

# Parenting Tips A-Z



Early Childhood Family Education  
Building Blocks for Family & School Success

This booklet brought to you by ECFE Coordinated Outreach-ECO

# Introduction

As we go further into the 21st Century, parenting is not the same as it was for past generations. It's true – a lot of the basic information, such as childhood milestones and the need for sleep, does not change but new findings concerning young children are being discovered every day. Mothers and fathers of young children need to stay up-to-date with parenting information.

This booklet contains some tried-and-true bits of wisdom, along with some new research and recommendations. One excellent way to stay abreast of current information of all things related to infants, toddlers, preschoolers and parenting is to check into your local Early Childhood Family Education program. ECFE offers classes for families with young children, birth up to kindergarten.

**Come for your child, stay for yourself!**



## AMAZING NEWBORN

Newborns are unique, amazing and even capable. Your baby came equipped with many abilities and reflexes. Babies are born ready to learn and grow, and you will see the unique ways your newborn adjusts to the world. All five of the baby's senses are working at birth.

- They can see. Babies see things that are about eight inches away. They like looking at colors, patterns and circles.
- They can hear. Newborns startle at sudden noises and may cry when they hear other newborns cry.
- They can taste. Infants prefer certain flavors. They like breast milk and formula but do not like bitter or sour tastes.
- They can smell. Newborns turn their heads away from strong smells that are unpleasant.

## It is not possible to spoil a baby in the first year of life.

- They love to be touched. Babies calm to the warmth of their parent's body. Premature babies gain weight more quickly if they are touched and held.

Children are a precious gift. They require lots of energy, and they have a way of giving energy back. You know this in a personal way now. You feel joy, confusion, exhaustion—sometimes all at once. You learn that all parents need support from other adults. Being a parent is one of the most exciting experiences in life!

## ATTACHMENT

One of the most important things that babies do is become attached to their parents and other important adults in their lives. Attachment develops over time as an infant and caregiver engage. You'll know that your baby is getting attached when he starts to cry when you leave. This does not mean that your baby is spoiled. It's a sign of attachment and trust. This will set the foundation for healthy relationships throughout his life.

Research shows that babies who have a secure attachment become children who:

- Handle problems better
- Have better play skills
- Are more curious
- Do better in school.



## ACCIDENTS

Despite a parent's best childproofing and safety efforts, accidents can happen in seconds. The key to preventing injuries is anticipatory guidance – thinking about the event before it ever occurs. You also need to know how to respond to emergencies when they do occur. Please take the time to learn basic first aid and infant and child CPR. Call 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Another number to always keep near your phone is the Poison Help Center. This phone number is NOT only for emergencies; you can also call it for information related to any type of poisons, including medications (over-the-counter and prescription), household cleaners and chemicals, cosmetics and personal care products, and plants.

Poison Help  
1-800-222-1222



24 hours a day 7 days a week free of charge

This hotline number works anywhere in the United States (including Alaska & Hawaii) and directly connects you to the poison control center taking care of the area from which you are calling. Each year, the Minnesota Poison Control System consults on tens of thousands of exposures and provides poison information on drug or medical information for many, many additional

callers. Over half of the exposures involve children aged 5 years or younger. About three quarters of the exposures are safely managed at home reducing unwarranted and expensive emergency room and urgent care visits. National studies have shown that for every dollar spent on poison control services around \$7 is saved in unnecessary health care costs.



## BABYSITTERS

Your young child needs lots of love and attention. It's also important to find time to nurture yourself and your relationship with your spouse/partner. A large majority of couples experience a huge drop in marital/relational quality during the transition to parenthood. New moms and dads need to make time for each other and to be with other people. After some time away from your little one, you can return refreshed to face the challenges of parenting. Here are some ideas to help you prepare for a sitter.

### Preparing a Sitter

Ask someone you trust to care for your child. The first time you have a sitter, ask the person to come 30 minutes before you leave so you can show the sitter around your house and share information about your child's routine.

Write down the following information about your baby and put it in a folder for the sitter:

- What usually happens at the time of day the sitter is present?
- What are your child's favorite toys and activities?
- How can your child be calmed?
- What will your child eat?
- Where are all the things the sitter will need to care for your child?

Show the sitter around the house and where the following items are located:

- Telephones
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Smoke detectors
- Fire escapes

Provide the sitter these pieces of information:

- Phone number where to reach you
- The birth dates of all children in the home
- Your child's doctor's phone number
- Phone number of a neighbor or nearby family member
- 911 or emergency response system (fire and police)
- Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222)
- Your house address
- Address of nearest emergency room
- Assigned consent form authorizing medical care within certain limits if you cannot be reached

If possible, it is best to call 9-1-1 from a landline, not from a cell phone.



## BITING

Infants learn about the world around them by exploring it with their hands, eyes, and mouths. But infants need help to learn what they should and shouldn't bite. Biting is a typical behavior often seen in infants and toddlers. As children mature, gain self-control, and develop problem-solving skills, they usually outgrow this behavior. While not uncommon, biting can be an upsetting and potentially harmful behavior that should be discouraged from the very first episode.

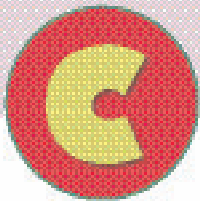
If your child takes an experimental bite on a mother's breast or a teacher's shoulder, stay calm and use clear signals to communicate that it is not okay for one person to bite another. A firm "no" or "no biting!" is an appropriate response.

## BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

A baby's brain develops very rapidly. Electrical activity of brain cells—stimulated by sights, sounds, noises, touch, language and eye contact—form synapses in the brain. These connections help determine the child's intelligence and ability to learn. Unless they are used, brain cells are eliminated. Connections that are never, or seldom, used wither and fade away. They can never be replaced. The window of opportunity for fully developing intelligence is open from birth to age 3.

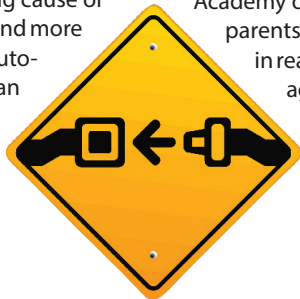
A newborn's brain is about 25 percent of its approximate adult weight. By age 3, it has grown dramatically by producing billions of cells and hundreds of trillions of connections or synapses between these cells.





## CAR SEAT SAFETY

Starting with a baby's very first journey home from the hospital, parents are responsible for ensuring their child's safety during travel. Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death in children and more kids are killed in automobile crashes than in any other type of unintentional injury.



Always have your child's car seat installed in the back seat of your car. Many cars have front air bags that, when inflated, can injure or even kill small children. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents to keep their toddlers in rear-facing car seats until age 2, or until they reach the maximum height and weight for their model of car seat.

[www.BuckleUpKids.state.mn.us](http://www.BuckleUpKids.state.mn.us)

## CRYING

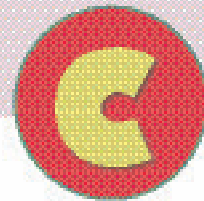
Crying is your little one's prime communication tool and is a call for help. When your baby cries, he is trying to tell you something. Remember that some infants are fussier than others. Like adults, babies have different personalities. Paying attention to the sounds of his cries helps you make a good guess about what he is trying to communicate:

- He may be hungry
- He may be in pain
- He may be lonely
- He may be sleepy
- He may be overstimulated
- He may have a wet diaper
- He may be hot or cold

New parents often feel inadequate when they can't stop the crying. The best thing parents can do when their infant is crying is to stay calm; know that an increase in your stress level will increase your baby's also. Remain calm and your baby might follow suit. Parents do not always like to stay close to out-of-control children but that is when you are needed most.







## NEVER SHAKE A BABY!

Shaking a baby can cause permanent brain damage or death. Babies do not intend to upset you.

Young children cannot control when they start to cry. They do not understand how much their crying can get on your nerves and will cry more if you spank them or treat them roughly. If you have tried everything – feeding, changing, cuddling – and your baby still cries, call a friend or relative to watch your baby for an hour while you take a break.

Everyone needs a little time away every now and then.

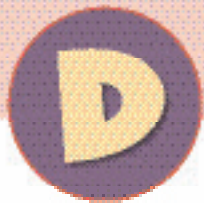
## COLLEGE

Did you know this is the very best time to start saving for your baby's eventual college education? You have many years before your little genius starts comparing different options for college and you also have one magical component on your side: compound interest. Start today. Invest in a child's tomorrow.



A 529 college account, such as those offered by Minnesota College Savings Plan, is a type of investment account that allows you to set aside money for your child's education and let it grow tax-free. The federal government won't tax your money when you take it out of the account, as long as it's used for higher education. Any family can contribute to a 529 account regardless of income and you can start an account with as little as \$25.

For more information visit  
[www.529MN.com](http://www.529MN.com)



## DEVELOPMENT

The first few years of life are a period of incredible growth in all areas of a baby's development. It always helps to learn about infant and child development when you have a child of your own and/or are caring for a baby, toddler, preschooler or school-age child. Even though life is constantly changing,

the basics of child development are not. There are many good resources available that will guide you through your little one's ages and stages. Please remember that the ages listed on any developmental chart are only an average of when children gain certain skills.

Often children will be earlier or later than the listed age when they actually accomplish the milestones.

### Infants

Throughout the first year, babies grow at a

tremendously fast rate. In fact, by the end of the first year they will have tripled in birth weight. Length can be expected to double. By their first birthday, most infants will be crawling and even may be walking! The most essential ingredient in infant care is a warm, responsive, and dependable adult caregiver. Try to spend lots of time holding, cuddling, and playing with the little ones in your care. You will be richly rewarded with babbles, smiles, and squeals of laughter.

### Toddlers

The toddler stage is characterized by much growth and change, mood swings and some negativity. Toddlers are long on will and short on skill.

This is why they are often frustrated and "misbehave."

Toddlers are also bursting with energy and ideas. They want to be independent, and yet, they are still very dependent and often have difficulty separating themselves from their parents. Toddlers cannot be expected to share. They sometimes get frustrated because they do not have all the language skills needed to express themselves. Favorite words are "No", "Mine", and "I do it."

### Preschoolers

Preschool children are eager to learn and learn best through play. They learn by experiencing and by doing. They are busy developing skills, using language, and struggling to gain inner control. Preschoolers want to establish themselves as separate from their parents. You can expect the preschool child to test you over and over again.





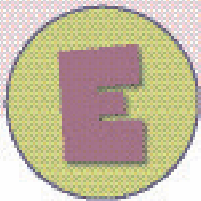
## DISCIPLINE

Discipline does NOT mean punishment, and it is much more than rules and consequences. Above all, discipline is teaching.

