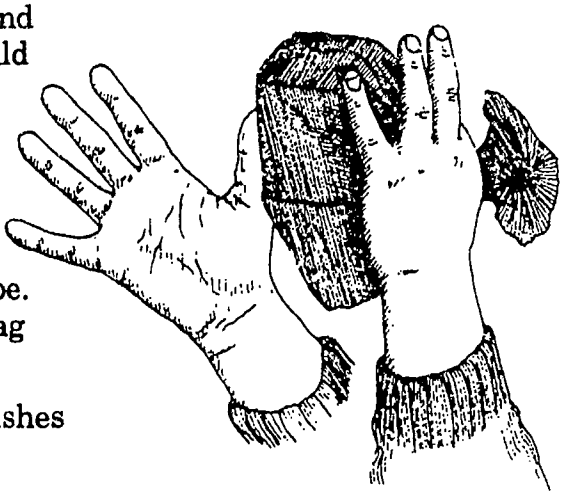
Some popular vegetable choices are carrots, potatoes, celery, peas, corn, green beans, and tomatoes. Even very young children can wash the vegetables. With your help, your child might be able to do some peeling and scraping. He can also cut vegetables as you supervise. It doesn't matter whether slices are even, or how finely the veggies are chopped.

To make the soup really special, let him put in a handful of bear pasta or alphabet pasta. Some markets now have the little bears in colors. If you don't have special pasta, a handful of elbow macaroni or rice will do just as well. He will also enjoy sprinkling in salt and other seasonings.

Here's another opportunity to talk with your budding scientist about how the vegetables change as they cook. You can talk about colors and tastes, too.

What Makes Thunder

Thunderstorms scare some children. Others find thunder and lightning exciting. However your child feels about thunder, it offers a good learning opportunity.

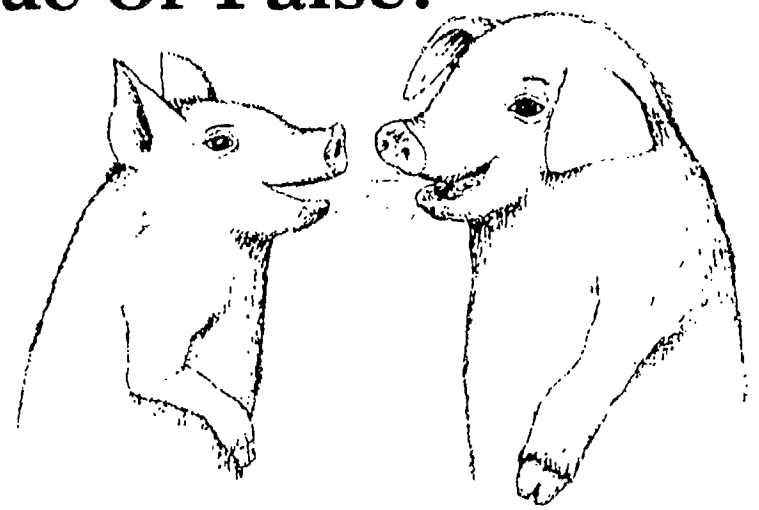


With a paper bag, your child can make a big bang and learn about thunder. Have her blow into the bag until it fills with air. Show her how to hold the bag's neck tightly so the air can't escape. When she hits the bag with her other hand, the bag will break with a loud crack.

Tell her that air makes a loud noise when it rushes together. Lightning forces air apart, and when it rushes back together, thunder is the result.

—A READ-ALOUD

True Or False?



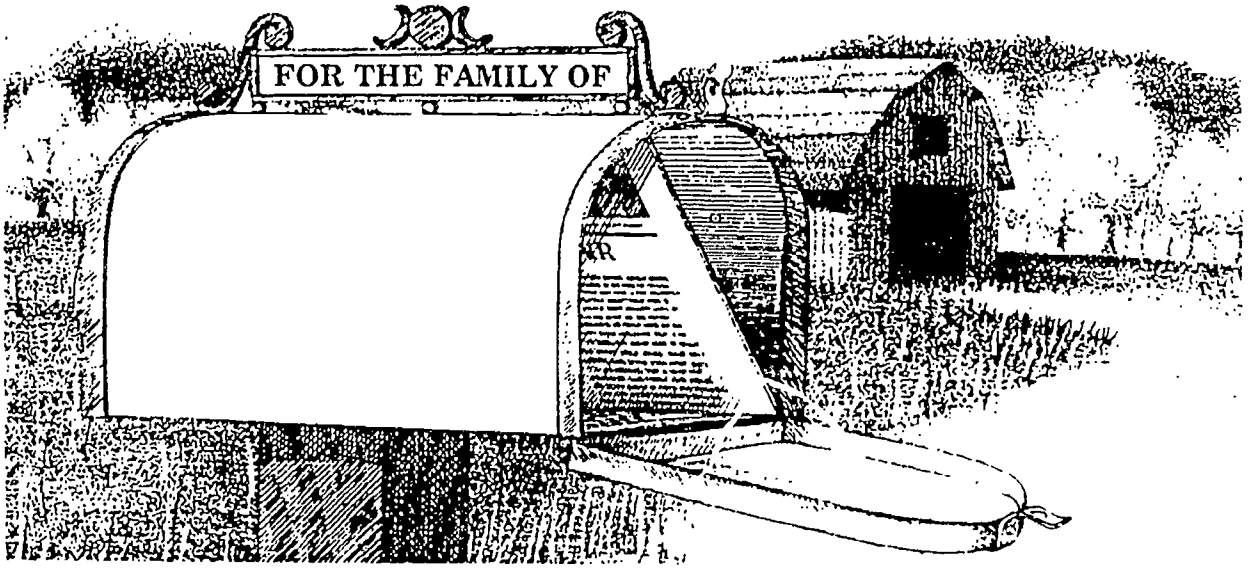
Is it so? Is it so?
Clap twice for **Yes**,
[clap two times]
Three times for **No**.
[clap three times]

Pigs can talk.
Birds can fly.
Tables walk in the sky.

Rain falls up.
Babies cry.
Apples are blue.
Kites go high.

Horses eat hay.
Kittens do, too.
I like pizza.
So do you.

This special read-aloud gives your child a chance to practice listening and choosing. When you read the line "Pigs can talk," for example, she will clap three times. Be sure to allow plenty of time. You might want to read through the whole verse once before doing any clapping. You and she can add lots of other choices. It doesn't matter whether they are in rhymes.



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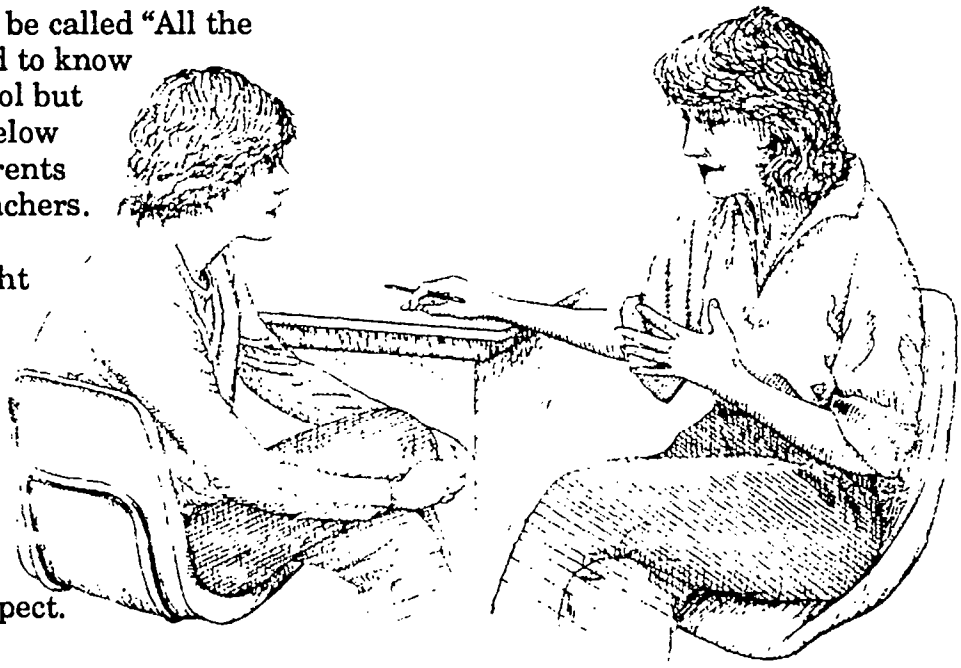
Family Connections 2

Ask Your Child's Teacher

This message could be called "All the things you ever wanted to know about your child's school but were afraid to ask." Below are some questions parents ask their children's teachers. Some of the questions show that parents might be expecting the children to do things they are not ready for. It is important to ask about anything that concerns you; teachers welcome the opportunity to talk with you about what you can expect.



Kindergarten and the early elementary grades could look very different from the way you remember them. Your child's school may have new ways of teaching and use new kinds of materials. Be in touch with your child's teacher. It may be hard to reach her by telephone, but you can send a note along with your child. She will be grateful for your interest.

- What kinds of things will my child do in your class?
- When will she learn to read?
- How do you teach children to read and write?
- Will she learn math this school year?
- Where does she play at school?
- Will she bring work home to do after school?
- How many children are in her class?
- Can I visit the school during the day and come to your class?
- Will we have meetings to talk about my child?
- How do you discipline my child?

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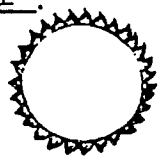
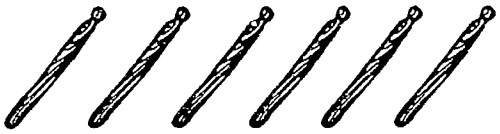
Rhyming with Numbers

Read aloud with your child to help her complete the verse with the number that rhymes with the word in bold type.

If you think of a shining **sun**
The **number** that rhymes with
sun is 1.



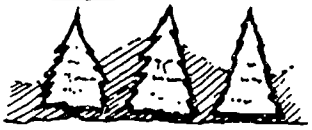
If you want to pick up **sticks**
The **number** that rhymes with
sticks is ____.



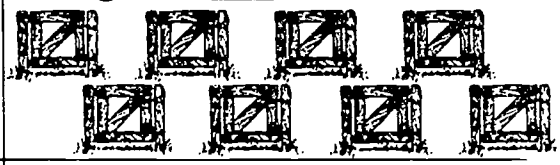
If you think of a basketball shoe
The **number** that rhymes with
shoe is ____.

If you know someone named **Kevin**
The **number** that rhymes with
Kevin is ____.

If you think of an evergreen **tree**
The **number** that rhymes with
tree is ____.

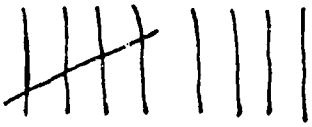


If you want to think of a wooden **gate**
The **number** that rhymes with
gate is ____.



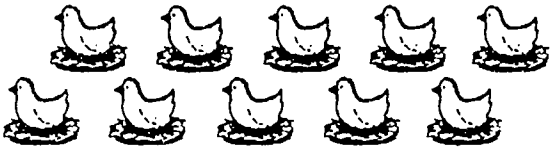
If you think of an open **door**
The **number** that rhymes with
door is ____.

If you put things in a **line**
The **number** that rhymes with
line is ____.



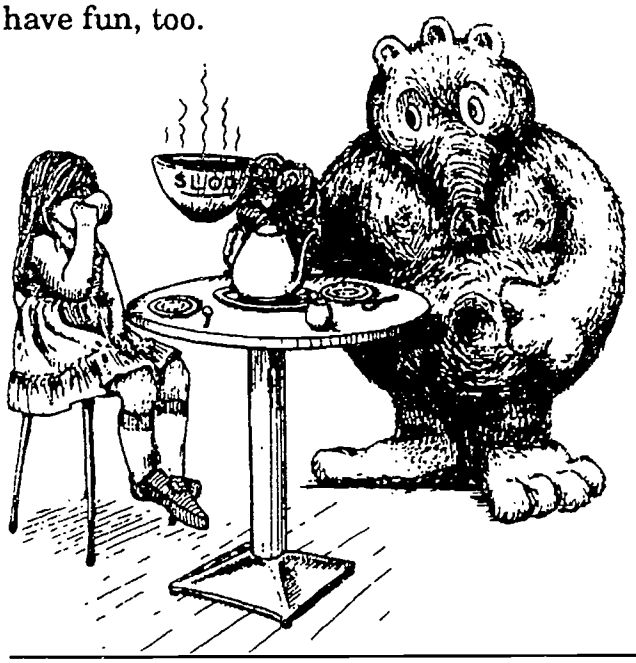
If you think of bees in a **hive**
The **number** that rhymes with
hive is ____.

If you see a big, fat **hen**
The **number** that rhymes with
hen is ____.



You Decide

This is a way to let your child get some practice in making decisions and have fun, too.



Plan with her to have a pretend party. She can have any refreshments she wants, but no more than four items. Encourage her to make a long list of her choices first. Write down the list so she can cross off the things she decides to omit. Then make a final list of her four selections.

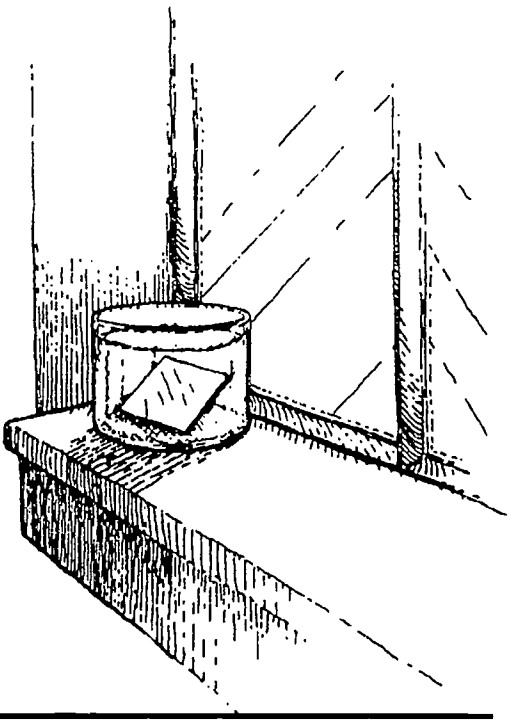
Do the same thing with people she would like to invite. Since this is a pretend party she is planning, she should think of people or characters in stories, television shows, movies and other famous people to invite. Limit the number of people to six. As she makes her final choices, you can talk together about her reasons for choosing certain people.

You Can Make A Rainbow

One of life's wonders is rainbows. Children especially love them, and they don't come along as often as your child would like. You can make one with a glass of water, a small mirror, and some sunshine.

Give your child a glass about half full of water. Let him put a small mirror in the glass and set it where sun can shine on the mirror. He can then turn the glass until rainbow colors reflect against the wall or ceiling.

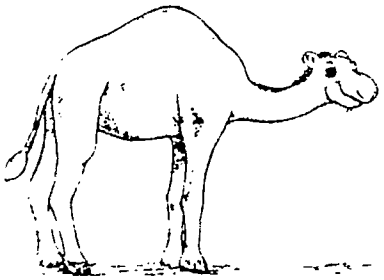
This type of activity helps your child develop curiosity about how things happen. When he asks questions you can't answer, suggest ways that you can learn things together. Take him to the library often; it's still a great place for finding out "why."



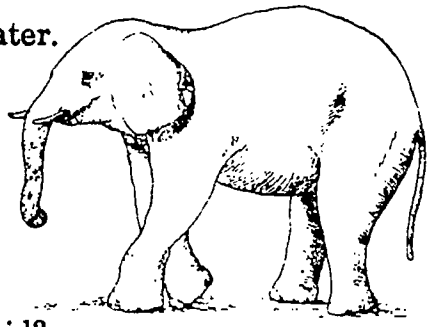
—A READ-ALOUD

Some Curious Things

Put your hands on your ears.
If you were a cricket,
you would put your hands
on your knees to touch your ears.

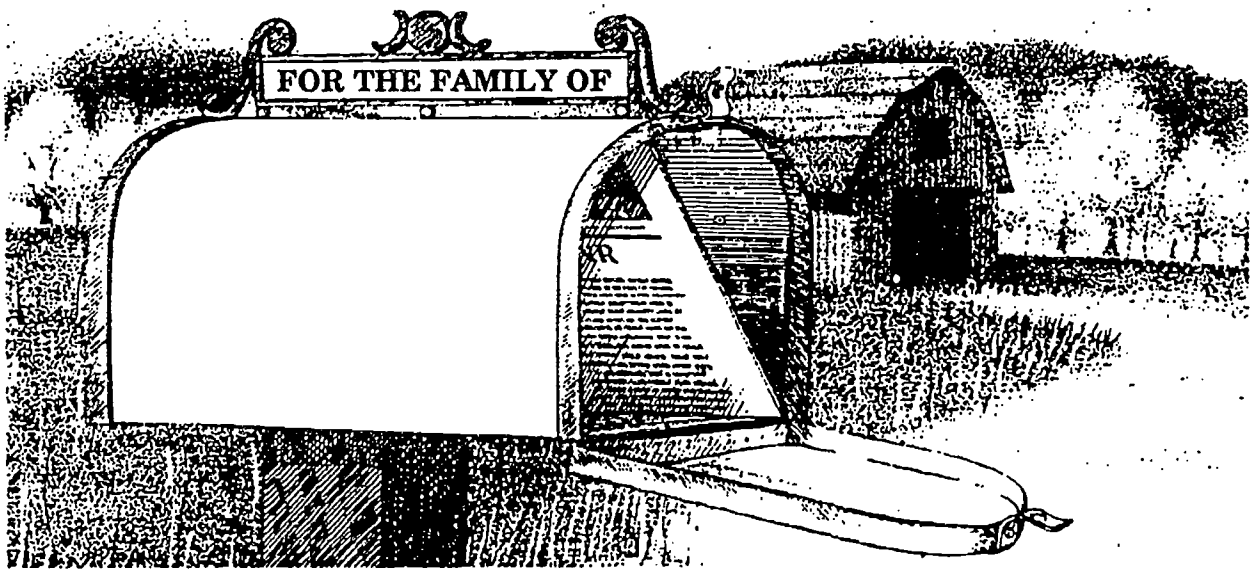


Bet your mom tells you
you should drink 8 glasses
of water every day.
If you were a camel
you could go 17 days
without a drink of water.



If you were a white elephant
you would drink
60 gallons of water a day
and eat 500 pounds of food.

Aren't you glad you're a kid?



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Family Connections 2

Teach Respect By Respecting

We hear a lot of talk about how kids don't have any respect for adults these days. We expect children to respect their parents and other adults. It's too bad that adults so often don't respect children. Respect, like most things, is best learned by example. Respect must be mutual.

Children need to learn many behaviors and skills to become able to function on their own. If you have faith in your child's ability to learn, and if you show it, you are respecting your child.

You show respect when you let him know that he is capable of changing the way he behaves at times. You show respect when you let him make choices, and you are careful to give him choices he is able to make. You show respect when you let him think for himself and encourage him to tell you what he is thinking.

You respect him when you give him opportunities to practice skills. You respect him with discipline that helps him learn self-control. You respect him when you listen to him. You respect him when you assign tasks to do at home to make it clear that he shares responsibility for the family.

When you treat him with respect, he learns, from your good example, to respect others.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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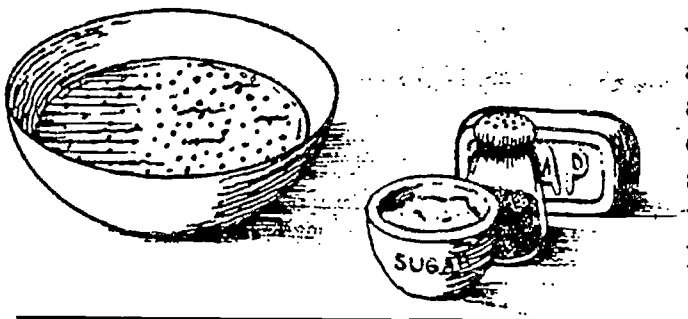
Soap and Pepper

Here's an experiment that may surprise you as it provides scientific fun for your child. You need a cup or bowl of water, black pepper, a small piece of soap, and a little sugar.

Have your child sprinkle pepper on the water and see it float.



Now dip the soap into the water. What happens to the pepper? (It should float away from the soap.)

Now sprinkle sugar into the water. What happens? (The pepper should run toward the sugar.)

When he asks why—and he surely will—tell him that the soap gives off an oily film that drives the pepper away. Sugar acts like a sponge, and draws water to it. The pepper follows along. (Wood shavings or bits of cork will behave in the same way as the pepper.)

Colors That You Eat

When you and your child are at the grocery store together next time, see how many different colors you can find among the fruits and vegetables. As you count the colors, you can talk about how many different shades of the same color you can see.

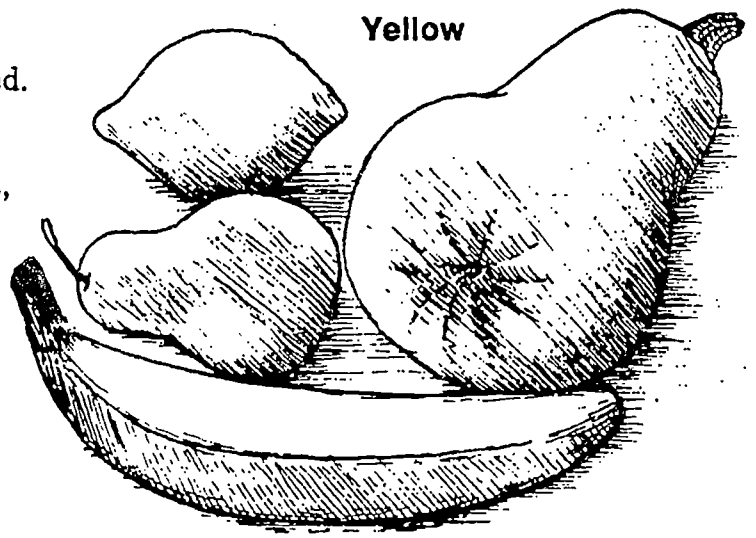
See red, for example. There are red tomatoes, apples, strawberries, and beets, and not one is the same red.

Other colors to watch for:

- yellow—lemons, squash, pears, bananas
- orange—tangerines, carrots, oranges
- green—lettuce, spinach, limes
- white—cauliflower, onions, garlic
- purple—eggplant, grapes, cabbage

Some vegetables are more than one color. Cabbage, for instance, is also green—or, in some cases, close to white. One variety of lettuce is called red, but the leaves are also green.

There's lots to talk about here, and many questions for your child to think of.