Discipline means providing guidelines and support for young children while they are learning, mostly through trial and error, how to manage their emotions, deal with disappointment or frustration and form relationships with other people. Far too many people equate discipline with punishment and/or spanking. With very young children, discipline is more about setting up the environment for them to learn and be safe.

### Five keys to good discipline with very young children

- 1 Prevent situations where your little one might do something you don't like. If baby does something you don't like, think of ways you could keep it from happening again. Create a trouble-free environment.
- 2 Ignore behavior that is annoying but not harmful. If he pulls everything out of your sock drawer, just take a deep breath and ignore it. If you pay too much attention, it teaches him to do things like this to get attention from you.
- 3 Distract or redirect your youngster from things you don't want her to have or do. If she has your keys and you need them, don't just grab them. Instead, interest her in some other toy or activity. She will let go of the keys then. It's easier to get your child started on something else than to take something away from her.
- 4 Reward your child with your loving attention when she plays nicely. Don't become a parent who only notices your child when she has done something wrong. Notice the good times, and give her a smile, a laugh, a hug. Your attention is a young child's most important reward—use it to encourage behavior of which you approve.
- 5 Provide freedom within limits. Your little one needs freedom to explore, but he also needs limits. You need good judgment to provide both. Babies kept in playpens or high chairs for much of the day have too little freedom, and are too limited.



## EARLYCHILDHOODFAMILYEDUCATION

All parents need a circle of support—family, friends and community.

Parents attend Early Childhood Family Education classes with their young children (birth up to kindergarten). ECFE is found in all school districts and many tribal communities in Minnesota. Most ECFE classes operate on a sliding fee scale; no one is turned away for inability to pay class fees.

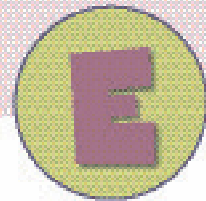


What does ECFE offer?

- **Education for children and parents**
- **Good ideas**  
"Have you tried...?"
- **Caring (understanding, listening, support)**  
"That would be difficult."  
"I understand what you are going through."
- **Practical help (resources and connections)**  
"I'll watch your child if you'll watch mine."  
"There is a food shelf at ..."

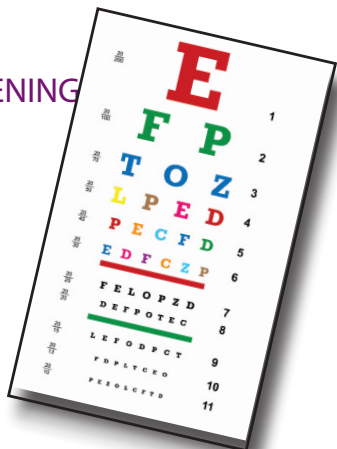
What are the benefits of ECFE?

ECFE helps build healthy families and sets the stage for parent involvement and children's success in kindergarten to grade 12 education. Also, ECFE works to strengthen families and engage the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy development of their children. Parents participate in educational activities with their children, and support each other by sharing their successes and challenges.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD SCREENING

The early years from birth to the start of kindergarten are an important time of rapid learning and growth. Early Childhood Screening is a FREE, quick and simple check of how children are doing. It is best to have your child screened just before his/her fourth birthday. Screening identifies, at an early age, possible learning or health concerns so that children can get needed help before starting school. It is NOT a kindergarten entrance test. Early Childhood Screening is required for entrance into kindergarten in Minnesota's public schools and is offered throughout the year by local school districts.



At your child's screening, trained professionals will check your child's:

- Vision & Hearing
- Height & Weight
- Thinking, Language & Communication Skills
- Large & Small Muscle Skills
- Immunizations & Health History

## EXPLORATION

Exploration is key to a child's learning. Toddlers have an intense desire to learn about people, animals, plants and objects around them. They want to know how things taste, smell, sound, feel and move. They are curious about everything. However, that curiosity can be dangerous when unsupervised. As a parent, your job is to ensure that your child can safely explore, while still avoiding danger zones.





## FATHERS

In the 21st Century, many men are quite involved in raising their children. These fathers play with their babies, feed and change their babies, and create a warm close relationship with them. More mothers work outside the home than in the past, so dads are taking on the responsibility of doing more in-home work, including caring for their children. By taking care of their children each day, fathers have a chance to form a strong, close bond with them. Dads create that close bond with their sons and daughters by giving them some special time each day. By focusing on just their youngsters and nothing else, dads are telling their children that they are important and they are loved.

## FAMILY DYNAMICS

Modern families come in many shapes and sizes. Each child is born into a unique family that has its own culture and history, its own strengths, and its own way of coping with stress and adversity. Family dynamics is a term used for the way that families communicate and exist together. Every family has a distinct pattern of relating to one another, which can be positive or negative. Families also are places where every child and adult should feel that he or she is special and be encouraged to pursue his or her own dreams; a place where everyone's individuality is permitted to flourish.



## No Honey, Honey!

Babies under 1 year old should not be fed honey. Honey is harmful to babies because it has spores that can cause infant botulism.



## FEEDING YOUR BABY

Feeding is one of a parent's most important jobs. It is how we help our children grow healthy and strong. When you feed your baby, you are doing a lot more than providing necessary nourishment. You are helping him feel safe and secure in his world.

Breast milk or the formula recommended by your baby's doctor is the only food your baby should have for the first few months of life. Do not give your baby fruit juice. Fruit juices can lessen his appetite for what is really needed — breast milk or baby formula. Feeding cereal to your baby does not help him sleep through the night. Your baby will sleep through the night when he is ready, usually when he weighs about 11 pounds, not because of what he eats.

Most doctors recommend that parents wait until their baby is 6 months old to start solid foods. Until that time, babies can't control their mouths and tongues very well so they

may push food out of their mouths instead of eating it. When you decide to feed your baby solid food, choose the right moment. Try it when your baby is rested, when she is hungry but not starved, and when you are relaxed. The first solid food to give your baby is often an iron-fortified cereal in addition to breast milk or infant formula. The first feedings will be messy. Your baby has been used to sucking liquids. Now, she has to learn how to swallow solids. The tongue thrust that makes food come back out is a natural reaction. Your baby has to learn to swallow rather than push her tongue out.

Give your baby new foods one at a time. Don't force a new food. If your baby doesn't like it, put it away and try again the next day. It may take seven to ten tries before your baby starts to like a food.

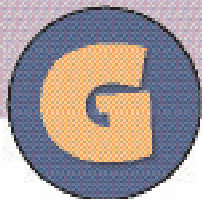
When your baby is hungry, she may:

- Wave her arms and legs
- Open her mouth or reach for the food
- Fuss and look around

When your baby is full she may:

- Push away or play with the bottle
- Hold her mouth tightly shut





## GIGGLE

Nothing warms the heart more than your baby's very first real laugh.

A baby's giggle is magical and infectious. The first time is a joy to behold and family members just want to get it to happen again and again. Ninety percent of babies will give at least a little laugh by three months of age.

Visual humor is very funny to toddlers. You can make faces, put on a funny hat, or knock yourself on the head with a pillow and pretend to fall over — any kind of broad slapstick will delight toddlers.

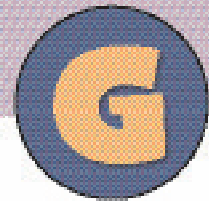
Laughter is the closest distance  
between two people.

### That's Not Funny!

While toddlers are often amused by out-of-the-ordinary things, some intense experiences, like clowns, costumes and parades, can be too much for them.



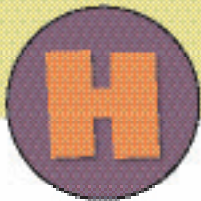




Grandmas are moms  
with lots of frosting.

## GRANDPARENTS

Young children thrive in an environment where they are nurtured and loved. They learn about the world around them when those close to them join in their play and exploration. Grandparents often are just the people to create such an environment. They may have more time to spend, and they can enjoy children for who they are at the moment. This warm, non-demanding and ever-loving bond is treasured by children and offers many benefits to grandchildren. Whether grandparents live near or far, they can be a source of invaluable advice and support and an additional source of love and care.



## HEALTH

Children need regular health check-ups. Whether you're a new parent or a seasoned veteran, you may have many questions about infant and toddler health. Which vaccines does your child need? What's the best way to take your child's temperature? What should you expect at well-child exams? What are the latest developments in infant and toddler health?

The more you know about health matters in early childhood, the more comfortable you'll feel caring for your child. Start by sharing your questions about infant and toddler health with your child's doctor. Remember, nothing is too trivial when it comes to your child's health.

## HABITS

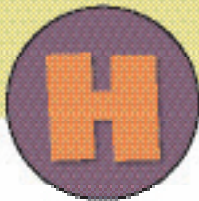
Parents find many behaviors and habits of their children annoying. When you want to change an unwanted behavior, it helps to first understand why your child is doing it. Often bad habits are just a coping strategy. Your child may fall back on these behaviors when they are stressed, bored, tired, frustrated, unhappy or sleepy. Many of these "bad" habits are calming and soothing to the child.

Most of the time, these behaviors are just phases or habits—not serious medical problems—and the young child typically outgrows them. Managing them can be difficult, however. In general, you should try to ignore bad habits. Yelling, calling attention to the habit and punishing do not usually work to stop the behavior (and may even increase it), but praise, positive rewards, and patience are likely to help.

## HONESTY

To tell the truth—children younger than age five or six have trouble keeping reality separate from what they wish for or what they pretend. They do not yet have the thinking skills to do so. Therefore, to expect young children to be "honest" is unrealistic. They do not fully understand the concept.

Even though preschoolers don't generally know that lying is wrong, this is a good time for parents to start teaching and modeling to them the basics of truth telling. A good place for parents to start is by letting their children know how happy it makes them when their children are honest, and that not telling the truth makes it hard for them to develop trust. Values, such as trust, are better "caught" than "taught."



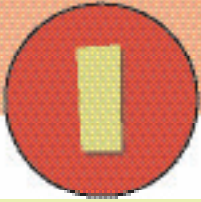
help me



## Minnesota's Early Intervention System

While all young children grow and change at their own rate, some children experience delays in their development. Special health conditions may affect children's development, too. Accessing early intervention services as early as possible will ensure the best developmental outcomes for these children. If you have developmental concerns about your child talk to your health care provider or call

**1-866-693-GROW (4769)**



## INTELLIGENCE

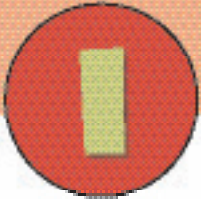
Young children vary tremendously in their capabilities, just as adults do. Only part of intelligence is genetic; a great deal of conflict exists over the degree to which intelligence is inherited. Intelligence is not fixed at a rigid level at birth, and many environmental factors can affect the level of a child's intelligence throughout her development. Infancy is when parents have the most control over the environment and thus, the best chance to enrich their child intellectually. The single most effective, and the only proven, enrichment activity is just basic language. Verbal stimulation, such as reading, talking and singing to a baby, has been shown to correlate with verbal IQ as well as later measures of cognitive ability.