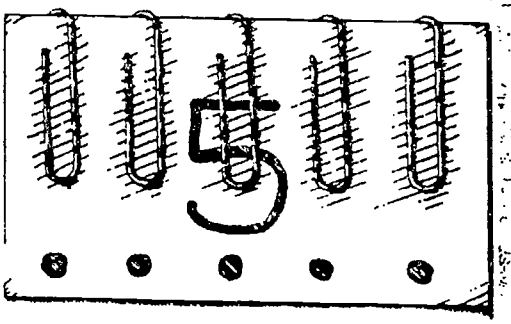
Clip the Numbers

With a box of paper clips and some cardboard pieces, you and your child can play a very useful numbers game. Your child will have fun while she learns about forming sets, an important math skill, and practices counting. She will also learn to use paper clips, which is good for finger dexterity.

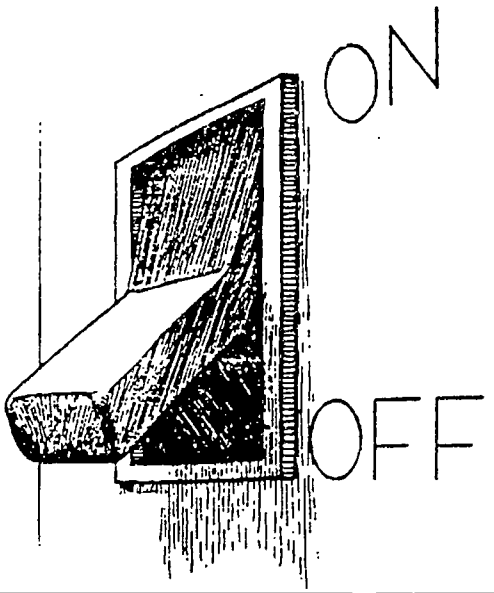
Put large numbers from 1 through 9 on cardboard pieces. (File cards are handy for this.) On the edge of each card, put enough dots to match the number. She can then count the dots to know how many paper clips to clip on each card.

Some things to talk about as you play together: How many clips are on this card? How did you know how many to put on the card? Can you show me a card that has the same number of clips that you are old? How about a card that has fewer clips than your age? Which card has the same number of clips as you have eyes? Which card has the number of clips that you have fingers on one hand?

You may think of other ways to play with the numbers. To end the game, ask her to lay out the cards on the table from the one having the smallest number of clips to the one with the largest number of clips.



Take Turns with Opposites



You and your youngster can make each other think as you take turns with opposites. First you think of a word, and ask her to say its opposite. Start with an easy pair. You say "in" and she will say "out."

Looking around the room will give you both ideas. The light switch makes you think of "off" and "on." The sink reminds you of "wet" and "dry" or "hot" and "cold."

People might remind you of opposites, too. "Brother-sister" or "aunt-uncle." What the people look like could also suggest opposites: "short-tall" or "thin-fat."

—A READ-ALOUD

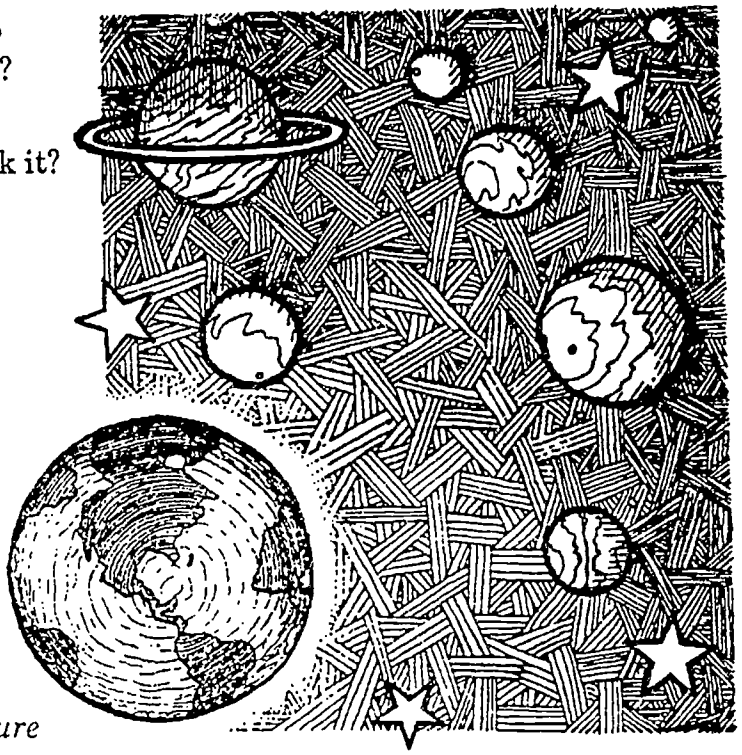
I'd Like To Know

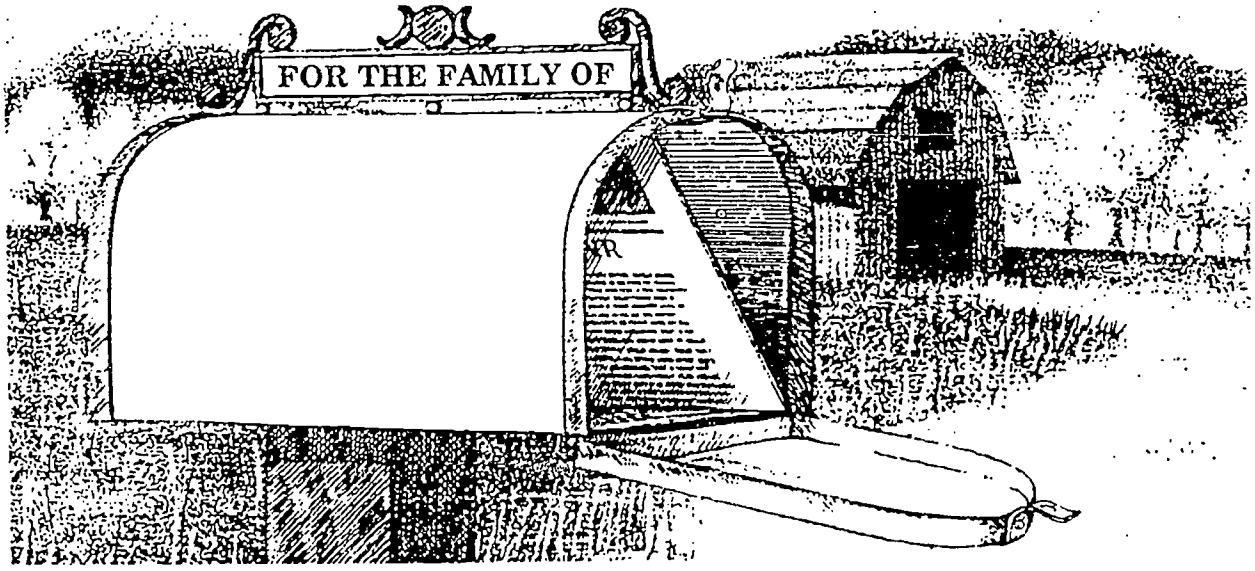
If the earth has four corners,
can you fold it like a blanket?
If the sky weeps and cries,
will someone come and spank it?

Would the sky be brown
if we lived underground?
How do the worms
know up from down?

I'd like to know more
about my planet—
especially,
What began it?

— *Carla Thomas McClure*





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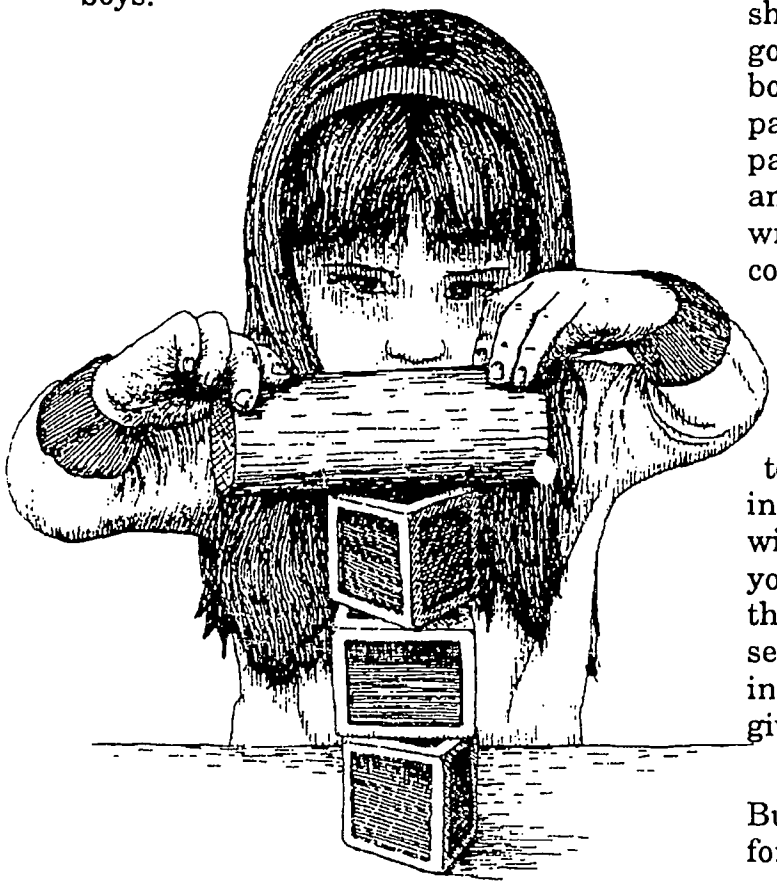
Family Connections 2

Builders Are Learners

One of the greatest gifts your child can receive is blocks. Most children get a set of little alphabet blocks at an early age, and we tend to think they outgrow them by about five or six. The fact is, building blocks are important to children for many years. And they're just as important to girls as to boys.



When children build things, they make choices, solve problems, and learn to work with others to reach goals. They can be creative. They can get a sense of achievement.

Good wooden blocks of varied sizes and shapes are a super learning tool. Have several different sizes and shapes. But blocks are not the only good building materials. Save cardboard boxes of all sizes, tubes from paper towels and toilet paper, foam packing material, plastic containers, and empty spools. Keep pieces of foil wrap, fabric scraps, yarn, string, and colorful paper.

Put together a tool kit for your child. It can be a basket or shoe box. Include paste or school glue, a ruler, safety scissors, and perhaps toy tools. Adult tools should be kept in another place, so you can use them with your child. Work with your youngster sometimes, but let her take the lead. Building things all by herself can boost self-confidence. Knocking down one of her structures can give her a feeling of control.

We all construct our own learning. Building play is one of the best ways for children to learn.

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What Is Gravity?

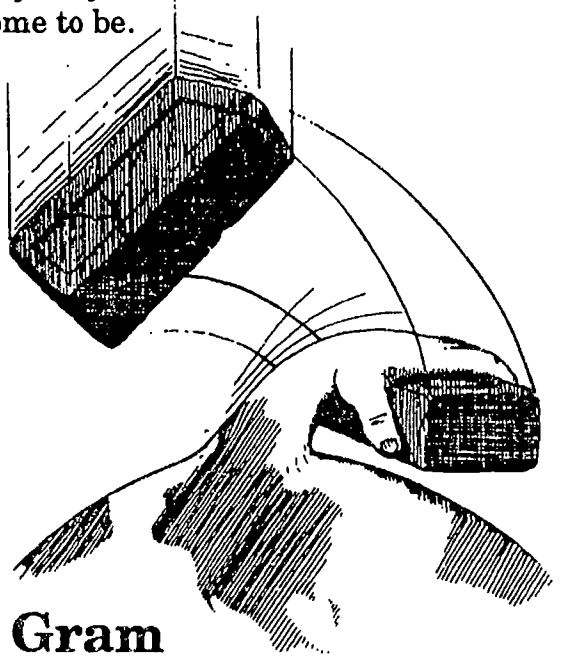
Your child will be fascinated to learn about gravity. Gravity is a force that pulls everything downward toward the center of the earth. It's fun to observe it and see how predictable it is.

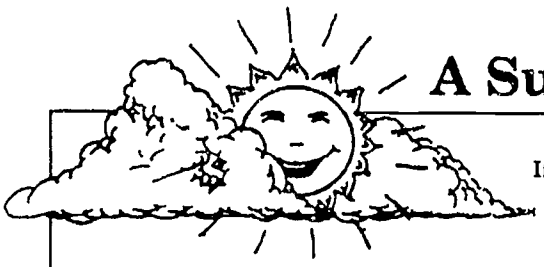
Give your child an object that she can drop without breaking it. Have her drop it. Where does it go? To the ground (or floor, if you're indoors). Have her drop it again and again. Each time, ask a question: Will it fall to the ground this time? Will it fall up? Will it fall sideways?

You can vary the objects by shape and weight to add interest. She will see that both a spoon and a sponge fall down every time.

Most young children will not understand or be able to explain gravity. They will be able to predict from their own experience that something will always fall to the ground. (One little boy heard the word as "grabity." He said that when you drop something the earth grabs it and that's why it's called grabity. Not a bad explanation!)

The important thing about this gravity game is that it arouses your child's interest in why things are the way they are. That's how scientists come to be.



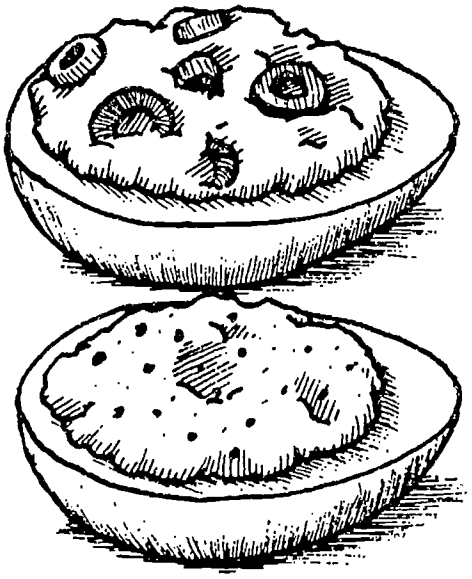


A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Devil Some Eggs

Even children who don't like eggs will enjoy helping make deviled eggs. And they love the name. Be prepared to talk about why they're called "deviled." Ask him what he thinks is the reason for the name.



You need:

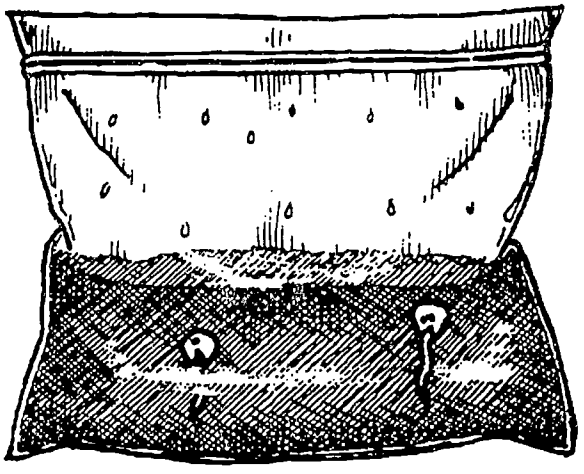
6 hard-boiled eggs
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 teaspoon prepared mustard
celery salt or other seasonings you like

Peel and cut eggs in half lengthwise. (Let your child do as much of this as he can. Ask him to count the tablespoons. Show him the difference in size between the tablespoon and teaspoon. Let him find out how many teaspoons it takes to make one tablespoon.) Mash the yolks with the mayonnaise and mustard. Some people like to add a little pickle juice.

Your child can stuff the yolk mixture into the white with a small spoon. He will enjoy decorating each egg with sliced olives or sprinkling on some paprika.

Sprouting Popcorn

Children love to see things grow from their own efforts. Your child will be surprised that he can do something with popcorn besides popping it to eat.



Give him a small zip-top plastic bag and some planting dirt. After he puts the dirt into the bag, he can add a few kernels of unpopped popcorn. Then he should add water to make the dirt fairly moist, and close the bag tightly.

Help him hang the bag in a sunny window. The kernels should begin to sprout in about a week. If he is still interested in the sprouts, you can help him plant them outdoors.

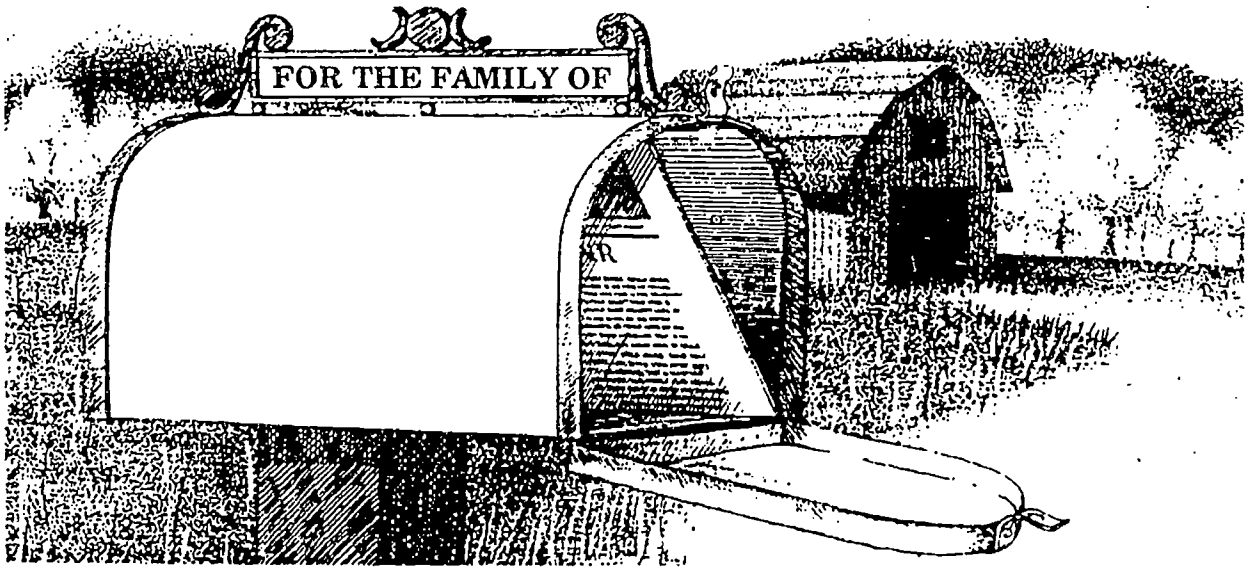
—A READ-ALOUD

Me and My Mirror

When I first wake up,
In the mirror I see
A messy child
Looking back at me.

So I wash my face,
And comb my hair
And find some
colorful clothes to wear.

As I brush my teeth
To get on my way,
The child in the mirror seems to say,
"Aren't we looking great today?"



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Family Connections 2

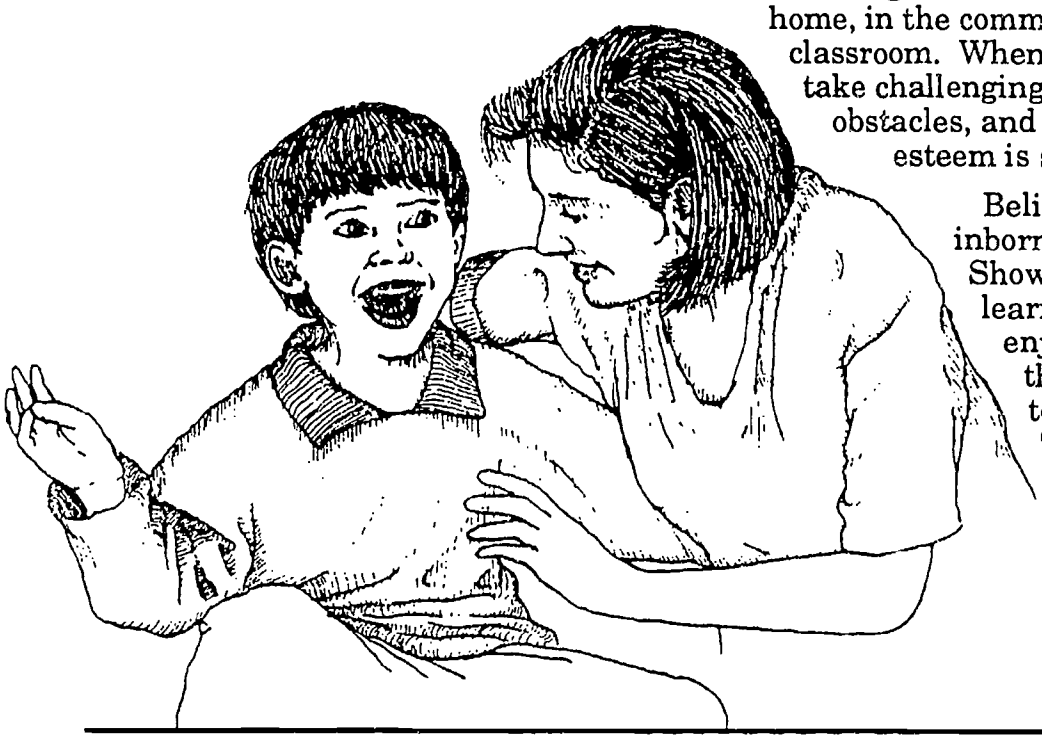
Rewards for Learning

The best reward in learning comes from the feeling of joy and competence your child gets from mastering a skill or new content. Using rewards such as food, stickers, and grades to tempt children into performing new learning tasks conveys a message: learning is not worth pursuing for its own sake.

Some children in a research study at a major university were promised a reward for completing a task. They performed less creatively than those who weren't promised a reward. Too many rewards and too frequent praise can be distracting to children. It's better not to interrupt children to praise them for activities they are enjoying. Rewards sometimes increase productivity, but not interest.

Specific praise does strengthen interest, especially if it includes information about how well the child is doing the work. If you give positive feedback that is informative—"I like the way you arranged the toothpicks in your collage"—the child stays interested in the task.

Self-esteem grows in the course of children's interactions with people who are significant in their lives at home, in the community, and in the classroom. When children undertake challenging tasks, overcome obstacles, and help others, self-esteem is strengthened.



Believe in your child's inborn desire to learn. Show that you think learning is important, enjoyable, and something that you like to be part of. Then, learning will truly be its own reward.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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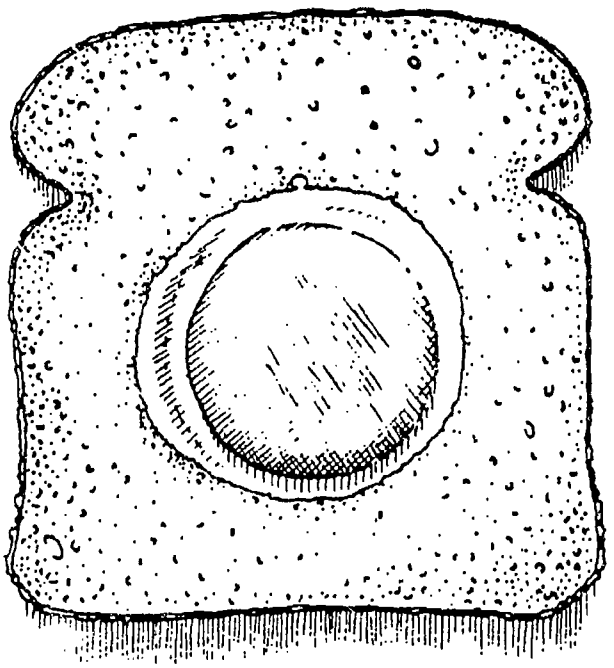
Nest Eggs

Here's a different kind of nest egg for you and your child to make together. You will need a slice of bread and an egg for each person having this breakfast treat.



Put the bread slices on a cutting board or counter where your child can work easily. Let her cut a circle from each slice of bread with a cookie cutter or a small glass. Set the circles aside.

Put butter or margarine in a skillet to melt. Brown one side of the bread, then turn it with a spatula. If your child is ready to work with a hot pan, she can do the turning as you supervise. You can brown the circles now or later for extra bread.

The tricky part is breaking the eggs. You will know whether she is able to learn this now. Break the egg into a measuring cup with a spout. Then she will be able to pour the egg into the cut-out, or nest. Sprinkle on a little salt and pepper, then cover the skillet. Let the nest eggs cook to the degree of doneness that your family members like.

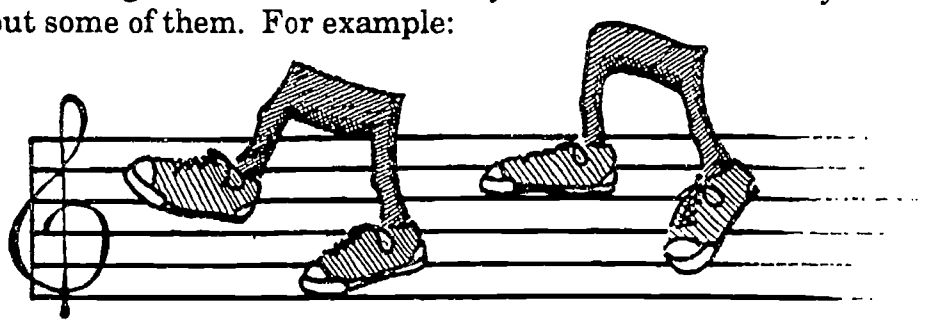
It's hard to get the family together for breakfast, so this could be a weekend breakfast treat.

Celebrate New Skills

Learning how to do new things is something to sing about. Take a few minutes with your child to realize all the things he has learned recently. To the tune of "Mary Had A Little Lamb" sing about some of them. For example:

I have learned to tie my shoes
Tie my shoes
Tie my shoes.

I have learned to tie my shoes,
See what I have learned.



A few other possibilities: to tell the time, to pick up my toys, to write my name, to use the phone, to zip my jacket. The list of things he has learned can go on and on!

My Family's Favorite Colors

Here's a good activity to give your child practice in collecting and recording information, sometimes called data. She will also have a chance to talk with others and to analyze results.

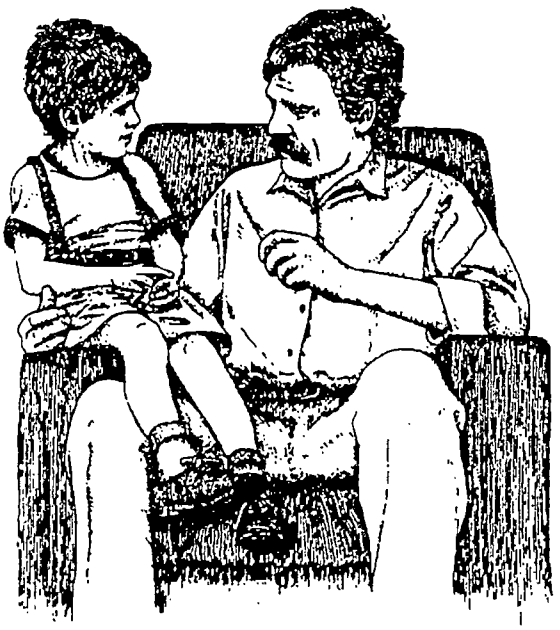
She will ask everyone in the family what their favorite color is. (If your family is small, make this a family-and-friends survey.) You might talk together about colors as she prepares for her survey. Colors send messages just as words do. Red, for instance, means **Stop** and green means **Go** in traffic.

Help her make a chart like this one to record her data. When she has done her chart, ask some questions: Which color did most people choose? How many chose this color? Did any colors tie as a choice?

She could also do a survey of favorite foods or other things she may think of. After this survey is finished, she can draw a picture using everyone's favorite color.

Names (family and friends)	Favorite Color
Me	Blue
Mom	Yellow
Dad	Blue
Sister	Red
Brother	Green

Put Your Child In A Story



You know how important it is to read aloud to your child. It's also fun to **tell** stories. You may think you can't, but if you follow this suggestion, you and your child are in for a treat.

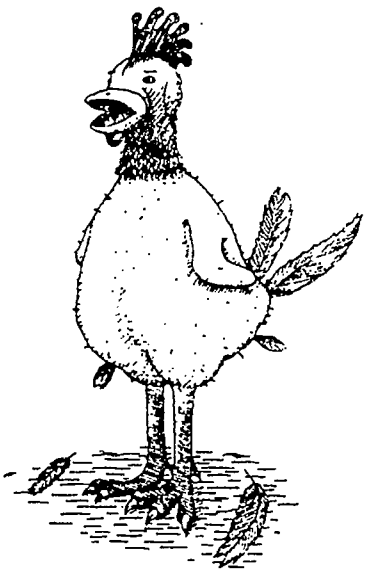
One of the great ways to begin a story is one of the oldest: **Once upon a time. . . .** The next step will capture your child's interest: **there was a boy (or girl) named**_____ and here you put **your child's name**. Now you have a good chance for a story he will love.

What happens in the story is whatever occurs to you as you go along. You know what he is interested in, what excites him, what he cares about. It's easier for most story tellers to get out of reality and into pretending. If you get stuck, just ask "What do you think happened next?"

Go ahead. Try it. "Once upon a time, there was a boy named. . ."

—A READ-ALOUD

A Tale of Tails



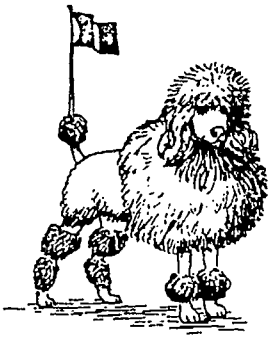
A lamb's tail looks
like a cotton ball.
A squirrel's tail keeps it
from taking a fall.

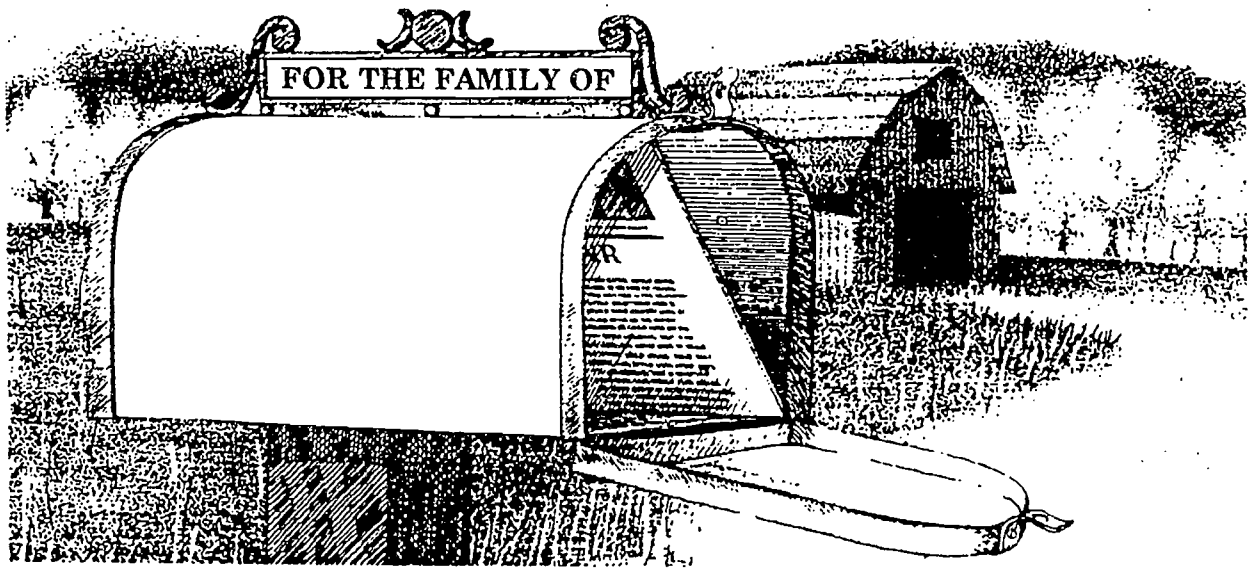
A rooster's tail has feathers
that could decorate a hat.
I don't know what
the rooster thinks of that.

A parakeet has tail feathers, too,
A writing pen for an elf.
And the peacock's fan is not really a tail,
A fact I just learned myself.

A French poodle's tail
stands up like a flag
A Cocker spaniel's is
designed to wag.

The tail on a cow
can keep away flies.
You'll see all kinds of tails
if you open your eyes.





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Family Connections 2

Some Thoughts About Early Learning

In recent years many people seem to want to speed up development of five- and six-year-old children. The result has been unrealistic expectations, and the cost to children is high. Some young children believe that they are loved only when they achieve.

Kindergarten should not be first grade moved down a year. It should be, and in the best programs it is, a time for getting children excited about learning. Your child will be exposed in many different ways to numbers and language. The worksheets that many adults remember are not good for early learners. Children often complete them but do not understand their answers. So don't worry if your child doesn't bring home worksheets.

Increasingly, young children are in mixed-age groups in the early years of school. All children grow and learn differently. They develop at different rates. They have talents in different areas. When they are not divided into arbitrary age groupings, they have opportunities to flourish individually.

You can do many things at home to help with your child's early learning.

Family Connections gives you ideas and activities using real-life situations. Many of the activities encourage play; children continue to learn from play well into the early primary grades. These activities and read-aloud selections are to encourage you and your child to have fun with learning.

Children understand through experiences in their own lives. You can give your child such experiences.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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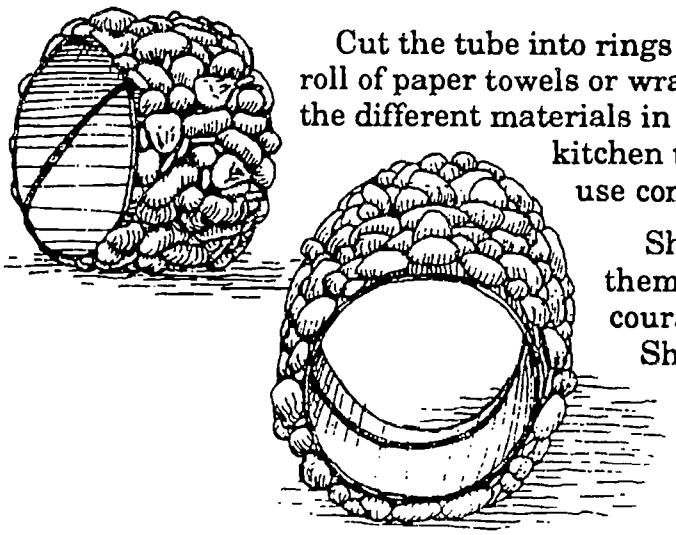
Books To Read with Your Family

These books are from a list developed by the American Library Association. Some of the titles here will let your family enjoy the rich variety of cultures that make up our world. If you aren't able to get to a public library, talk to your child's teacher about borrowing books from the school's media center. But, please, do read aloud with your family.

Arrow to the Sun: A Pueblo Indian Tale	Gerald McDermott
Digging Up Dinosaurs	Aliki
How Much Is a Million?	David M. Schwartz
How My Parents Learned to Eat	Ina R. Friedman
The Mud Pony	Carol Lee Cohen
Oliver Button Is a Sissy	Tomie DePaola
One Monday Morning	Uri Shulevitz
The Purple Coat	Amy Hest
The Very Last First Time	Jan Andrews
When I Am Old With You	Angela Johnson

Napkin Rings from Kitchen Things

Here's an activity that you and your child can do to make a gift for the whole family. All you need is a cardboard tube, some school glue, and a variety of uncooked foods: rice; green split peas; red, white, and brown beans; and dried corn kernels.



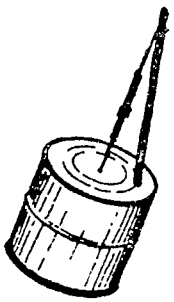
Cut the tube into rings about an inch wide. A tube from a roll of paper towels or wrapping paper will do very well. Put the different materials in a line of bowls on a work surface—the kitchen table or a counter that your child can use comfortably.

She can put glue on the rings and cover them with the beans, rice and so on. Encourage her to make different patterns. She would enjoy making a personal ring for each family member. Putting an initial on each one would be good practice in letter skills.

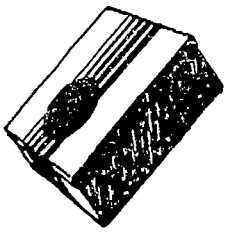
Make A Rhythm Band

It's amazing how many musical instruments you and your child can make from things you have in your house. If you put together several, your family can be a band. Just put a favorite tape in the player, and add your own sounds. Trade instruments every now and then, so everyone can have a chance to play each.

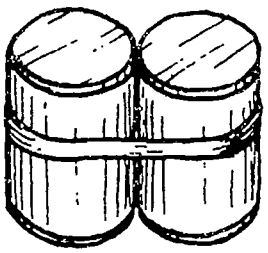
1. **Coffee fiddle**. Punch a hole in the bottom of a three-pound coffee can. Put a heavy string through the hole and make a knot so the string won't go through the hole. Tie the other end of the thread around a stick or a piece of wood. Pull the string tight. When you pluck it, you get a bass fiddle sound.



2. **Shoe-Box Banjo**. For this you need a shoe box with lid. Cut a round hole in the lid. Stretch rubber bands of different widths around the box lengthwise. Play it like a banjo. Wide bands have a low sound. Narrow bands sound higher.

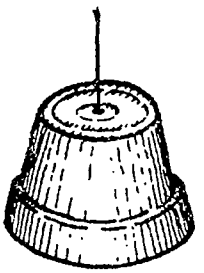


3. **Oatmeal Bongo Drums**. Tape two empty oatmeal boxes together to make bongos. Be sure to tape the lid on, too. Play them with the finger tips. You get a different sound from the tops and the bottoms.

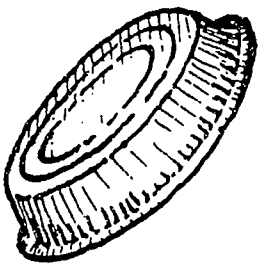


4. **Balloon Drum**. Make a different kind of drum with a large tin can. A coffee can will do. Stretch a balloon over the open end and hold it in place with a rubber band. Use a wooden spoon or the eraser end of an unsharpened pencil as a drum stick.

5. **Clay Bell**. You can make a nice bell sound with a small clay flower pot. Knot a thick string or yarn and thread it through the drain hole in the bottom of the pot. Hold the pot by the top of the string (the pot will be upside down), and strike the pot with a pencil.



6. **Pie Pan Cymbal**. Aluminum pie pans make cymbals without your doing a thing to them. Just hold the pan by its edge in one hand and hit the bottom with the other hand. You can also use a pair and hit them against each other.



Your child might invite some friends over and form a marching band. Yes, it would be a good idea to choose a day when the weather is right for outside play.

—A READ-ALOUD

What Boys and Girls Are Made Of

What are little boys made of, made of?
What are little boys made of?

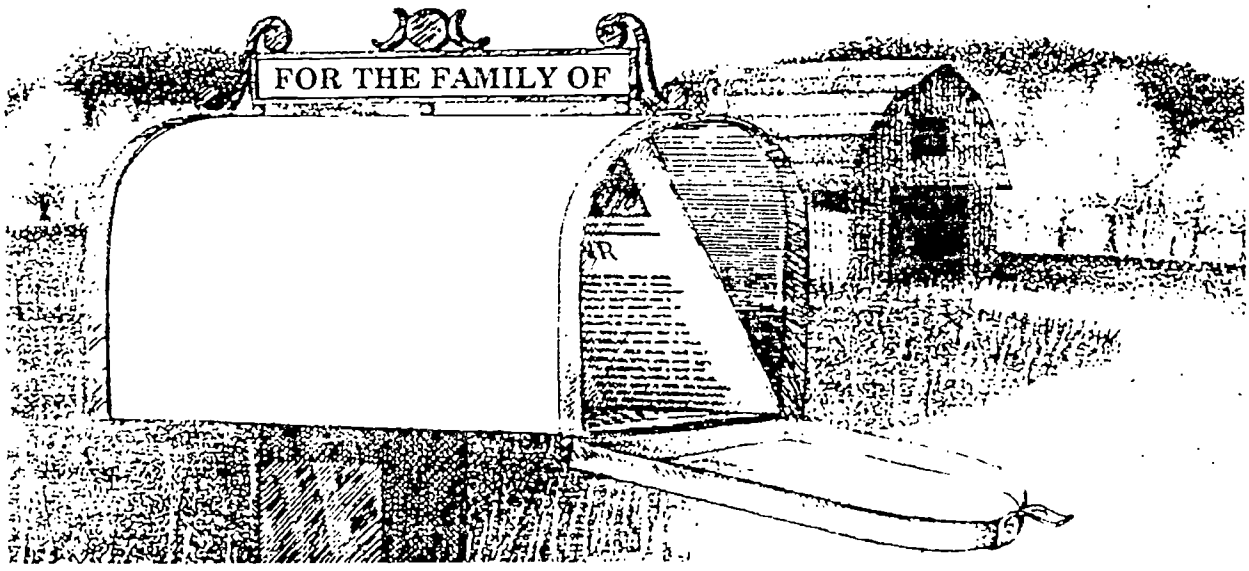
Of flesh and bones
And muscles and smiles,
And ways to learn
And grow for miles.

That's what little boys are made of.

What are little girls made of, made of?
What are little girls made of?

Why, they're made, too,
Of flesh and bones,
And muscles and smiles,
And ways to learn
And grow for miles.

Boys and girls
Are made to plan
And be whatever
They think they can.



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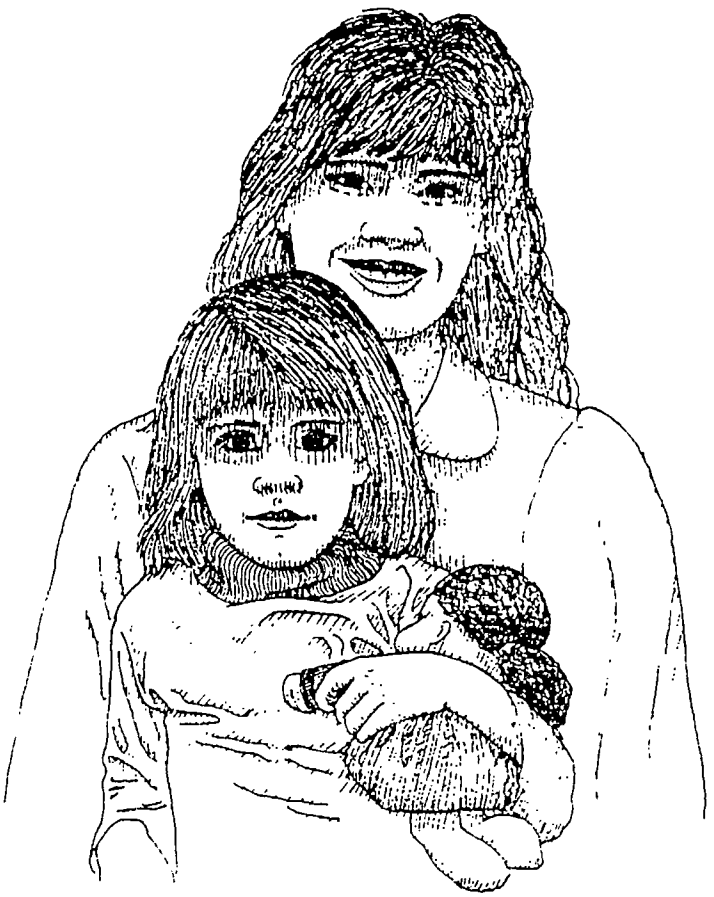
Family Connections 2

Dealing with Anger

Does your child know that it is okay to get angry? Anger is a natural emotion that everyone feels sometimes. What your child needs to learn is what to do when she gets mad. Here are some ways that you can help her.



When she hits someone because she is angry about what has happened—maybe another child took something away from her—respond firmly but calmly. "People are not for hitting. I understand that you are upset, but you cannot hit." This can now become a rule, and you can decide together what consequences will be for breaking it. Keep rules few and simple. Then you can see that they are enforced.

Solve problems together. "What do you think you might do if this happens again? Remember that the rule is: People are not for hitting." She will have some ideas for solving the problem. "I could hit a punching bag. I could count to 25, the way the man did on TV." Take her ideas seriously. You can see things from her point of view without agreeing that she can do what she wants. Children can be harsh judges; they sometimes think of punishment far more stern than you would!

Set limits that are reasonable. Involve the whole family in making fair rules. Then don't give in when the rules are broken. Children want and need to know that you—adults they love and trust—are in charge.

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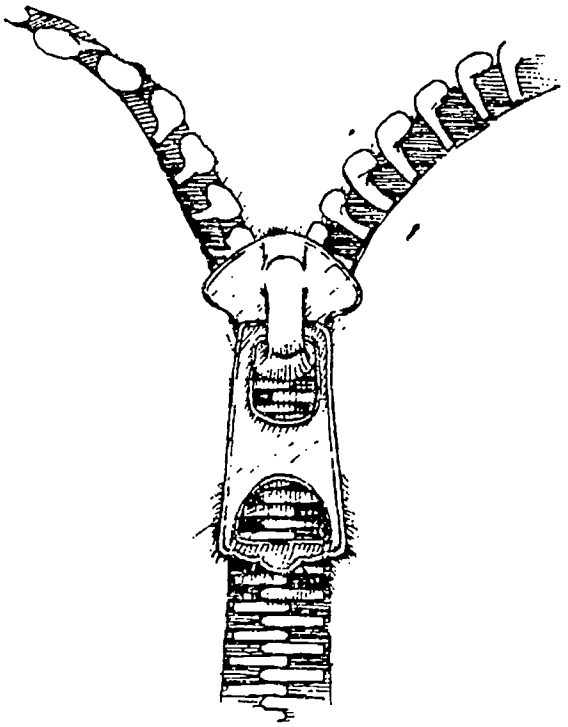
Our Family History

A favorite storytelling subject for most children is family history. If you have a photo album with old pictures, you have a book full of stories. To your young child, pictures of you as a child seem very old!