Three proven ways boost your child's intelligence:

- Encourage open-ended, guided play
- Praise your child's effort rather than her intelligence
- Talk to your child A LOT

It takes a real live person to boost your baby's brain power. Infants do NOT learn from TV, DVD's or radio. They need the one-to-one interaction with another human being to learn.



## IMAGINATION

Imagination is a critical component to learning — one that serves as the foundation for a host of necessary life skills. Imagination is necessary for learning about people and events we don't directly experience. For young children, it allows them to ponder the future, such as what they want to do when they grow up. It may also help them deal with fears and other anxieties. Preschoolers love imaginative play because they can be whatever they want to be. Make-believe play allows children to build their creative and problem-solving skills.

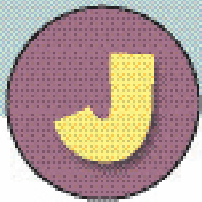


## IMMUNIZATIONS

Baby shots, or immunizations, protect your infant against many serious diseases. The shots are so much safer than the diseases. Vaccines work best when they are given at certain ages. Your child needs a series of shots. If you have missed shots, don't worry. You can start now. Call your child's doctor or clinic. Many communities offer free immunizations. Check with your public health office.

**GOT YOUR SHOTS?**

For More Information  
Call 1-800-657-3970 or Visit  
[www.health.state.mn.us/immunize](http://www.health.state.mn.us/immunize)



## JOY

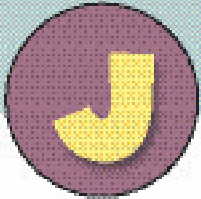
The experience of having a baby is indescribable. There is no other way to describe parenting than joyous. Throughout your life you have probably experienced many happy occasions but there is simply nothing that can compare to the moment your baby is placed in your arms for the first time. You look down into the precious little face and feel that teeny little hand grasp your finger for all it is worth. It is an emotion that encompasses everything, and suddenly life as you have known it, and will forever know it, has changed.

Is there any greater pleasure than watching a baby smile, and play with her fingers and toes? That is the true joy of parenting. Babies steal your heart with their angelic smiles.



## JUMP

Hops, skips, and jumps are not simply child's play. These skills take lots of practice for young children. Daily movement is an important part of a child's educational experience. Preschoolers are ready to acquire and practice new motor skills at this stage of rapid development. New experiences can help them learn motor skills that they'll use for a lifetime.



## JOIN THE LIBRARY

Public libraries make literacy fun! They create inviting spaces for children to enjoy literacy-rich, hands-on experiences in an interactive and caring environment. Librarians are always available to provide tips for parents and caregivers on how to select and use age-appropriate materials for their children. Many libraries offer story times for young children. These special events acquaint young children with books and improve listening and language skills. Parents and librarians help nurture a child's love of books and reading and can help prepare the child for school.



## JUGGLE

How many roles do you juggle? Parents need to manage multiple roles. Balancing family and work responsibilities is very difficult in our overworked culture. You may feel indispensable to your work, but you ARE indispensable to your family. Parents need to figure out what their priorities truly are and how they can live them. Time together at home as a family is the foundation upon which security and stability are built. When it comes to time, we're all given the same amount each day. The gift of your time is the greatest gift you can give your family.



# KINDERGARTEN



Kindergarten is a time for children to expand their love of learning, their general knowledge and their ability to get along with others. While kindergarten marks an important transition from preschool to the primary grades, it is important that children still get to be children. Kindergarteners are very eager to learn and possess an innate curiosity about the world they live in.

Do you realize that your baby will be starting kindergarten in less than 60 months? You will be surprised how quickly that time comes.

Half of Minnesota's kids aren't fully prepared when they get to kindergarten, according to the Minnesota Department of Education. Our responsibility as adults is to nurture children so they can realize their dreams and reach their full potential. What happens in the earliest years not only matters to children and their families, but to the neighborhoods they live in, the schools they will attend and the communities they will contribute to. You too can play an important role in the growing movement to improve the lives of young children and families. Learn more at

[www.Ready4K.org](http://www.Ready4K.org)



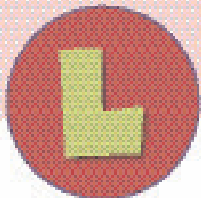


## To start kindergarten in Minnesota your child needs:

- To be five years old by September 1st
- To have all of his immunizations (shots or vaccinations) up-to-date or have proper documentation of exemption from immunizations for medical or conscientious objector reasons
- To have participated in Early Childhood Screening or completed a comparable health and developmental screening

[www.isyourchildready.com](http://www.isyourchildready.com)





# Reading is FUNdamental!

## LITERACY

Growing minds need lots of nourishment, and books are excellent brain food! When you read together with your young child, things really start cooking. Reading together is relaxing and fun. And it is one of the best ways to strengthen your child's early literacy skills.