As you look at old photos, tell stories. It is helpful for children to learn that stories in books can be based on real-life people and events. When you tell stories about family members and things that happened in the past, your child may want to tell stories, too.

Encourage her by giving cues: "Remember when we went to the family reunion? You couldn't believe how much food there was." That gives her the beginning for her own story. Family stories make good books. She can make her own with folded paper stapled on one side. Or you can buy an inexpensive notebook and let her decorate the cover.

Zipping Things Up



Your child might have fun thinking about how clothes and other things are fastened. Everybody has to struggle with a zipper sometimes. Ask your child:

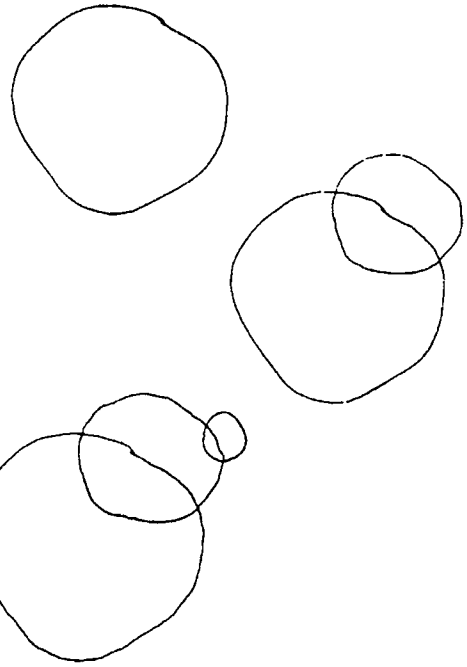
- How many things can you think of that have zippers? Help him make a list.
- How did people fasten things before zippers were invented? (You may be interested to know that a patent for the zipper was issued April 29, 1913.)
- What fastener is newer than a zipper? (The answer to that question is "velcro.")
- How many things can you think of that fasten with velcro? (So many shoes have velcro fasteners instead of laces that some children learn late how to tie their shoes!)

Isn't it fun to do mental exercises with your child? Now, do something physical together.

—A READ-ALOUD

You Can Draw A Pig

Dear Parent: Your child can learn so much more doing an original drawing than he can by tracing, or coloring in a coloring book. His circles in this activity probably won't be perfectly round, but that doesn't matter. This is also a read-aloud. Read it together, then give him some paper and a pencil or crayons. He will probably keep drawing after he does a pig or two.



It isn't so hard to draw a pig.

If you can draw a circle,

You can draw a pig.

First, a big circle for a plump pig.

With a small circle for the head

and a smaller circle for the snout.

(That's pig talk for nose.)

That doesn't look like a pig, you say.

Wait. . .

Add nostrils

And ears

And eyes

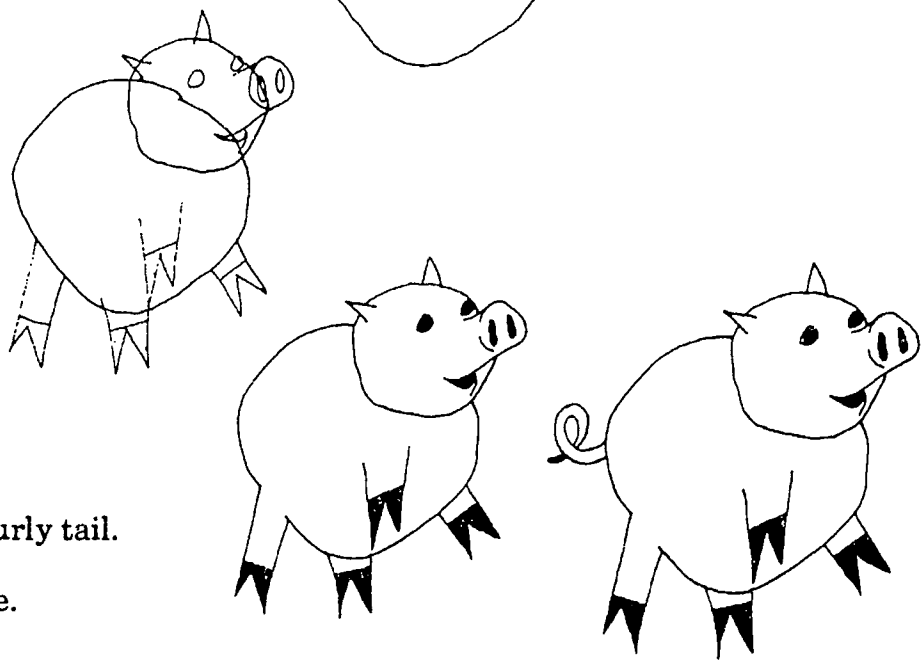
And legs.

Now it's a pig.

No, not quite.

This pig needs a curly tail.

Now, you draw one.



—A READ-ALOUD

How Big Is A Raindrop?

How many raindrops does it take
to make

A drizzle

A sprinkle

A downpour

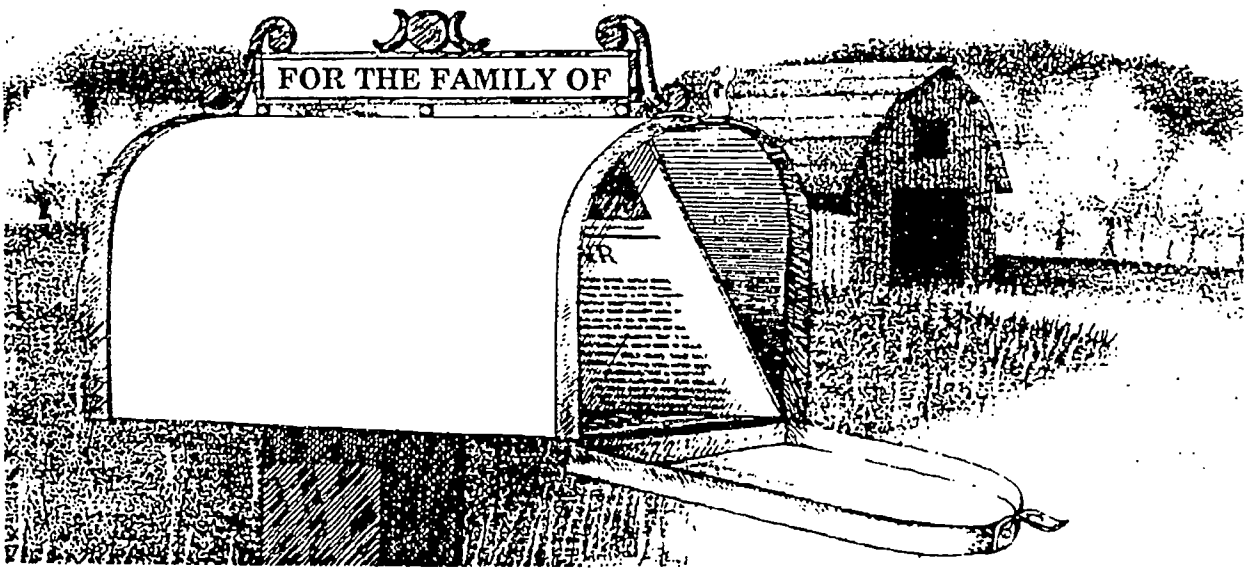
A cloudburst

A flood?

Does it all start with a drip,
or a trickle?

How big is a raindrop?

How big is rain?



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Family Connections 2

The Best Things in Life Aren't Things

It isn't easy to be a parent, especially if you want to be the best parent possible. "I know it's wonderful, but it's just one more thing to worry about," a mother said of a product that would be excellent for her children but would require some time from her.

And there is, it seems, more and more to worry about, or feel guilty about. We know that children do better in school, are less likely to drop out, are more likely to succeed as adults, when their parents are involved in their education. So parents want to do what they can to help their children as learners.

Some buy educational toys. Some spend a great deal of money on computer programs, or packages of learning aids. Some use worksheets and flash cards. Some send their children to after-school lessons in everything: swimming, dancing, gymnastics, piano. . . . The list can go on and on.

Sometimes what is hardest to give is time. All the lessons in the world and all the things will not be as valuable to your child as the gift that only you can give—your time. Time to listen to his concerns, time to let her know you are interested, time to read to him and let him read to you, time to tell her stories, time to walk in the woods or the park. Time that you spend with your young learner is the greatest parent-involvement activity of all.

You can give things or you can give time. Time is better.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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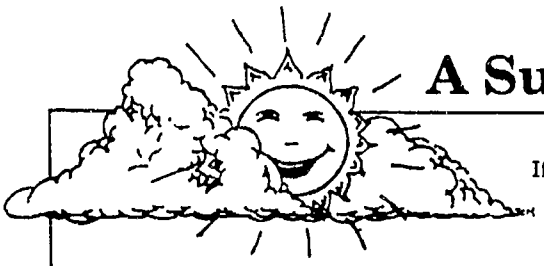
Freeza Banana

What do you do with bananas if they start to get too ripe? You can bake banana bread, but you may not have time to do that. Here's an idea your child will enjoy.

You will need plastic wrap. Have your child tear off as many pieces of wrap as you will need: one piece large enough to wrap each half banana. If the bananas are very small, one piece of wrap each will do. She can lay out each piece on a flat surface such as a cutting board or the kitchen counter.

Now she can peel each banana and wrap the halves in plastic. Put them in the freezer for a delicious snack. You don't need sticks for the bananas. When she's ready for one of the frozen treats, she can just peel back the plastic wrap and use it as a holder. This snack is tastier and healthier than popsicles.



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Estimate, Estimate

Have you ever thought about how many times a day you estimate? Many people do it when they shop for groceries to be sure they stay within their budget. You may estimate how much time you have to finish a task before the kids get out of school. You may estimate how much it will cost for car repairs.

Estimation is a useful skill. Children can have a lot of fun practicing it.

It's another way to help them learn to enjoy math. Here's just one simple activity for your child.

Ask her how many windows she thinks are in the house. Give her time to think about it. Assure her there's no pressure for a right answer. Then go through the house together and count the windows.

Other things that are fun to estimate: 1) how long a piece of string will she need to go around her waist? her wrist? 2) how many times does she chew each mouthful of food? You can easily see how close her estimate is.

When children see the connection between their everyday lives and math, they are more apt to be comfortable with the subject in school. Together, think of other ways to practice estimating.

Tire Art

You probably don't think of tires as art, so you are in for a surprise. You and your child can have an artful experience with some crayons and thin paper. (If you save gift boxes, you might find tissue paper in them that will be ideal for this activity.) Old crayons that don't have points anymore are good to use for **rubbing**, which is the name of this art form.

Place a piece of paper over a tire and rub the crayon gently back and forth. A pattern appears in a wonderful way. Bicycle tires, tricycle tires, and automobile tires all make interesting patterns.

Your child will find other rough or bumpy surfaces that are good for rubbings: brick walls, tree bark, sidewalks, and leaves are just a few examples.

—A READ-ALOUD

Arrangements

Whales move in pods
Geese go in gaggles.

Lions live in prides
Wolves in packs
And buffalo in herds.

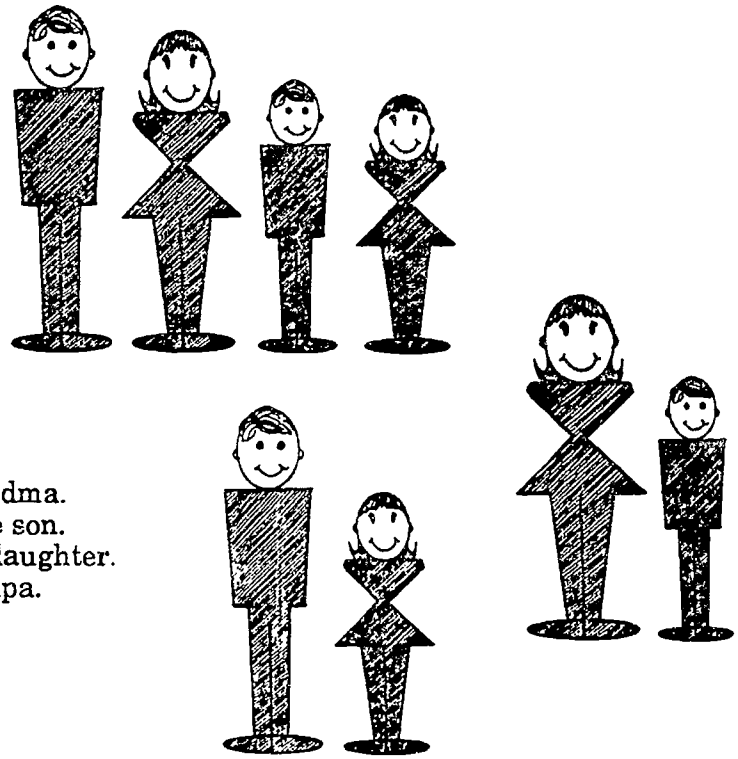
Dolphins, the smarties,
are in schools.

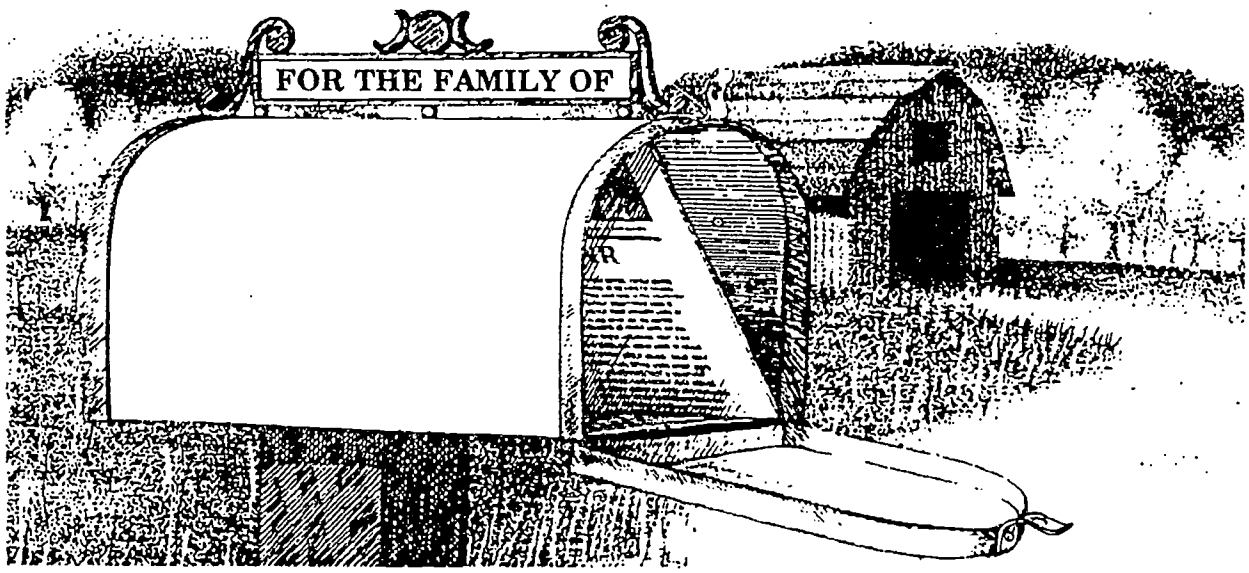
And what about people?
How are they arranged?

People live in families,
All kinds of families.

Some have a daddy, a mommy,
a brother, a sister, maybe a grandma.
Some have just a mommy and one son.
Some have just a daddy and one daughter.
Some have a mommy and a grandpa.

All kinds of families,
Living with love,
In all kinds of arrangements.





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Family Connections 2

Good Manners Means Being Kind

We used to devote a lot of attention to what was called etiquette, or good manners. At some point, people started to think that many of the rules seemed silly, or artificial. Why should we worry about teaching our children how to introduce people to one another? What difference could it possibly make whether children called adults by Mr. or Ms. and their last name?

It seems that we forgot what having good manners is really about. The rules of etiquette got in the way of the purpose: being kind to one another. Saying "please" and "thank you" eases the hard corners of life.

Learning the rules of etiquette has other rewards, of course. Just one example is listening, a very important social skill. Not only is it impolite to talk when someone else is talking, it also gets in the way of learning. Children need to become good listeners. (So do parents!)

The best way to teach good manners is to model them for your child. Praise her for following the rules: "Thank you for not interrupting my phone call. Now I'm free to help you with the puzzle." Treat her with the same kindness and respect that you do your adult friends. As always, you will get better results by praising for success than you will by punishing for failure.

Knowing how to behave in ways that are expected and accepted has other benefits for children. The approval that comes from doing the right thing builds confidence. Knowing how to behave makes a child feel competent. And we know that self-esteem thrives on competence and confidence.

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Am I Like You?

Here's an activity your child will enjoy doing that will encourage him to think about comparing. You can use the chart provided here for Mom and/or Dad and the child. You could also make a chart for the family, including as many members as you wish. If your youngster enjoys doing this, he might want you to help him make a chart to use with some friends, too.

Fill in this chart together. Consider these questions: How are we alike? In what ways are we different?

	Me	Mom	Dad
birthday			
height			
eye color			
hair color			
right/left handed			

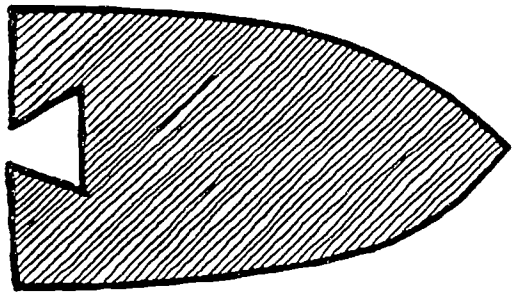
If you have a chart with several people on it, ask your child to see if there is one thing that everyone has in common.

Detergent Power

No, this is not a TV commercial. It's an activity that will help you get your child excited about science. And since she gets to play in water, you know it will be fun. Let her do as much of the preparation as she can.

You will need some light cardboard. Index cards are ideal, or you can cut your boats out of an old manila file folder. Cut out the shape to the right, making the boat about 2 1/2 inches long and 1 1/2 inches wide at the wide end. You might as well cut out several; she will want to do this more than once.

1. Cut out a boat.
2. Fill the sink or dish pan with water.
3. Put the boat gently on the water.
4. Pour a drop or two of liquid detergent into the notch of the boat.



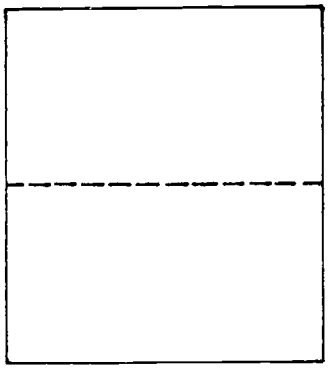
Your child will be delighted to see the boat speed across the water. If she asks how it happens, you can look up surface tension and read about it together. Be sure to wipe out the sink and put in fresh water before you try the experiment again. It won't work if the water has any detergent in it.

This activity is adapted from Helping Your Child Learn Science, a publication of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

The Paper Stretch

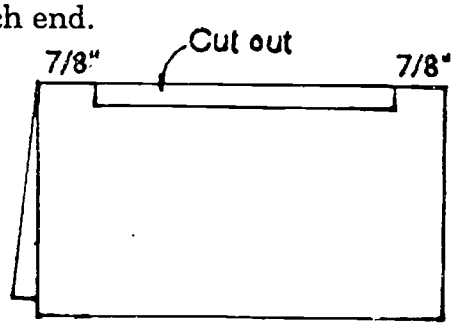
You probably won't believe you can cut a piece of typing paper so that you can step through it without tearing it. Your child will love showing this amazing thing to friends and family.

To do this mysterious trick, you will need a sheet of paper 8 1/2 by 11 inches, scissors, and a pencil. The measurements don't have to be exact, and the cutting can be rough. Safety scissors will work just fine. If you follow these steps, you and your child will be able to step through the piece of paper.

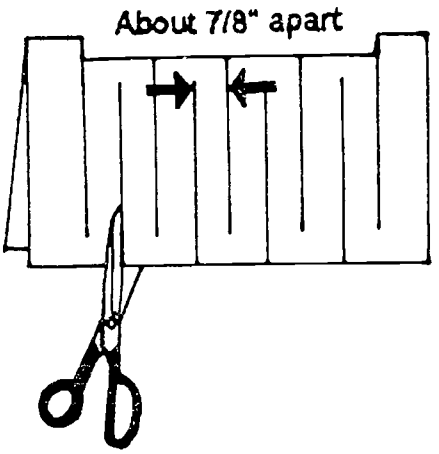


1. Fold the paper in half across.

2. Cut out a 1/2-inch deep box along the fold, starting about an inch from each end.



3. Make 9 cuts roughly an equal distance apart, alternating with one cut starting at the fold and the other starting at the bottom. Be careful not to cut through the fold.



4. Unfold the paper and stretch it out. Now you can step through it.

This activity is adapted from one in the book "Simple Science Experiments with Everyday Materials."

> If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
> If children live with encouragement, they learn to be confident.
>
> —*Dorothy Law Nolte*

—A READ-ALOUD

The Weather Report

Yesterday, Jonathan had to wear his hard shoes.
He wanted to wear his hightops.
Then, Barney fell into a bowl of cereal.
Jonathan's dad said Barney had no business on the breakfast table.

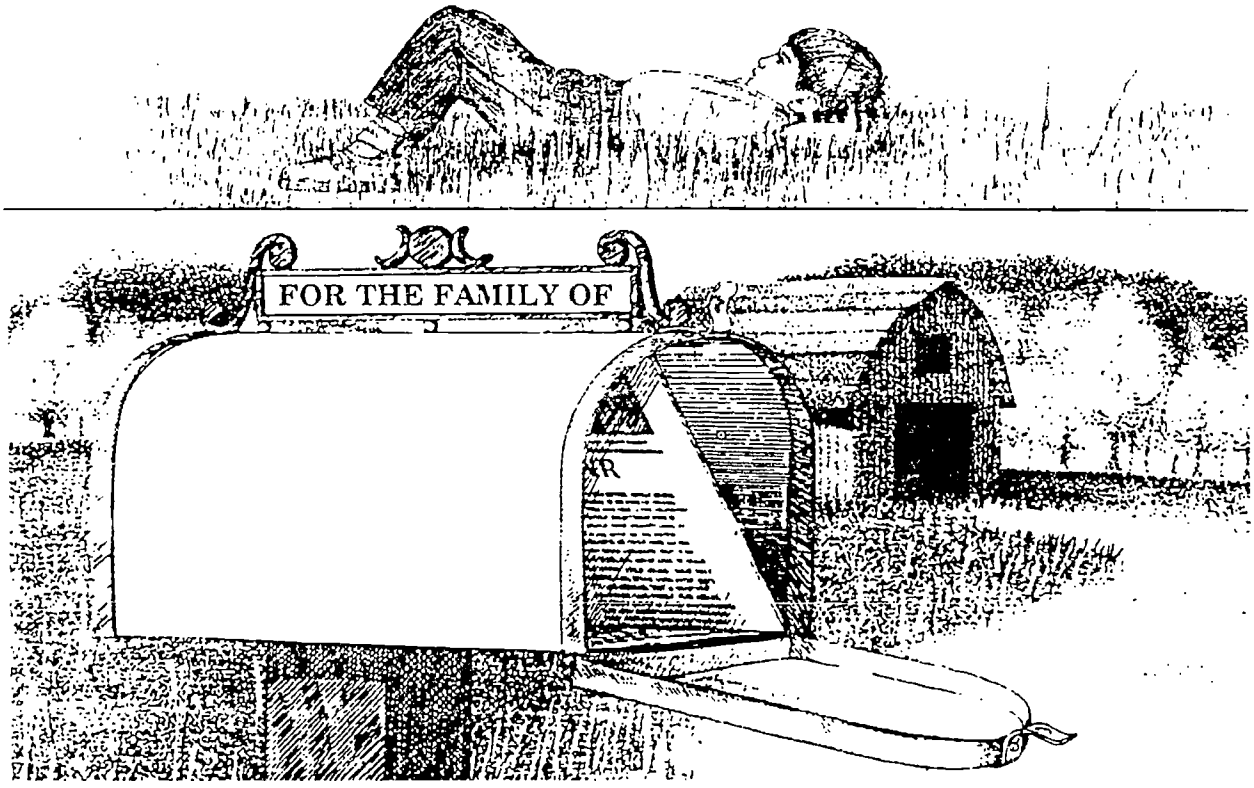
Cloudy, with chance of thunderstorms.

Today, Jonathan accidentally told his mom
he had already picked up his toys.
When she saw his room, she didn't care
that he told her accidentally.
He still didn't get to watch his favorite TV program.

Cloudy, with nighttime showers.

Tomorrow, Jonathan is going to the zoo.
His favorite auntie is coming to visit.
And it's spaghetti and meatballs for dinner.

Sunny, with little chance of rain.



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Family Connections 2

Help Your Child Learn to Plan

We could say the same thing about planning that is said about the weather: everybody talks about it, but nobody does anything about it. We know that it is important to plan, but most of us were not taught how to do it.

Children can learn to think ahead. You can help your child by watching for opportunities to practice planning. For example, when you're going to the library, plan the trip. Help him to put the necessary steps in order. They might go something like this:

- First, wash your hands and comb your hair.
- Next, get the books we need to return.
- Next, be sure you have your library card.

What comes first and what comes next are important in learning to solve problems. Ask questions to help him think of other things he might need to do to be ready. "Do we need to make a list of books that you want to look for? Shall we take along the most recent **Family Connections** book list? Did you remember something you want to look up while we're at the library?"

You will think of many other chances to plan. If you are getting ready for a trip, planning is a big part of the enjoyment. As you can see from just one example, lots of other learning opportunities pop up when you're planning. But don't make it into serious business; just enjoy this time together with your child.

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An Important Message

All children are born to grow, to develop, to live, to love, and to articulate their needs and feelings. For their development, children need the respect and protection of adults who take them seriously, love them, and honestly help them to become oriented in the world.

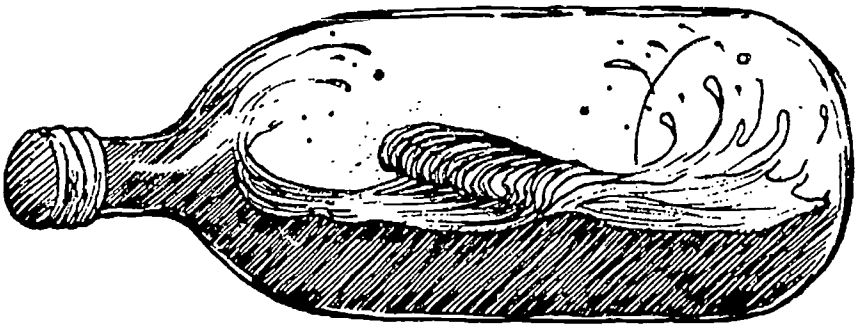
—*Alice Miller*

Bottle A Little Ocean

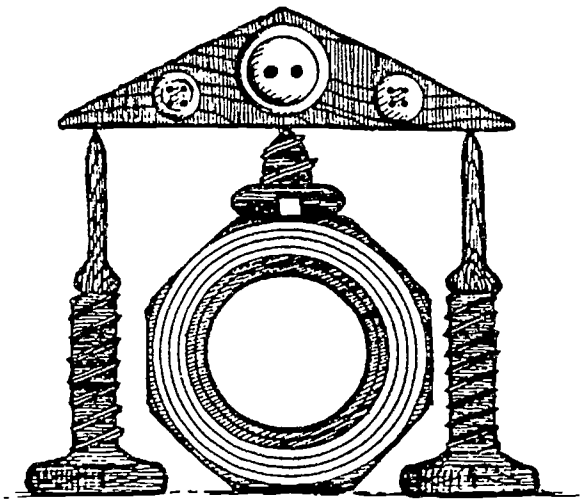
You know that oil and water don't mix. Because they don't, you can create an ocean in a bottle. The toy you and your child can make together may lead to a science project when the child is older. Meanwhile, it's another chance to show your child how science is all around, all the time.

You will need a small, clear-plastic bottle with a screw-on cap. A 16-ounce soft drink bottle will be fine. Let your child do as much of the work as she can. Fill the bottle two-thirds full with water. Add a few drops of blue food color, depending on what color you want your ocean to be. Fill the bottle with baby oil or cooking oil. Put the cap on and tighten it. It's a good idea to tape or glue the top as well. This is not a mixture you want to spill on the couch!

Your child will enjoy rocking the bottle back and forth to create what looks like ocean waves. She might ask questions you can't answer, but you can help her find answers. And she will begin to see that science is interesting and exciting, not something to dread.



Good Junk Creations



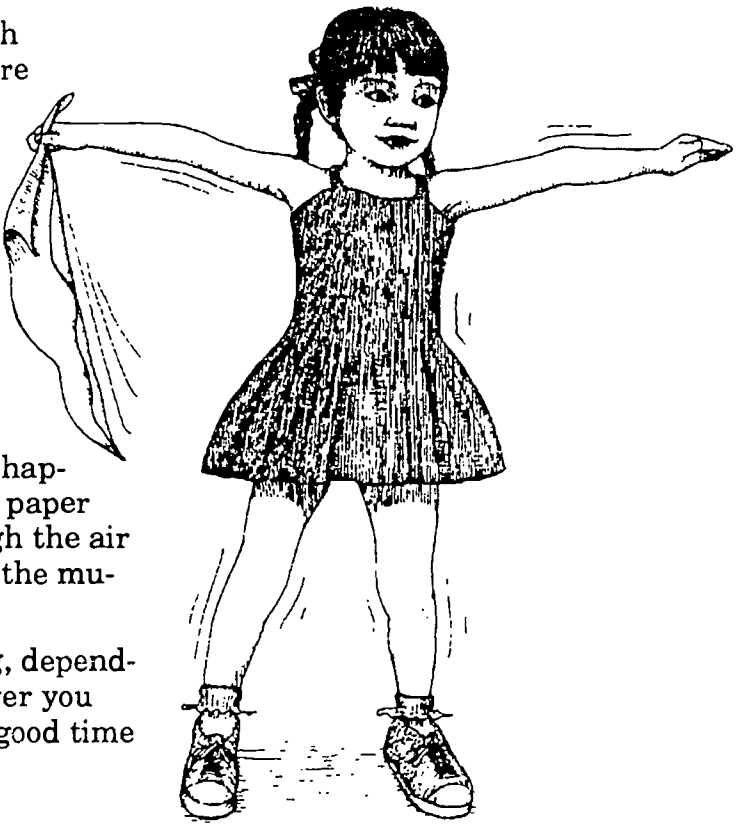
Given a box of junk, your child can construct a thing of beauty. Bolts, screws, buttons, golf tees, and wood scraps are just a few of the things that might be in the box. Or, she might choose to make something that has a useful purpose. (That could also be lovely.) Good junk can make a beautiful piece of sculpture.

Be sure to provide string, pipe cleaners, tape, and other aids to building.

The point is to give your child a chance to look at things in different ways. Part of problem solving is going beyond the usual.

Move to Music

One way to spend relaxing time with your child is moving to music. There are many ways to do it, and none involves much preparation.



You can just stop whatever you're doing when a favorite song comes on the radio, and do a dance that you make up together as you go along.

You can choose a favorite tape or CD and do a follow-the-leader game to music.

You can each take a scarf or, if you happen to have some, a long piece of crepe paper about two inches wide. Wave it through the air as you move together to the rhythm of the music.

Music can be energizing or relaxing, depending on the melody or the beat. Whatever you choose, you and your child can have a good time together moving to music.

All I Want To Do Is Play My Cello

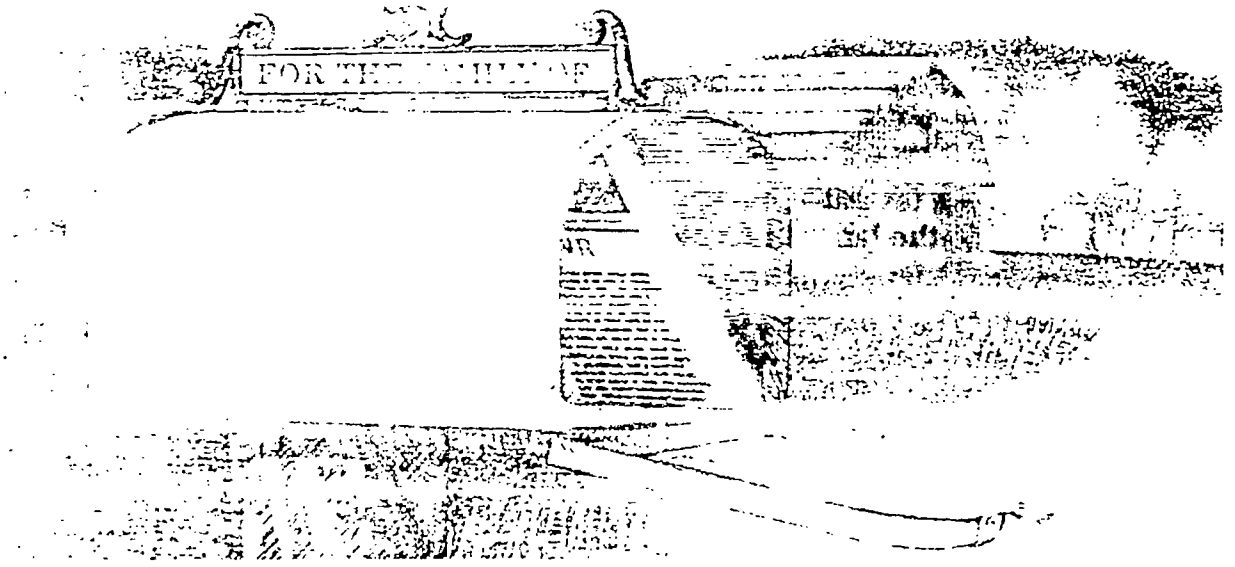
My mom says I could be a doctor
  if I study science more.
My dad says I could be a football star.
My grammy agrees with my mom.
And my grandpa just says I'll go far.

But what I want to do is play my cello.

My brother spends all his time with dinosaurs.
My sister spends all her time with chemistry.
My best friend says it's silly to play the cello,
  and why do I want to do that anyway?
He wants me to go bike racing.

But what I want to do is play my cello.

Today the symphony orchestra came to school.
Now everybody wants to play my cello.



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Family Connections 2

TV Can Be Scary for Children

When children see television news—and other shows, as well—they sometimes see things that scare them. Scenes of war in which children are injured, or pictures of children who are victims of famine, are even more horrifying to children than to adults.

If children become frightened, talk with them about what they have seen. Don't ignore or make light of what they say. It doesn't help to say such things as "It's not real" or "It's silly to be scared" or "Don't be such a baby."

Reassure them. Tell them that you are there to keep them safe, and that you will watch over them. But don't over-promise: "Nothing like that will ever happen to you. I won't let it." Listen to what they say, and treat it with respect.

Many children take comfort from feeling in control. "When I grow up I won't let people starve. I won't let people have wars with each other." Encourage your children's belief that they can affect their own lives and those of other people by the choices they make.

Above all, help them to understand that bad things don't happen because of something "bad" they did or wished for.

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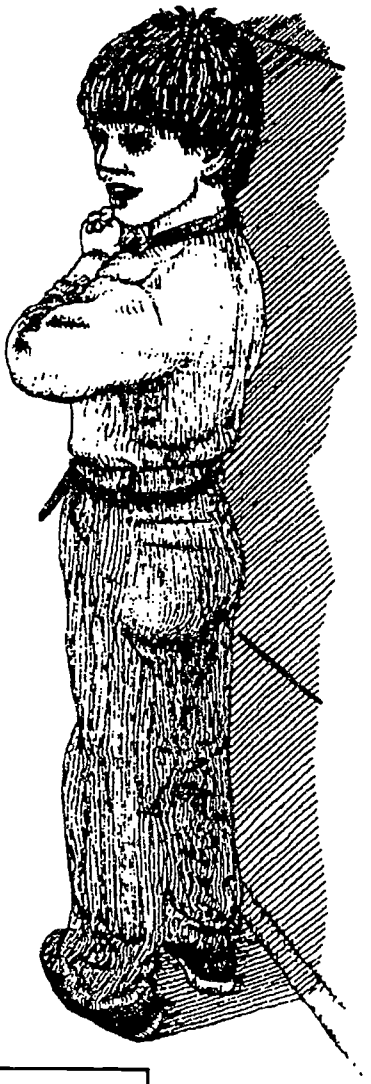
See How I Grow



Your child will enjoy keeping a growth chart to show how he is getting taller. You can make marks on a door frame, or you can make a paper chart that can be removed. Either way, the record becomes a special kind of family history.

To arouse his interest, make the first mark at his birth length. Kids like to hear about their size as babies. You can talk about how much he can do now that he could not do as an infant; for one, he could not stand up to be measured! He will also be interested to know that if he had kept growing as fast as he did when he was a baby, he would be 35 feet tall by age 16.

He may be learning at school to use the metric system. You can keep your chart in either metric or English (feet and inches) measurements. It would be fun to know the difference in his height in inches and centimeters. You might do some other measurements, too: head size, length of foot, and so on.

This is another example of numbers in everyday life.

More Riddles

What do you call a skeleton who won't get out of bed?

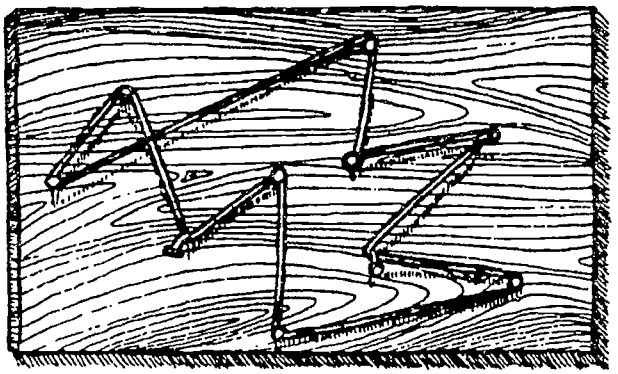
Lazy Bones.

Why shouldn't you tell a secret to a pig?

He might squeal.

Pound A Pattern

Here's an enjoyable way for your child to develop her eye-hand coordination. Give her a hammer, some big-headed nails, and a piece of wood. Be sure to talk about how to be a safe pounder before she begins to work. Show her how to hold the hammer and how to get the nail started.



Have her pound the nails into any arrangement she wants. When the nails are placed to her satisfaction, give her some yarn or twine to wrap her pattern.

A variation on the activity can give her practice in copying patterns, which is an important pre-math skill. You make a pattern on the wood block and have her copy it.

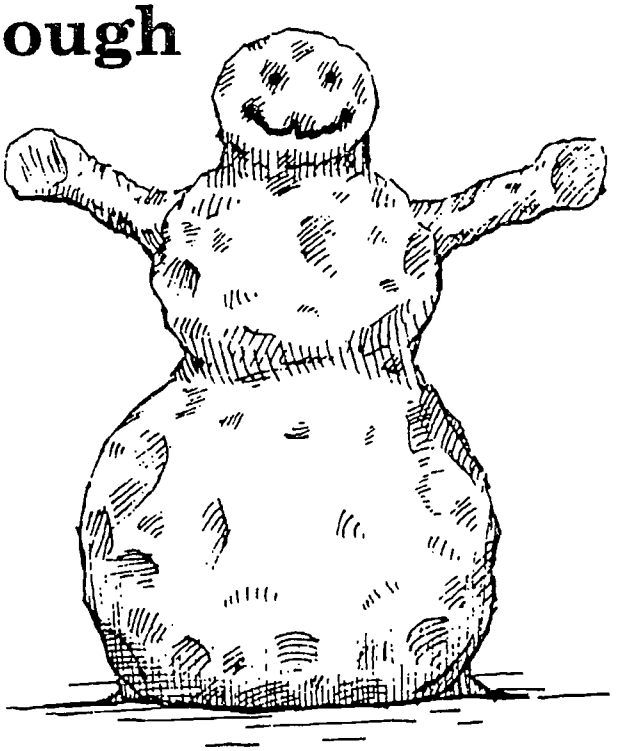
Now play with some numbers using the nails. Ask: "How many nails did you use in your pattern? How many nails are above the bottom nail? How many are on the right side of the board?" You can make up questions that fit her pattern. Or just count all the nails.

Fun Dough

If you haven't had a chance to work with your hands for a while, join your child in a game of **Fun Dough**. It's quick and easy to make, and it will bring out the artist in both of you.

Mix together 1 cup flour, 1/2 cup salt, and 1/2 cup water. If you have some, add a few drops of food color. Let him do the measuring and mixing. You can divide the dough before adding food color if you want more than one color of dough.

Now have fun shaping the dough into anything that you like. This activity is good for developing and coordinating his large muscles.



—A READ-ALOUD

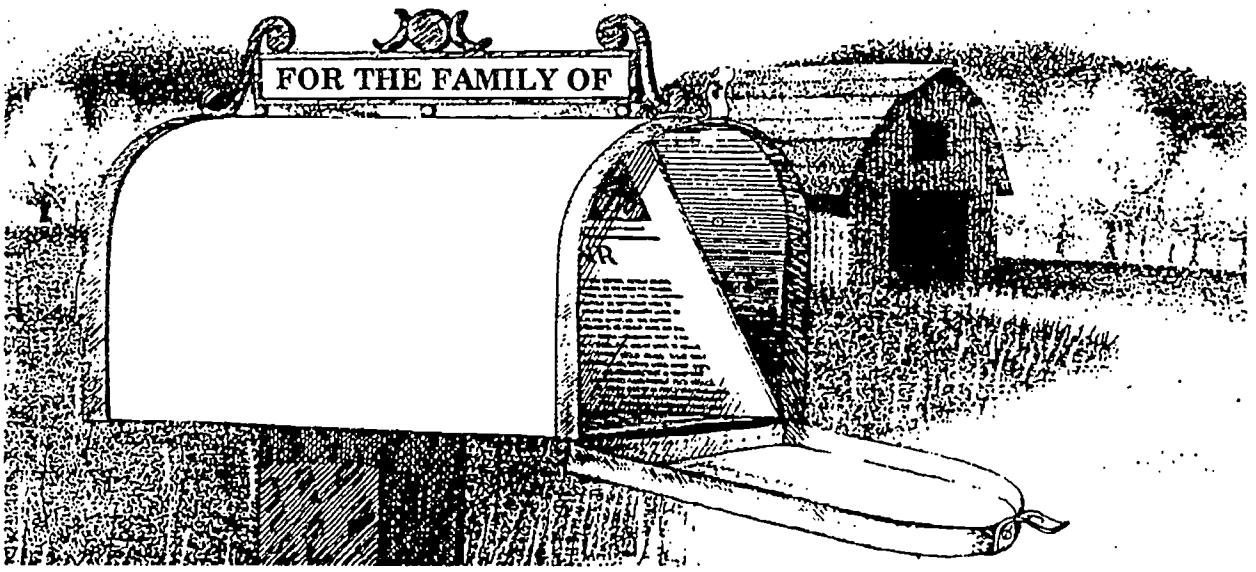
Twelve Friends for Toast

I asked some friends over for toast,
and maybe a cup of tea,
And when they arrived on my doorstep
They created a party for me.

Carolyn came with cookies.
Frederick offered fudge.
Irene dripped in with ice cream,
Bill from his brownies won't budge.

Anthony polished some apples.
And Patty made a pie.
Calvin thought cake was in order,
And Opal brought oranges to try.

I loved all the goodies to nibble,
But what was the best thing to me,
Was Fred coming in with his fiddle
So we could have music with tea!



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Family Connections 2

Choose Words Carefully

One way to help children learn that both boys and girls can do all kinds of work is to use titles that don't limit jobs to one sex. Here are some examples:

Instead of **fireman**, say **firefighter**.
Instead of **workman**, say **worker**.
Instead of **policeman**, say **police officer**.
Instead of **mailman**, say **mail carrier**.

Doctor, lawyer, architect, and many other occupational titles have never meant, by definition, work done by men. Yet a lot of people still put **lady** or **woman** in front of those titles. The same thing is true of **nurse**; men doing that work usually have **male** added to their title. So-called feminine word endings such as "ess" and "ette" are belittling. **Flight attendant** is one example of a better title choice than **stewardess**.

We all learn most from what we have as examples. One little girl whose mother is a lawyer told a friend who said his father was a lawyer: "Daddies can't be lawyers. Mommies are lawyers." Not many years ago, the example would have been the other way around.

Children should be confident that any work they choose will be possible for them if they prepare themselves. They should not feel limited by their gender. Help by teaching them the right words.