Positive early language and literacy development can give children a window to the world, helping to ensure that each child can seize her potential

for future success. The foundations of literacy and learning are laid during infancy and toddlerhood, when the brain undergoes its most dramatic

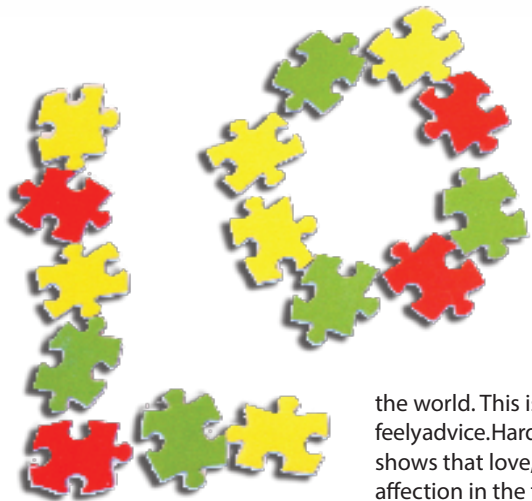
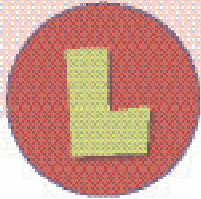
development. During these first 3 years, children acquire the ability to

think, speak, learn, and reason. When this early development is not nurtured, the brain architecture is affected and young children begin to fall behind.

Early language and literacy development begin in the first few years of life and are closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with books and stories. Through research, we now know that children gain significant knowledge of language, reading and writing long before they enter kindergarten. The interactions that young children have, with materials such as books, paper, and crayons and with the adults in their lives, are the building blocks for literacy.

Reading time is treasured time, bonding time and a wonderful time to share a great adventure with the young people in your life. Do not let other things, such as television, videogames and the Internet, interfere with time that might be spent reading with your child.

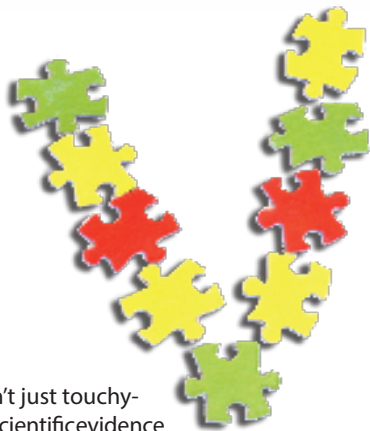




All children need love. Affection between you and your child is the most important tool in developing his or her brain. Your emotional caring and support give your child a secure base from which to explore

the world. This isn't just touchy-feely advice. Hard scientific evidence shows that love, attention, and affection in the first years of life have a direct and measurable impact on a child's physical, mental, and emotional growth.

How do you show your love? Hug, touch, smile, encourage, listen to, and play with your little one



whenever you can. It's also very important to answer his cries immediately, especially in the first six months or so, when experts say it's impossible to spoil a child. In fact, responding to your baby when he's upset (as well as when he's happy)



helps you build trust and a strong emotional bond. What your baby needs most to thrive is you. Nothing else can replace the power of what your child learns as he explores the world and shares his discoveries during everyday moments with you.



## MEMORY

- Babies form memories of many, many sights, sounds and smells. You can have fun with your baby and help her memory at the same time.
- Show your baby a toy, and then cover it — slowly at first — with a cloth or cup. Does your baby try to pull the cover off? What if you cover only part of the toy? Try different toys and different covers.

- Play peek-a-boo to help your baby learn that you come back when you go away. Sometimes cover your face and sometimes hers. If your baby doesn't have fun playing these games now, wait a few weeks and try again.
- Watch what your baby does when things disappear from view. Does she lean over to look for things she dropped? Does she look for a favorite toy? These are signs that your baby's memory is growing. When she was younger, out of sight was out of mind. Later, she is learning that things exist even when she can't see them.

## MEDIA

Television, movies, DVD's, video games, computers and other media are an important part of our culture and should be used wisely. Use media reasonably by choice, not out of habit, and be a good role model for your child.

Wisely chosen TV programming, DVD's and computer software can provide experiences, fun, and a positive influence for children when used in moderation. Engaging in passive activities like watching TV or playing video or computer games for long periods of time may interfere with the child's growth and development. The more time children spend looking at screens, the less time they spend actively exploring their world, learning, running, jumping, climbing and growing.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no television viewing for children under age 2, and no more than two hours of daily media exposure for ages 2 and older. If you do let your child watch TV, it is suggested that you:

- Sit down and watch shows together.
- Talk about what you are seeing.
- Discuss commercials and explain advertising.

Always be sure to turn the television off during mealtimes to encourage family conversation. You can make a list as a family of alternative activities to enjoy instead of watching TV or using the computer.



## MOTHERS

To a child's ear, "mother" is magic in any language. A mother's love is instinctual, unconditional, and forever.

No two moms are alike. Pat yourself on the back Mom—You've accomplished a miracle. Know that you are very important and that your children need you to be as solid an individual as you can be.



### She's One Smart Mom, She's Got Text4Baby

Minnesota Departments of Education and Health collaborate to reach out to pregnant women and new mothers through use of an innovative technology titled Text4Baby.

Women sign up for the free service by texting BABY to 511411 (or BEBE for Spanish) and receive three free text messages each week timed to their due date or baby's date of birth. The messages focus on a variety of topics critical to maternal and child health, including birth defects prevention, immunization, nutrition, seasonal flu, mental health, oral health and safe sleep. Text4baby messages also connect women to early prenatal and infant care services and other resources that promote healthy birth outcomes.



## NATURE

Plan activities outside with your child. Being out in nature is vital to a child's health and development. When children spend most of their time indoors, they miss out. Kids who have direct access to nature are better learners. Exposure to nature has been shown to reduce stress and increase attention spans. When a child is out in nature, all the senses get activated. He is immersed in something bigger than himself. He's seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, even tasting.