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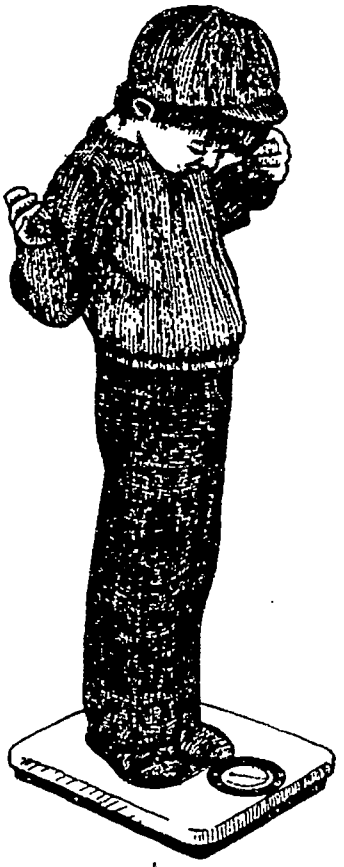
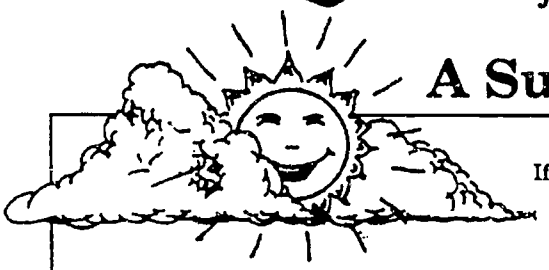
Weighing In



If you have a bathroom scale, you have a perfect tool for helping your child learn about another kind of measurement. You may be keeping a height chart. Talk with your child about weight, which is another kind of measurement.

Have him stand on the scale to be weighed. Show him and tell him how much he weighs. Ask him if someone smaller than he is would weigh more or less than he does. This may seem a very easy question. But the concept of weight is harder to understand than is the concept of height.

He will be interested in comparing weights of objects. If he picks up several different objects he will notice that some are heavier than others. He will understand weight better if he picks up some things. He will notice that some large objects are not as heavy as some smaller ones. Suggest that he pick up a pillow from his bed, for example, and then a can of tomato juice, or a small bag of sugar.



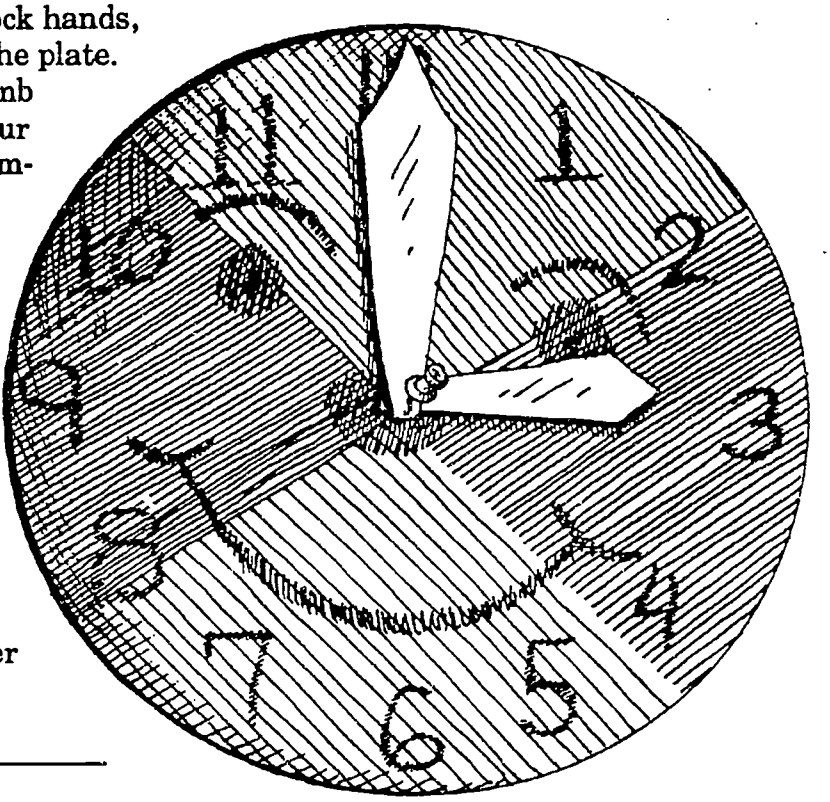
A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Measuring Time

Another thing that your child will learn to measure is time. Making a simple clock with her will help you show her how time is measured. As she moves the clock hands, she will begin to understand why we talk about time passing.

You will need a paper or styrofoam plate, two strips of heavy paper to cut into clock hands, and a brad to fasten the hands to the plate. If you don't have a brad, use a thumb tack and a small piece of wood. Your child may want to put the clock numbers on the plate to make the face. She could use crayons to make the clock colorful. Explain to her why the hands go around the clock twice each day.



You probably tell time at your house mostly with digital clocks. Show her how time looks on a digital clock and the clock you have made together. It isn't important to explain how either clock works. If she has lots of questions, look for answers together if you don't know them.

What Happens When

Use the paper clock to help your youngster understand the importance of time in everyday life. Ask him to think about some things he does every day:

Get up at what time?

Eat breakfast at what time?

Go to school at what time?

Eat lunch at what time?

Have him move the clock hands to show the time on his clock. Help him think of more examples to practice setting his clock.

Another thing he can do to learn time measurement—look around the house to count as many different time measurers as he can find. Some possibilities are alarm clock, clock radio, wrist watch, stove clock, and VCR clock. How many are digital?

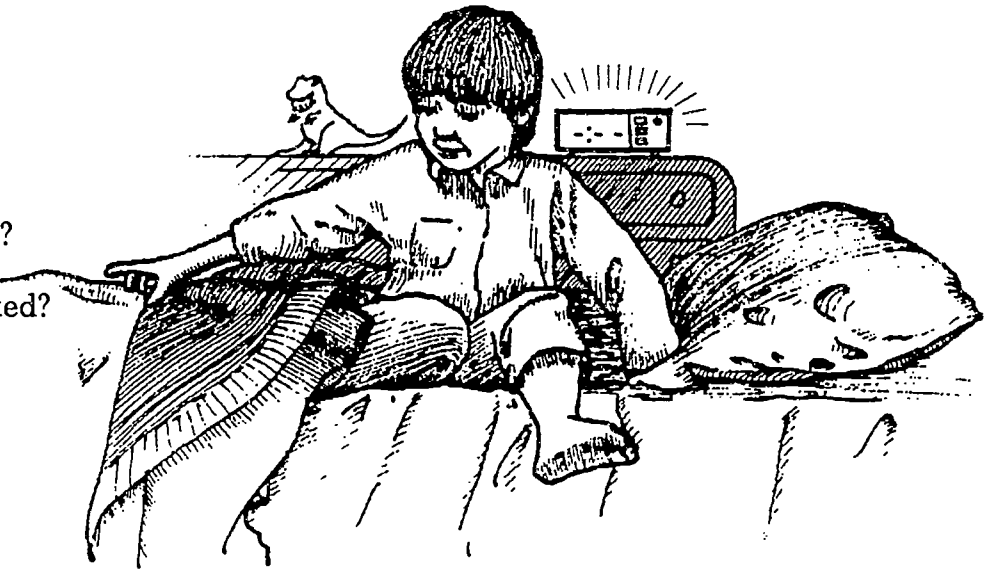
—A READ-ALOUD

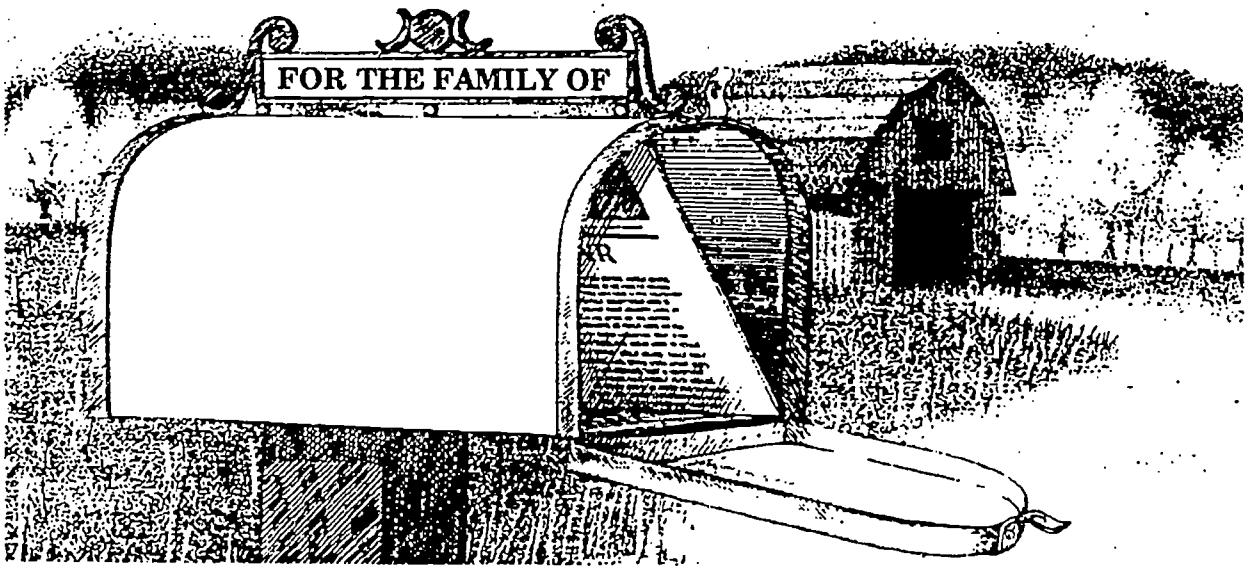
New-Fashioned Time

Lightning flashes.
Thunder cracks.
The lights go out
And then come back.

From in my bed
I look to see...
Is Dino there?
Are books still stacked?
Did the fish survive?
Did the tree get whacked?

No, all seems fine,
  except the clock.
It blinks and blinks
  and tells me...
    not.





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Family Connections 2

Have A Genuine Encounter

A psychologist at a child development center said he is often struck by how many children never have a genuine encounter with a parent or other person who cares for them. What is a genuine encounter?

For a certain length of time each day, your child gets 100 percent of your attention. It doesn't have to be a very long time—just 10 minutes would be wonderful. For that 10 minutes, nothing is allowed to intrude. This is intimate, personal time. You might hold hands, or in some way touch each other. Even a six-year-old child sometimes might like to sit on your lap.

You might whisper secrets, or talk about something that was special about the day. Encourage your child to say anything that occurs to her. Ask to see a drawing, or something that he has written. To have a genuine encounter, the parent must be all ears.

Watching TV together or going to the movies don't count as genuine encounters. They are important activities to do together, and can be good fun. But a genuine encounter requires giving your child your undivided attention, with no competition.

"It is amazing to me how starved many children are for such an interaction, and how some children never experience 100 percent of a parent for some time," the psychologist said. Parents are often surprised when their children get into their teen years and don't talk to parents. They have never had a chance to learn how, he said.

Make genuine encounters with your child a regular part of your life.

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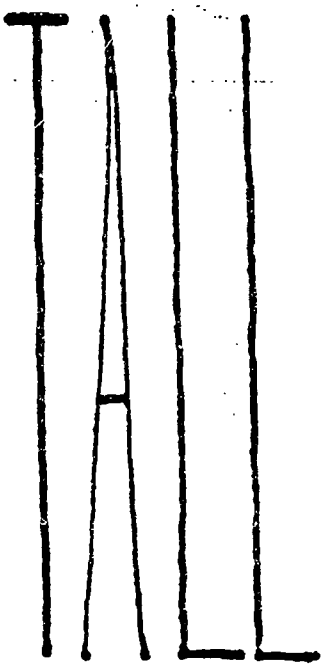
Words That Make Pictures



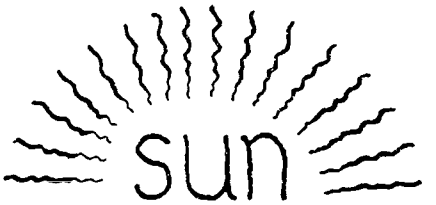
Have you noticed that you can make some words look like what they mean? The word "tall" is a good example. Have your child print the word in long, thin letters. "Sun" can have rays of light coming out of it.

Some words are easy to turn into pictures. Try the word "cat." The "t" can make a tail from top or bottom. The letters can be printed like this

c
a
t

to create lots of possibilities.

Illustrating words can be fun. Printing the names of colors in those colors is, too. Give your youngster some plain paper and crayons and try these activities together.



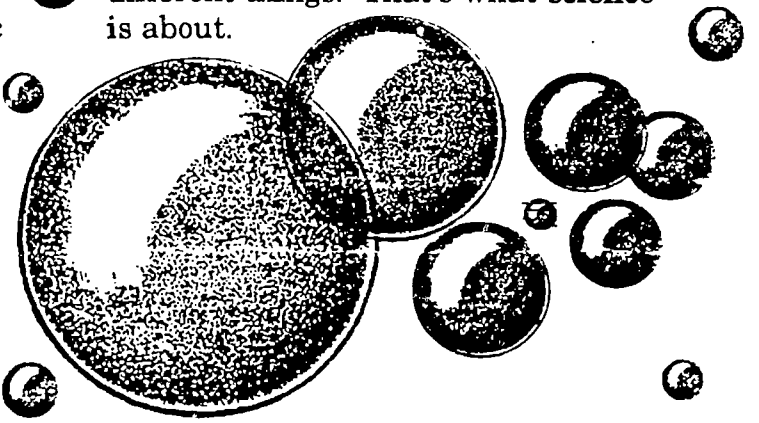
Forever Blowing Bubbles

You can make bubble-blowing solution by adding 1/3 cup dishwashing liquid to 1 cup water. Add two tablespoons light corn syrup. Collect some bubble-blowing equipment: straws; small cans with both ends removed; shapes made from paper clips; plastic berry boxes; and a plastic fly swatter.

To make bubbles with everything except the straws, just dip the object into the bubble mix and wave it in the air. Creating bubbles is a delightful experience for children—and many adults. It is also a way to make discoveries. Some questions to ask:

How large can you make your bubbles? What might you do to make them even larger? Can you make them last longer? How can you change their shape?

The answers come from trying different things. That's what science is about.



Name Some Tunes

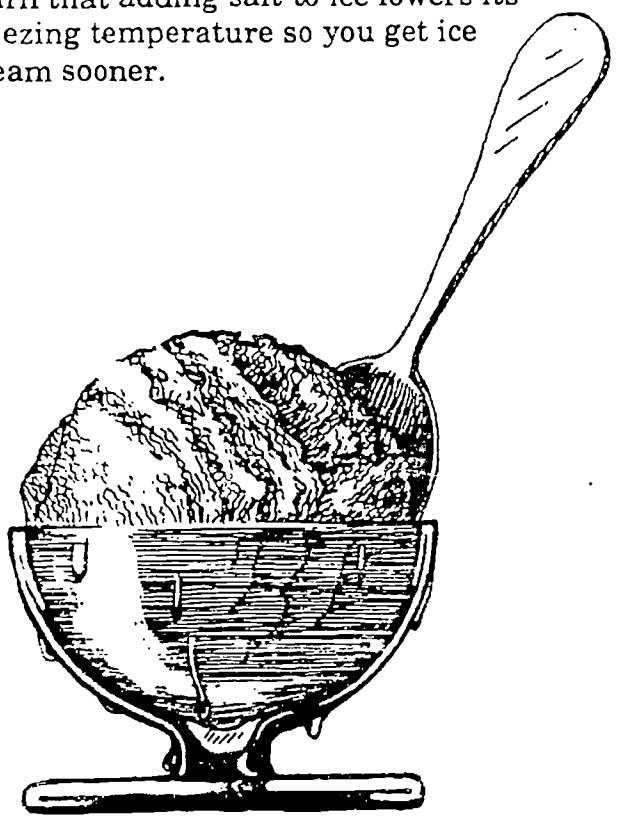
This is a good game that can be played by a family of two or more. Take turns coming up with songs that others in the game guess in as few notes as possible. You can hum the tunes or sing them if the words don't give away the name of the song.

Start with three or four notes and add notes as players continue guessing. Use songs that most players are apt to know. Include theme songs from television programs—commercials, too—as well as songs from movies and top-40 recordings.

You can keep score if everyone wants to. If you do, make the prize a gift of time to each other. It's fun to play without keeping score, too.

Ice Cream In A Bag

Here's a science experiment that your child can eat. Your child will learn that adding salt to ice lowers its freezing temperature so you get ice cream sooner.



You will need a pint-size zip-lock plastic bag and a gallon-size zip-lock plastic bag for each child who participates in the experiment. Fill the larger bag half full with ice. Add 6 tablespoons of salt and seal the bag to let it chill while you and your child prepare the smaller bag.

In the small bag put 1/2 cup milk (low-fat is fine), 1 tablespoon sugar and 1/4 teaspoon vanilla. Let your child do the measuring; it's good practice for beginning to understand fractions. Seal the small bag. Open the large bag and put the small one in. Reseal the large bag.

Have your child shake the bag until the mixture in the small bag becomes ice cream—about five minutes. You may need to wrap the bag in a towel or newspaper if it gets too cold to hold. Your child can eat the ice cream from the bag. Be sure to wipe it off so no salt gets into the ice cream.

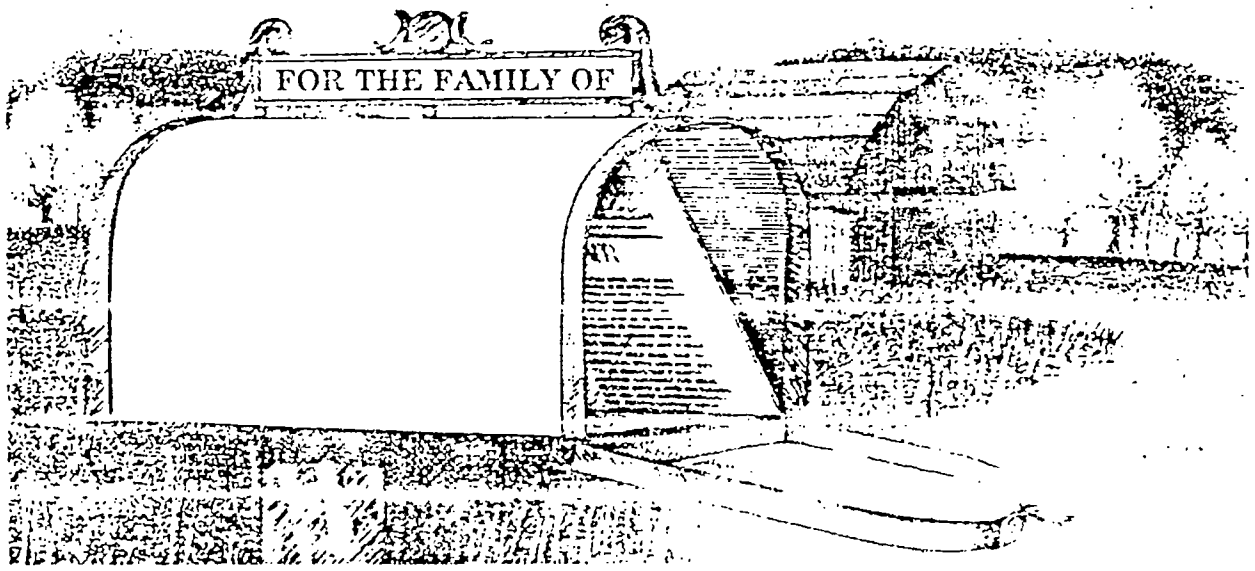
—A READ-ALOUD

What Shall I Do?

What am I going to do
today?
Maybe I'll go to Jane Ellen's
to play.
Or maybe to Tiffany's. . .
No, I don't think so.

There really is nowhere
that I want to go.
And nothing that I want to do.

I'll just wander upstairs,
And sit down
with my bears,
And think of a
blue kangaroo.



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Family Connections 2

Stay Involved with Learning

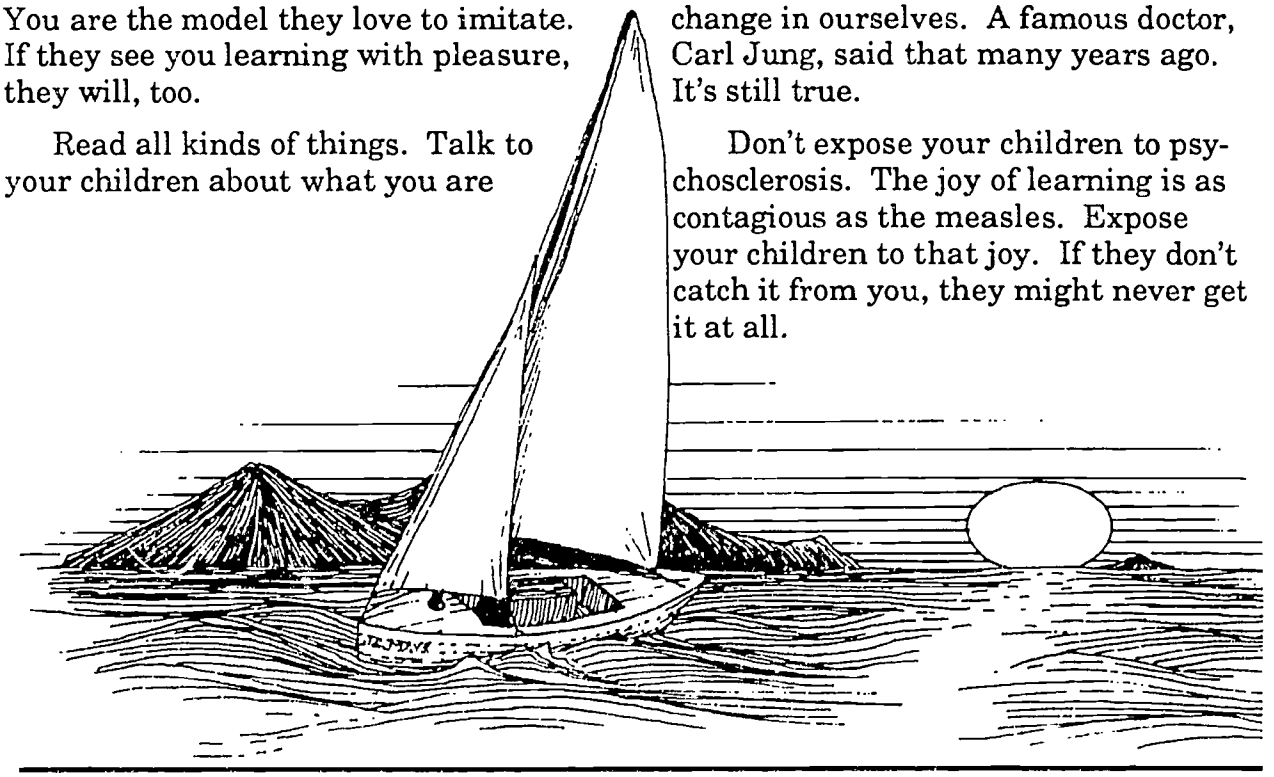
Most of us know things we should do to avoid clogging of the arteries. We ought to be just as concerned about hardening of the mind. You can help keep your arteries from hardening by not eating a lot of fat. You can keep your mind young by continuing to learn.