Parents can be enthusiastic about nature. Go out in your backyard. Instead of a manicured lawn or

garden, leave some spots untamed so kids can dig in the dirt and find rocks or interesting weeds. If you have a vegetable garden, have your child help you plant seeds, pick weeds or harvest the vegetables. Even walking to your local park can be a nature walk to a preschooler—he can collect leaves, you can point out trees and bushes and show him the bugs crawling along the curb. Let your kids get down in the dirt so they can see at eye level the whole universe there. Nature is good for everyone's mental health.





## “NO”

The young child goes through a normal individuation process—that is, she is taking steps to separate herself as an individual from mom and dad. She may say No because it is fun and easy to say. Your child may not even mean No. Some toddlers use No for everything so listening carefully is important to figure out what your child really means.

Limit your own use of No. Sometimes parents are amazed at how many times during the day

they say No. Try other words to convey the same meaning or don't say anything at all, just act. Gently take your child's hand and lead him where he should be. Remove items that your child wants to touch or distract your child. "You may not touch this, but you can touch this."

Celebrate. "Hooray. You are starting to think for yourself and deciding what is important to you." Give your child many opportunities to make decisions and choices fostering a sense of power and importance.

## NAPS

Children resist sleep because they don't want to miss out on anything as they explore their exciting world. Parents can't force their child to sleep, but they can set the scene for rest. Tell your child to rest, look at books, or listen to soft music. Try naptime in a sleeping bag on the floor. Give a choice. Do you want to start your nap at 1:00 or 1:15 PM? If your child gets up before nap is over, follow through with kindness and firmness. Gently take your child's hand and lead him back to bed.

## NUTRITION

Your child's nutrition is important to her overall health. Eating properly can also help prevent many medical problems and ensure that your child physically grows to her full potential. You can also help promote good nutrition by setting a good example. Healthy eating habits and exercise should be a regular part of your family's life. It is much easier if everyone in the house follows these guidelines, than if your child has to do it alone.

The best nutrition advice to keep your child healthy includes encouraging her to:

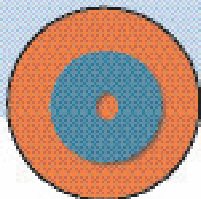
- Eat a variety of foods daily - all colors of the rainbow
- Balance the food eaten with physical activity
- Aim to eat plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits
- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- Choose a diet moderate in sugars and sodium
- Choose a diet that provides enough calories to meet her growing body's requirements



The Food Guide Pyramid for young children was designed by the US Dept. of Agriculture to promote healthy nutrition in children over two years of age. It is meant to be a general guide to daily food choices.

Full information can be found on-line at

[www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)



## ORAL HEALTH



The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that your child's first dentist appointment should be within six months of the eruption of the first tooth and no later than her first birthday. At the visit, the dentist will gently examine your child's teeth, mouth and jaw while your toddler sits on your lap. The dentist will also talk to you about how to take care of your child's teeth at home, how food and eating habits affect her

teeth and about ways to help ensure that she receives sufficient fluoride.

Your child should get in the life-long habit of brushing her teeth after the eruption of the first tooth. Start using a small (child-sized) soft toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. It is important for your child to brush at nighttime before she goes to bed. You can be a role model for your toddler by brushing your teeth along side your child at the same time.





# PLAY

The child plays to learn. Through play, a child gains valuable knowledge about the world around him, including how things work and how to get along with others. Play allows a child to try out new ideas and find out what his mind and body can do.

## What are the types of children's play?

**Active Play** includes jumping, climbing, or running allowing the child to make her arms, legs, fingers and body move. This play develops eye-hand coordination.

**Imaginative Play** includes dress up, puppets or kitchen play. Imaginative play stimulates the child's creativity and helps the child to understand the world around him.

**Creative Play** includes playing with blocks, coloring, or painting. Creative play involves making something work, provides opportunities for problem solving and allows the child to create something new.



## What are the benefits of play?

Play encourages an outlet for energy, exploration, rehearsals for real-life situations, working out feelings, learning and practicing skills, learning new words, concentration and coordination, problem solving, creativity, acquisition of new information and confidence in one's abilities.

## What is the parent's role in play?

- Parents support and encourage play and allow the child to lead.
- Parents take cues from the child's interests.
- Parents provide enriching play activities.
- Parents offer help only when needed.
- Parents play with the child.

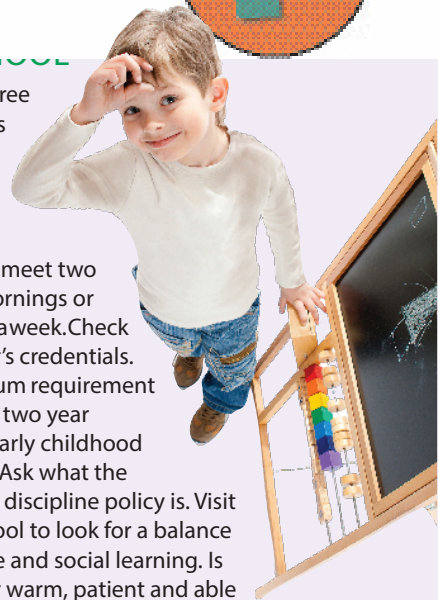
## What makes a good toy?

Is there cause and effect? Is it adaptable? How long will it keep the child entertained? Is it appealing to the child? Is it 80% child input and 20% toy input? Can it be cleaned? Is it too noisy? Is there a place for the child to play with the toy? Does it have too many pieces? Does the toy encourage the child's imagination? What is the amount of adult supervision required?