For children, learning is natural and fun. But many get the idea pretty early that learning is hard work. What they have done joyfully, and with excitement, becomes drudgery. You are the model they love to imitate. If they see you learning with pleasure, they will, too.

Read all kinds of things. Talk to your children about what you are reading. Let them see that reading is important to you. Try something new often. Take up a craft, or try boating. Watch for shows on television that will introduce you to a new subject. Rent a videotape about some exciting place you know little about. Visit the library. Take a short trip to a city that has a museum.

If there is something that we wish to change in a child, we should first examine that thing to see whether it is something that we really ought to change in ourselves. A famous doctor, Carl Jung, said that many years ago. It's still true.

Don't expose your children to psychosclerosis. The joy of learning is as contagious as the measles. Expose your children to that joy. If they don't catch it from you, they might never get it at all.



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Interview An Oldster

It's not too soon to arouse your child's interest in history. One excellent way to begin is to have her interview a grandparent or other older friend or relative. Family history is fascinating to children.

Your child will like the idea of being the interviewer. You can have a good time with her as she prepares the questions she wants to ask. She will be able to think of many once you get her started. Suggest something like: "What television programs were popular when you were a little boy, Grandpa?"

If your children are lucky enough to have great-grandparents they can talk to, even more interesting subjects may arise. As an interview goes on, persons being interviewed are likely to bring out photographs and other items to illustrate their memories.

One way to have a record of the interview is to use a tape recorder. Your child can then share her experience with others in the family and with friends. She will also enjoy hearing her voice on tape. If you don't have a tape recorder, she can write about the interview in her journal or dictate to you. She could also write, or dictate to you, a story about the interview. She might want to draw pictures, too.

Books Starring Older Folks

Next time you take your child to the library, look for these books. It's good for children to see older persons as important and competent.

My Great-Aunt Arizona	Gloria Houston
The Potato Man	Megan McDonald
Not the Piano, Mrs. Medley!	Evan Levine
Grandpa's Face	Eloise Greenfield
Loop the Loop	Barbara Dugan
The Wednesday Surprise	Eve Bunting
Brrr!	James Stevenson

TV Imagination

Watching television is passive. Here's an activity that will help your child use imagination about what he watches on television.

Make a list together of some of his favorite shows. Then ask some questions: What five characters on TV would you like to have as friends? Why would you choose that five? Write the names of the characters across a sheet of paper. Put qualities or characteristics that he mentions about each character under the name.

He can then look at how the characters are different from each other. He will also be able to see what they have in common. Are the characters like his real-life friends?

He might have fun talking about how he would spend time with one of his TV friends. Where might they go? What might they do?

Barney					
He's a dinosaur					
He's Purple					
He's Funny					

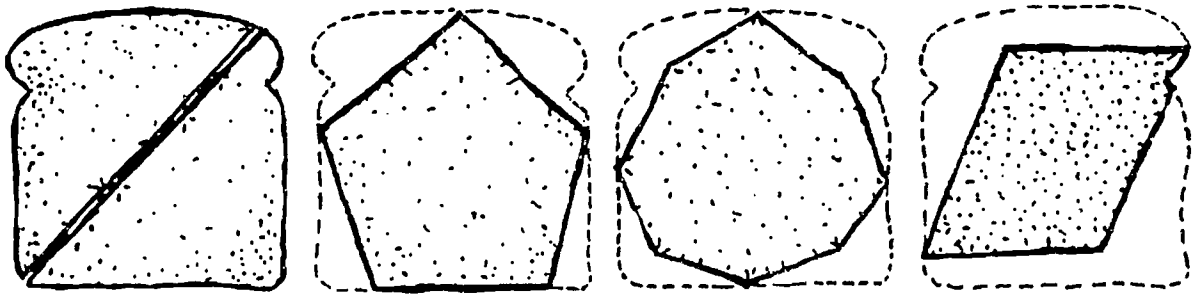
Shape Up Some Sandwiches

Make some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or any kind that won't come apart when you cut them into different shapes. Your child can do the spreading.

Cut the sandwiches into as many different shapes as you and your child can think of. If you start with the usual square, cut it diagonally to make triangles. You can get fancy with five sides—a pentagon—or eight sides—a hectagon.

You might even make a parallelogram. If you get carried away and make too many sandwiches, label them with the name of the shape and freeze them. Your youngster will feel very clever going off to school with a pentagon sandwich.

You could also help him cut bread into shapes and add filling when he wants a sandwich.



—A READ-ALOUD

I'd Rather Be Older

I'd be Andrew if I could.
  Andrew's already nine.
He gets to stay up later
  than other friends of mine.

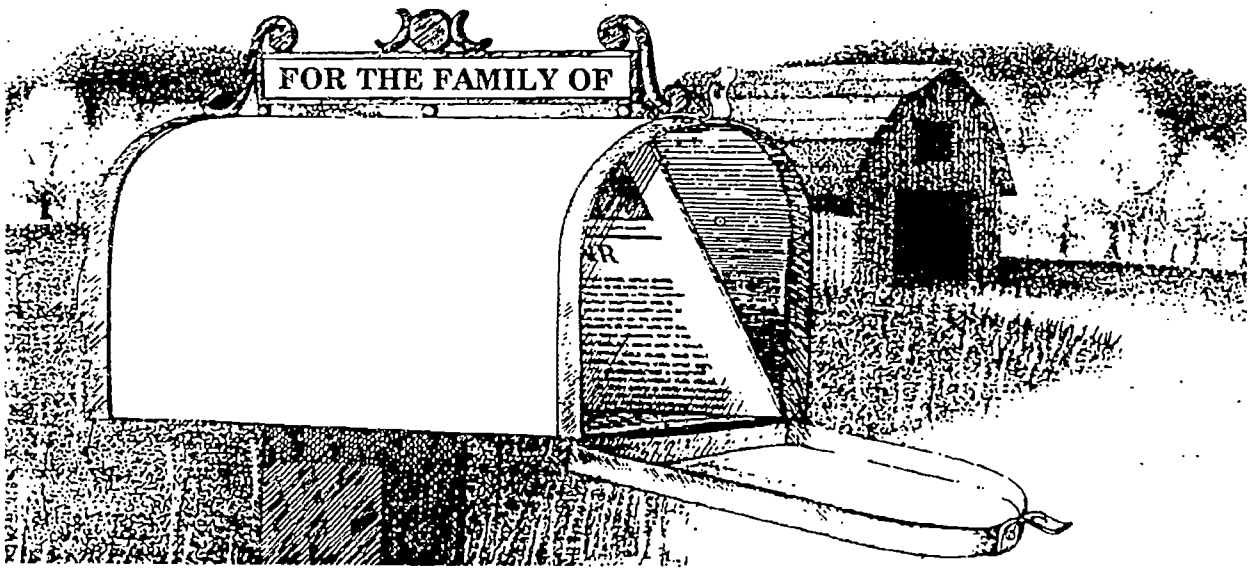
    I'm six.

I'd be Nancy if I could.
  Nancy's almost ten.
She's pitching games in Little League
  and I'm playing T-ball again.

    I'm still six.

But I wouldn't be Philip
    if I could.
When people see Philip they coo.
My mom still ties a bib
  under his chin.
Philip's not even two.

    I'd rather be six.



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Family Connections 2

Straight Talk With Your Child

Parents are people, too. We all have hot buttons, things that we are especially sensitive about. Children can punch those buttons without realizing it. When they do, parents sometimes lose their temper and leave the kids upset, in tears, grounded . . . and not understanding what they did wrong.

When such a scene has happened in your house, you may remember that you felt upset afterward, too. If you think about what your child did to make you angry, you might find that it's often the same thing. Your hot button may be noise, or messiness. It might be your child's not finishing a meal.

Whatever it is, talking with your youngster about it can help. Be very open. "You must wonder why I get so upset when you don't put your things away. I know I overreact sometimes, but I really hate messy rooms. I know you don't mean to make me mad when you leave your things scattered around. I don't like to be cross with you. What do you think we could do about this problem?"

Children are also people. They like to be treated as adults. They respond well to honest expressions of feelings. Even young children can learn to solve problems if they get opportunities to practice. If they don't, they will continue to use tears and temper displays when conflicts arise.

As we all become able to take responsibility for our own behavior, we will blame each other less. Straight talk between parent and child helps everybody become more responsible.

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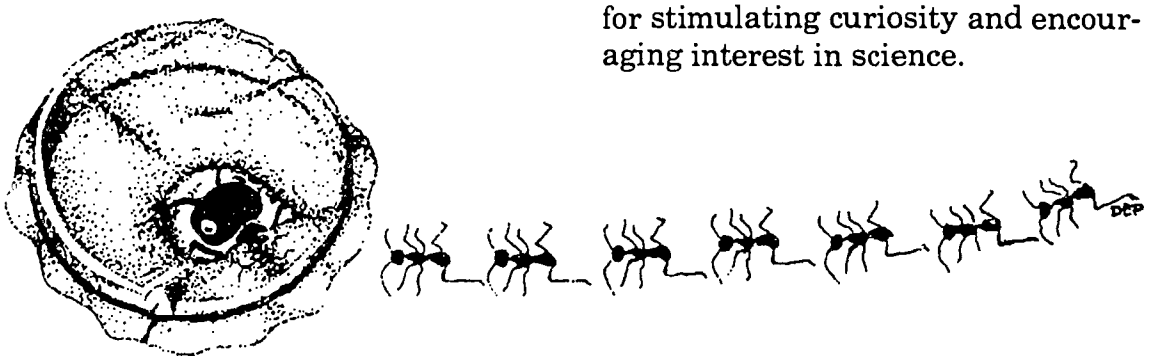
Make A Magnifier

A magnifying glass will add excitement to the one-foot walk. Your child will have fun making his own. You need plastic wrap and something to make a frame. A jar ring is ideal. If you don't have one, you can make a frame from a styrofoam or heavy paper cup.

Cut about a half-inch ring from around the top of the cup. Stretch plastic wrap tightly across it and slip a rubber band around to hold it. Your child can do it from here on. Give him these directions.

Put a drop of water on the plastic wrap. Try holding the magnifier at different distances from an object. You will find the best distance to see things bigger. That's called magnification. (He will find that the water moves around, but stays on the plastic wrap pretty well. If it slides off, just add more.) Then encourage him to wonder what would happen if. . .

Using water to magnify is great fun. It's also well worth spending a dollar or two to buy a magnifying glass for your child. Few things are better for stimulating curiosity and encouraging interest in science.



Cook Some Welsh Rarebit

Some folks call it Welsh Rabbit. Some call it Cheese Tom Ditty. Whatever your family wants to call it, they will enjoy eating it. And your child will like making it. He can do most of the work with your supervision.

You need:

1 can (10 1/2 ounces) tomato soup
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
6 slices bread (any kind will do)

Grate the cheese. Heat the soup until it begins to bubble, stirring constantly. (Don't add water.) Add the cheese and continue stirring until it melts. Crush the oregano between thumb and forefinger and add it to the mixture. Your child will probably say something about pizza at this point, since oregano gives pizza its distinctive aroma.

Toast the bread and cut it into four triangles. Serve the rarebit over the toast.

A One-Foot Walk

Your child will be amazed at what she can discover on this very short walk. She will use all her senses, and learn how to observe as scientists do.

There are a number of ways to do a one-foot walk. Here's the first kind.

Help her measure a four-foot piece of string or twine. Tie the ends together. Take the string outside. Have her choose a piece of ground where she can arrange the string in a square and anchor the corners. She will take her one-foot walk within the square, using her senses instead of her feet.

You can be her recorder. Write down for her everything that she tells you she is observing, hearing, and experiencing. To extend the activity, she may want to find answers to the questions that are bound to occur to her.

Variations: Use the string to take a circle walk. Or, use a 12-inch ruler to measure a square, and mark it off with rocks or some other material found outside. Extend the square to see whether her senses will make more discoveries in a larger space.

- **Look for:** different kinds of grass or plants, bugs, rocks, and dirt.
- **Listen for:** sounds that will be in her one-foot walk.
- **Taste:** a blade of grass, or something else safe.
- **Smell:** the aroma of grass, dirt, rocks. . .
- **Touch:** everything in her space

—A READ-ALOUD

Jellies of the Sea

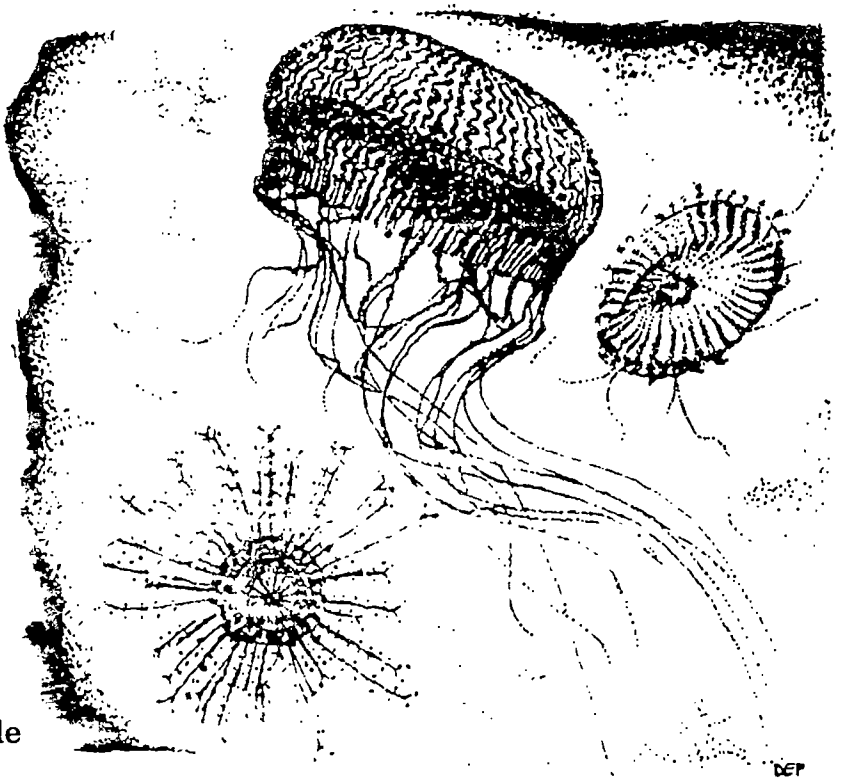
The mysteries of jellyfish
You ought to behold
Some hang in the sea
Just like jewels or gold.

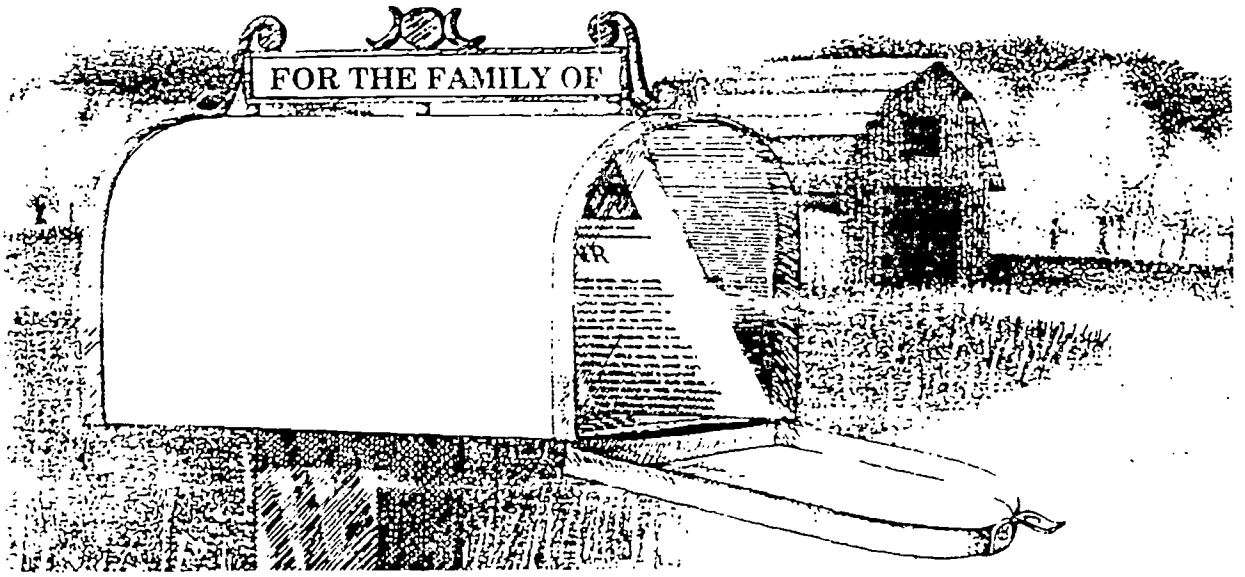
We're not all alike,
With our jellyfish jell.
Some of us are umbrellas,
Some are more like a bell.

We come in all sizes
From as small as a pea,
To one arctic cousin
about seven feet three.

I'm as big as a soup bowl
Colored sky blue, I think.
My sister's pale orange,
My brother is pink.

We don't like to sting folks,
But what can we do?
What would you do to people
who step on you?





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Family Connections 2

Parents' Expectations Matter Most

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they're capable of being." —Goethe

Parental expectations are the most powerful predictor of a child's school success, according to some research. It's important for you to expect a lot. It's even more important that you don't expect the wrong things.

If you ask your children to do something they are not developmentally ready to do, they may feel like failures. When schools expect children to do work they aren't ready for, they may learn to hate school. It's far better to spend time on activities they can do successfully. Succeeding gives them a self-image as learners, and they are eager to do more. That's why it's a good idea to do things with your child sometimes that she's familiar with. It's good for her to be able to show off for you.

You as parent and first teacher are aware of your child's strengths. Be careful not to write off other areas as weaknesses. Children's abilities develop at different rates. Some who have good verbal skills early will become equally skilled at math or other subjects later. Some are physically adept very young; others take longer to become graceful or agile.

Be sensitive to children's needs, but don't assume they can't do anything. You may have heard something like this when you were a child: "He'll never be a teacher. He's too shy." "She'll never be an accountant. Nobody in this family is any good at math." Children take such comments seriously. Be careful not to say such things about, or to, your child.

Expect your children to be successful learners, and you increase the probability that they will be.

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Songs at Bedtime

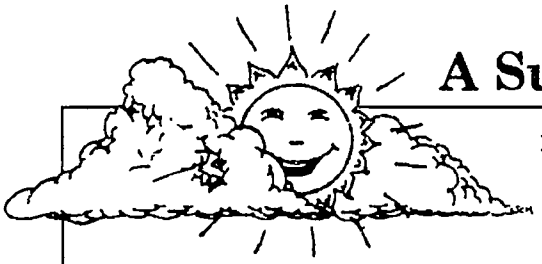
Did you know that singing is good for your health? It increases the amount of oxygen that you breathe. It makes you feel happy. And it is relaxing.

You probably sang lullabies to your child when she was a baby. Singing at bedtime is still a wonderful thing to do. Along with the storytelling you do or bedtime books you read, include a few songs. Your child may want to sing along.

Twinkle, Twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky...

Sing some old favorites: London Bridge Is Falling Down; Farmer in the Dell; Three Blind Mice; I'm A Little Teapot. She might enjoy doing a baby song like Eensie Weensie Spider. Make up a melody to a favorite book or nursery rhyme.

She would also enjoy hearing some of your favorites from an earlier time in your life. Sing!



A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Words I Know

Most children like to use scissors. Give your child some old magazines and let him do a Word Hunt. He can cut out words he knows and find pictures to go with them.

If you have old greeting cards that you hate to throw away, give him some of those. They are good material for word hunting. So are such things as empty cereal boxes, old yellow pages, and yesterday's newspaper.

You will both enjoy seeing how many words he can recognize.

A Softening Experiment

This recipe for a dish that most people like to eat—twice-baked potatoes—is also a science activity. Your child can do almost all of the work, and it doesn't take much time—especially if you have a microwave oven.

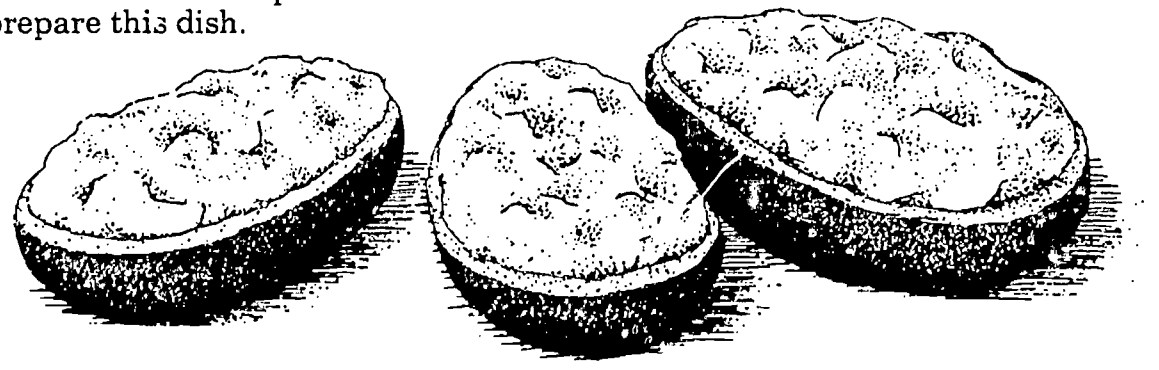
Tell your youngster about the potatoes you will be eating. Spanish explorers took the potato home with them to Europe after they explored for gold in South America. Now the potato is the most widely used vegetable in the Western Hemisphere.

Potatoes are mostly starch, which turns to sugar as we digest it. This hardy veggie is loaded with vitamins plus iron and potassium. If you eat the skin you get protein as well. Your child will be interested in how the potato changes from hard to soft when it is baked. Talk about potatoes as you prepare this dish.

Ingredients for 6 servings

3 medium-size potatoes
1/2 teaspoon salt (or to taste)
3 tablespoons butter or margarine
3 tablespoons milk
grated cheese

Bake the potatoes as you usually do. Cut them in half lengthwise when they are cool enough to handle. Scoop out the cooked potato and set aside the skins. Mash the pulp with the salt, butter, and milk. Fill the skins and top with grated cheese. Bake them in a shallow pan at 400 degrees until the cheese melts and browns. The potatoes are also delicious browned without cheese. Don't forget; eat the skins to get the protein.



—A READ-ALOUD

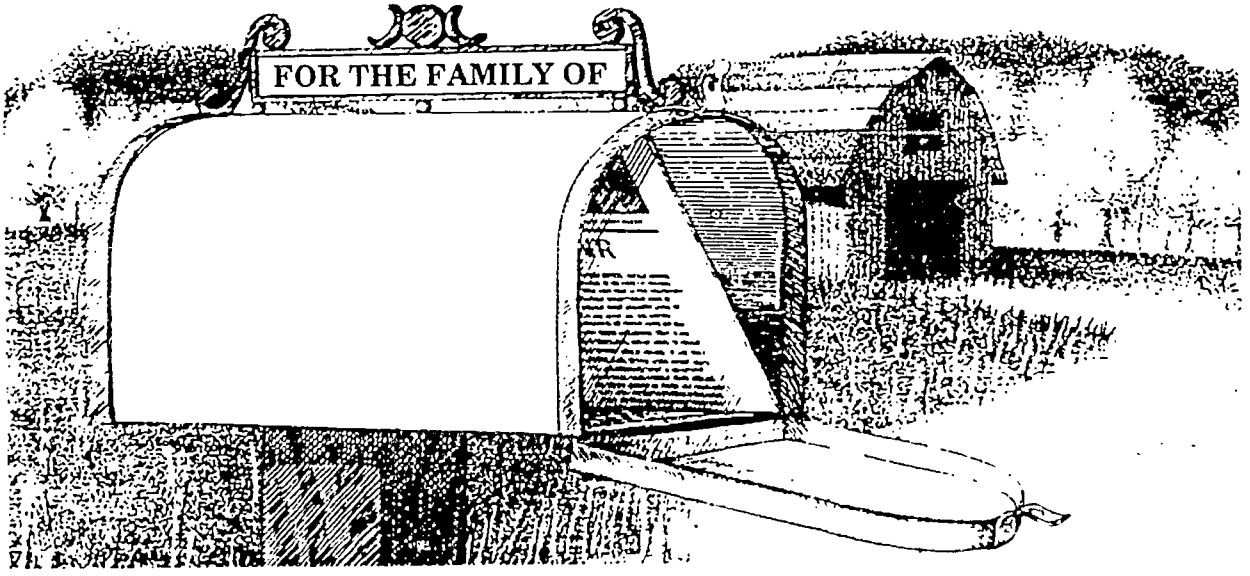
Treasured Tooth

Timothy had a tooth in his pocket
To keep it safe from harm.
Annette put a tooth in a teacup,
Which her grandfather viewed with alarm.

That night, they put teeth under pillows,
Where teeth go to be taken away.
But the tooth fairy must have been busy.
Both teeth were still there the next day.

"Don't worry," Annette said to Timothy,
As she re-stored her tooth in the cup.
"The tooth fairy will feel bad he forgot us,
And his sorrow will drive the price up."

Sure enough, on the following morning,
Both teeth under pillows no more,
Ann and Tim found their assets improving,
With two dollars to put in their store.



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Family Connections 2

Open-Minded Children Will Help Us Get Along

Children as young as two notice differences in skin color. Yet preschool children mix easily with playmates of all colors. By primary school, we may be shocked and saddened to hear them say racist things. How does that happen? According to the song, children "have to be carefully taught to hate." We can instead teach them not to.

Children who are five to seven years old notice all kinds of differences in people. They evaluate information, but it is hard for them to realize that something can be good and bad at the same time. They may think, "I have brown skin. People who don't have brown skin are not like me, and they are bad." They can't understand yet that skin color is not what determines good or bad.

Many things influence children: television, happenings at school, books they read. But what their parents do and say has the greatest impact. If we are to raise open-minded children, we must teach them early that we do not like remarks about people based on their color or physical condition or religion. It makes a big difference when children understand that something hurtful they say can make another person feel sad.

Your child's healthy self-esteem is a big part of a willingness to accept and understand those of different races, religions, physical abilities, and backgrounds. Encourage your child to be responsible, competent and independent. Children who feel good about themselves don't need to put down other people.

Pretending differences don't exist doesn't work. What does work is to help children value the differences.

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Have Some Oobleck

What is oobleck? In chemistry class, it would be called a non-newtonian fluid. It has properties of both solids and liquids. What you will probably call it is "messy." It is. But you and your child will love it. Don't worry; it's easy to clean up.

Have your child mix about half a cup of cornstarch with water until the mixture is fairly thick but can still be poured slowly. It's fun to add a little food coloring if you have some on hand. Now you can investigate together. You could put the mixture into different containers: a plate, or plastic dishes of varying sizes. Experiment.

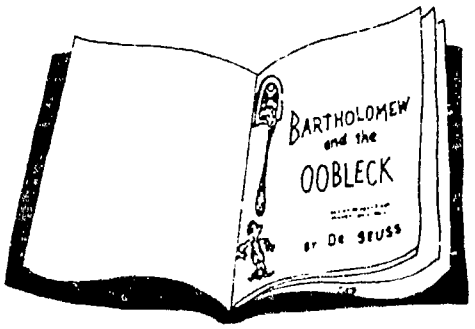
Put your finger into the oobleck and pull it out quickly. Try hitting the surface of the solution rapidly. Squeeze the oobleck in your hand, then release the pressure. Try to grab some of the mixture. Try to pick it up

slowly. Encourage your child to describe what happens with the different actions. The spills will clean up easily when the mixture dries.

Other things you might try: freeze oobleck; list as many ways to use it as you can think of. Can you build something with it? Can you use it as paste?

Added Oobleck Fun

Oobleck is named for a book by Dr. Seuss called *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. This is a good time to read the book together, even if you have read it before. Dr. Seuss also wrote *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*. Children never seem to get too old to enjoy the Dr. Seuss books. He wrote and illustrated 42 of them, and your public library will probably have several.



Come to think of it, parents never seem to get too old for Dr. Seuss books, either. His last one is called *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* His final message for children was

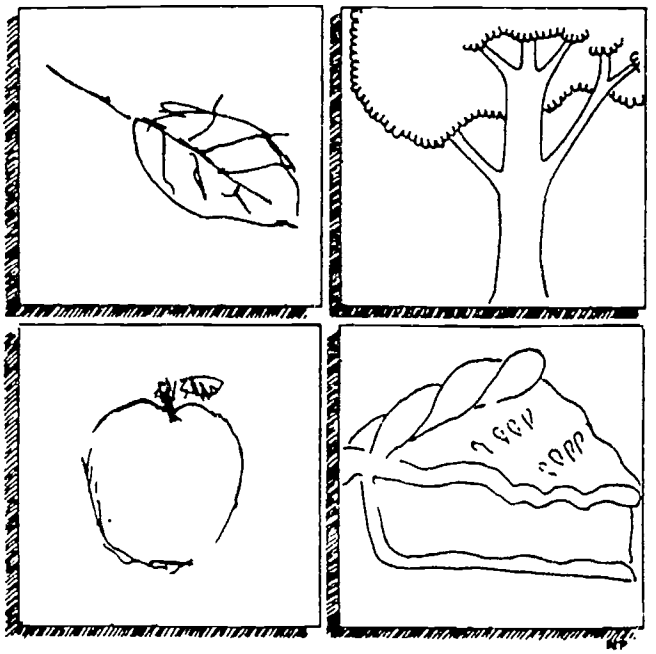
And will you succeed?
Yes! You will, indeed!
(98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.)
KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!

Talking in Pictures

Want some quiet time with your child? Here's a way to have a conversation that is almost soundless. You will need plenty of plain paper and a writing implement for each of you. You can use pencils, crayons or markers.

Do a simple drawing on a sheet of paper. Have your child respond with a sketch of his own. Keep "talking" until you don't have anything left to say to each other with pictures.

Now you can talk about your pictures if you want.



Search for Shapes

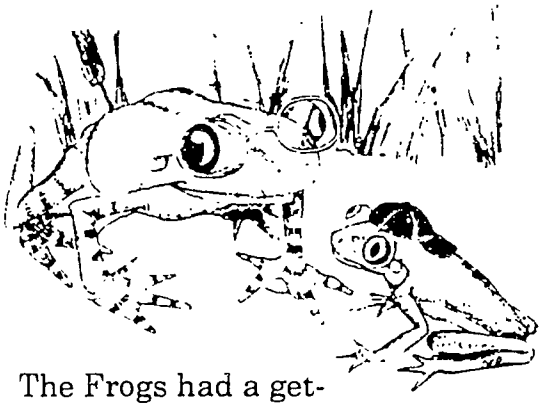
Call your child's attention to the shapes in this picture. They are all around the house. How many different shapes can she find in the picture? around the house? Make a list.

Now, see how many of each shape she can find. Count them and record the numbers on the list. Analyze the results. How many of each kind did she find? Which shape came in first? Next?

If she enjoys the activity, you can extend it by helping her make a graph of the information she collected.

— A READ-ALOUD

Family Reunion

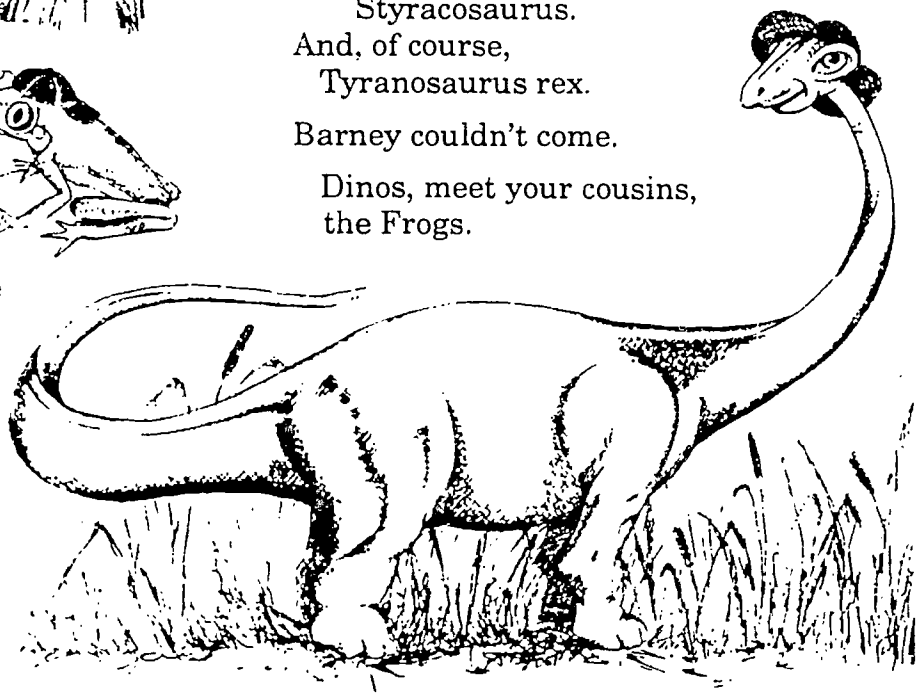


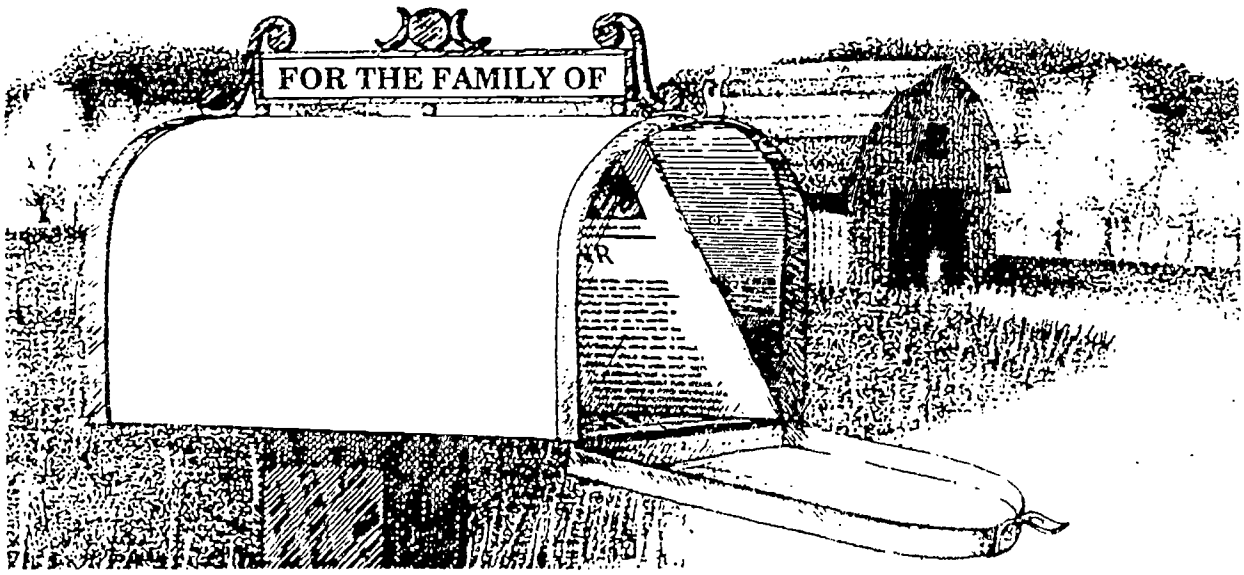
The Frogs had a get-together last week. Some interesting guests were on hand. Grandfather Frog introduced them.

I want you to meet
Gallimimus, Triceratop,
Velociraptor, Maiasaura,
Brachiosaurus,
Dilophosaurus
Protoceratop, Troodon,
Albertosaurus (that's Albert for short).
Corythosaurus, Deinonychus,
Gobinconodon Pleurocoelus,
Styracosaurus.
And, of course,
Tyranosaurus rex.

Barney couldn't come.

Dinos, meet your cousins,
the Frogs.





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Family Connections 2

As A Parent, I Promise . . .

- To read to my child, because children learn from good stories to be compassionate; to treat others as persons, not objects; to have courage; to have hope; to take action; and to take responsibility.
- To promote my child's self-esteem by giving him opportunities to build competence and confidence; by giving her specific praise for her work and displaying it for others to see; by letting him share in family responsibilities and decisions.
- To encourage my child's curiosity and natural interest in science and math, because all children need to learn both and all children can; to engage with my child in activities to observe and discover, so she can see that science and math are part of our everyday lives.
- To pay attention to TV when my child is watching; to introduce him to programs like "Reading Rainbow," "Ghostwriter," and "Mister Rogers;" and to watch TV together so we can talk about what we see.
- To turn off the television more, because both child and adult programs include enormous amounts of glamorized violence;
- To be involved in my child's education throughout the school years by showing in every way that I think education is important; by talking with my child's teachers; by volunteering my time and talent to the school.
- To enjoy my child as we grow and learn together.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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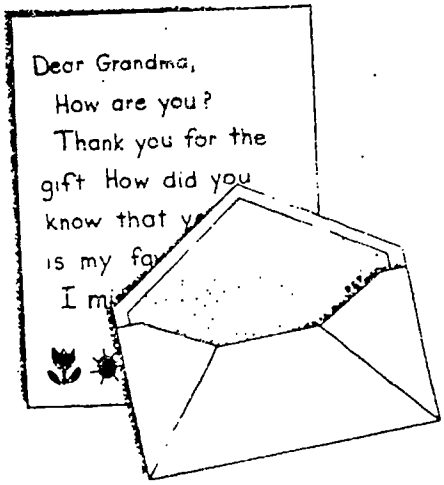
A Letter To Someone

A recent poll found that the average family receives fewer than 6 personal letters a year.

Since most everyone loves to get letters, encourage your child to write to a relative or friend. Show your youngster how to date the letter. Talk about the greeting. A letter doesn't have to begin with "Dear Someone." "Hi, Someone," or some other informal beginning is fine.



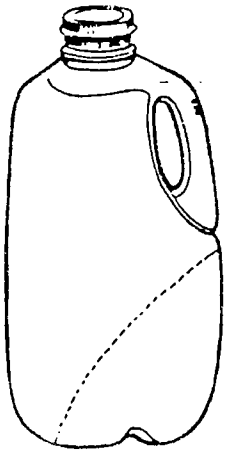
If your child isn't writing yet, have him dictate the letter to you. Then let him sign his name at the end. If he is writing, don't worry about the correctness of spelling and punctuation. The important thing is to learn about letter writing as a way to communicate.

Show him how to address the envelope, and where to put the return address. Let him put a stamp on the letter and drop it in a mail box or take it to the post office. He can also write letters to friends or family nearby and deliver them by hand.

Milk Jug Scoop

You and your child can make a scoop from a half-gallon plastic milk container. You will be recycling the plastic and having fun at the same time.

You will need to cut a slit in the bottle at the bottom to make room for scissors. Your child can do the rest of the cutting with the scissors. If the cut edges are rough, use sandpaper or an emery board to smooth them.



The scoop will look something like this. It's great for digging in a sandbox or at the beach. It's also fun to catch a ball with it. You can use a homemade foil ball, a tennis ball, or a ping pong ball and make up a game.

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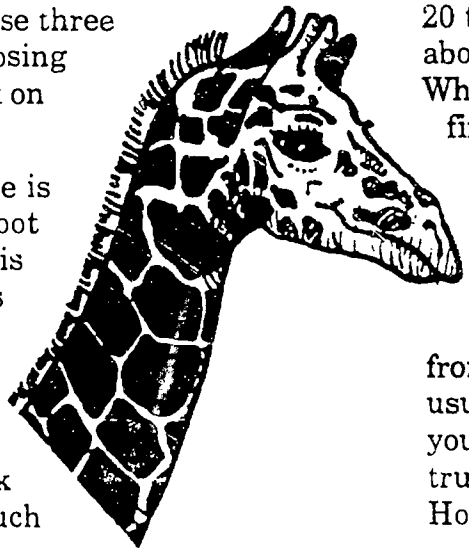
Figure With This

You can have fun with your child by telling him these three fascinating facts and posing some questions to work on together.



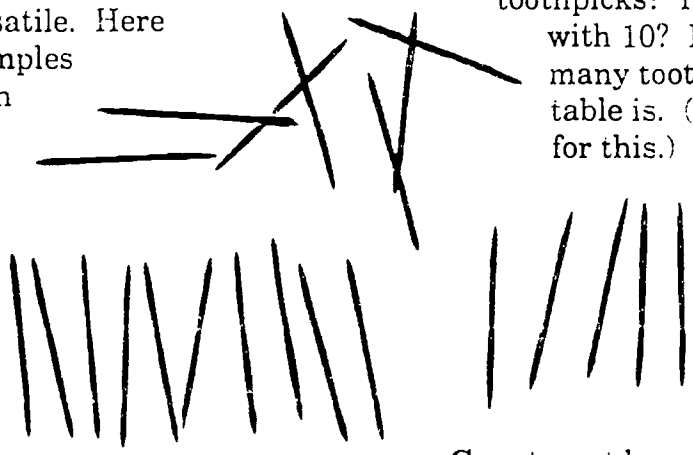
1. A giraffe's tongue is more than a foot long. How long is your tongue? Is the giraffe's tongue longer or shorter than yours? Why do you think the giraffe has such a long tongue?

2. Most people breathe about 20 times a minute. (That's about 10 million times a year!) What ways can you think of to find out how many times you breathe in a minute? in an hour? in a day?

3. People have an inch measure with them wherever they go. The thumb from its tip to the first bend is usually about one inch. Can you find out whether that is true of the people you know? How?

Toothpick Time

With a box of toothpicks you and your child can have many fun-filled learning activities. Multi-colored picks cost just a little bit more and are a lot more versatile. Here are just a few examples of things to do with toothpicks. You will think of more as you spend toothpick time together.



Sort into colors. **Count** as high as you can go. Arrange in groups of ten. Play with changing numbers in groups by adding to and taking away. Seeing how numbers work makes the process clear to kids.

Design patterns and shapes. How many shapes can you make with just 5 toothpicks? How many more with 10? **Estimate** how many toothpicks wide the table is. (Use a small table for this.) Then put enough end to end to reach from one side of the table to the other. Count them to see how close the estimate came.

Create art by making designs on white or colored paper. Secure the arrangement with paste.

—A READ-ALOUD

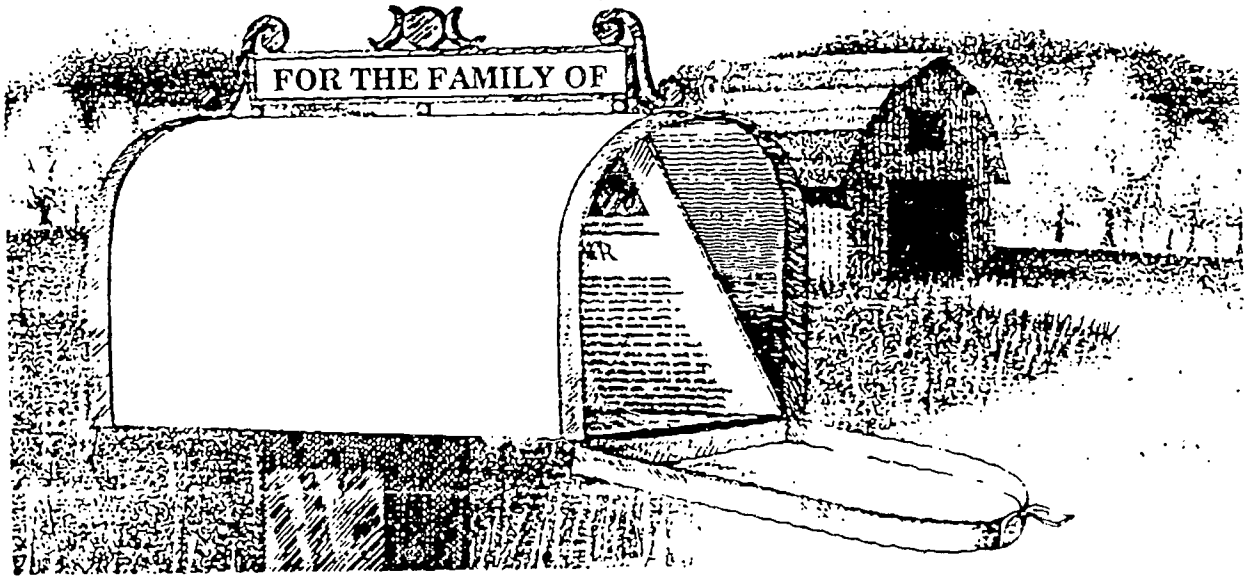
That's About the Size of It

Blue whales are the largest creatures on earth.
How big are they?
Oh, about 15 and one-half Michael Jordans long, and about 33 African elephants heavy.
(That's 100 feet, and 44,000 pounds.)

What do such large creatures eat?
Mother whales feed the babies milk—about 120 gallons a day, for 6 months or so.
On that diet, the baby grows 8 and 1/2 pounds an hour!
When it stops drinking mom's milk, it eats 4 to 8 tons of krill every day.

We don't know much about whales, except that they are a lot like us.
They live in families,
Talk to each other,
And care for one another.

If we don't care for them,
They will soon be all gone.



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