## PRESCHOOL

Children three to five years old may attend preschool.

Most preschools meet two or three mornings or afternoons a week. Check the teacher's credentials. The minimum requirement would be a two year degree in early childhood education. Ask what the preschool's discipline policy is. Visit the preschool to look for a balance of cognitive and social learning. Is the teacher warm, patient and able to encourage each child? Is there a satisfactory ratio of adults/children? Are there clear and consistent rules to allow the children the freedom to explore and learn? Is the environment clean? Safe? Healthy?





## QUIZ

There is no quiz that moms and dads can take to assess their parenting skills. As you probably know by now, babies do not come with instructions. All parents face struggles in raising their children but there are also many rewards. Being a parent is one of the most fulfilling roles a person can have.

The most important thing that any mom or dad can give their child is a sense of being unconditionally loved. Remember, there is no such thing as a "perfect" child or a "perfect" parent. We all make mistakes and it is good to view these errors as great learning opportunities.

## QUESTIONS

If you have a three year old living in your household, chances are you've been asked a hundred questions.

Why is the sky blue? Why are there clouds?  
Why can't I go outside? Why do I have to be nice?

Parents can be frustrated for two reasons.  
You may not know the real answers to the innocent questions your child asks.  
Even if you know the answer, the questions keep coming.

When the child begins to ask,  
"Why?" "Why?!?" "WHY, Mommy, WHYYYYY???"  
What the child really is saying is, "That's interesting to me. Let's talk about that together. Tell me more, please?" The child doesn't need to know why, all she needs is animated attention and the parent saying whatever comes to mind about that subject. You can also suggest a visit to the library to find out more information together.



## RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility is acting wisely without being guided, told, pressured or threatened into action. It is the ability to make decisions and to be accountable for them. Children learn to be responsible by feeding themselves, sleeping independently, dressing themselves, playing independently, helping with simple chores and behaving within limits. Children who are given responsibility for tasks they are capable of are likely to have a greater sense of belonging in the family, and develop a belief that they can contribute to life in a meaningful way.

Starting at age two, give your child small chores that she can accomplish and add responsibilities each year as she gains new skills. Praise your child for her help and effort, whether the job is done perfectly or not. Give your child opportunities to make decisions by offering simple choices.

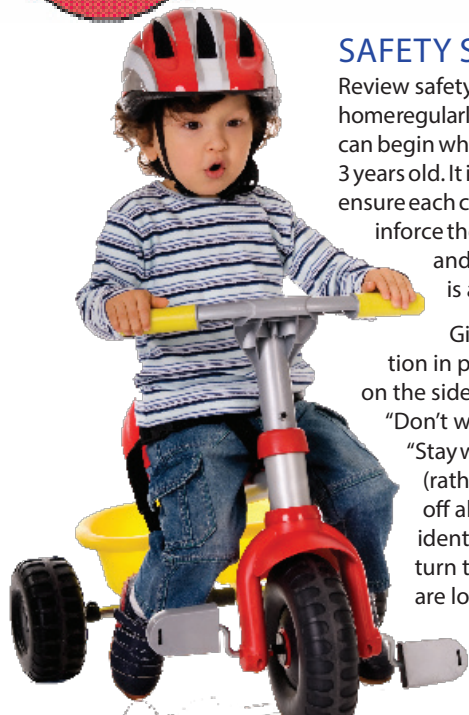
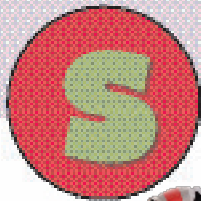
## ROUTINES

For most of us, our lives involve a series of patterns—routines we perform almost everyday, like stopping at the same place each day for coffee on the way to work. Consistent routines, activities that happen at about the same time and in about the same way each day, provide comfort and a sense of safety to young children. Whether it is time to play, time for a snack, a nap, or a loved one to return, knowing what will happen next gives young children security and emotional stability. It helps them learn to trust that caring adults will provide what they need. When children feel this sense of trust and safety, they are free to do their “work,” which is to play, explore, and learn. Routines provide the two key ingredients for learning: relationships and repetition.

## RESPECT

Respect is to be considerate of another person or thing. Parents teach respect through everyday interactions:

- Parents treat children respectfully.
- Be conscious of how you address your child and the tone of voice you use to communicate.
- Listen and respond to your child’s concerns.
- Consider ways to handle a situation when the parent’s and child’s needs conflict. Understand what developmental tasks and abilities your child has at this time.
- Remember, children are not just smaller versions of adults.
- Allow transition time as children move from one activity to another.
- Say “Please” and “Thank You” often to your child.
- Parents support the child’s interests and allow time and space to pursue these interests.
- Parents offer appropriate choices, acknowledge and appreciate the child’s respectful behaviors.



## SAFETY SKILLS

Review safety precautions in your home regularly. Teaching safety skills can begin when your child is about 3 years old. It is the job of parents to ensure each child's safety and to reinforce the child's sense of trust and belief that the world is a good place.

Give safety information in positive terms: "Walk on the sidewalk." (rather than "Don't walk in the street.") "Stay where you can see me." (rather than "Don't wander off alone.") Help children identify people they can turn to for help if they are lost—store clerks, other mommies or daddies with children.

Nurture your child's self-protective instincts. Help your child to recognize an uncomfortable feeling. Teach your child to trust her instinct. Talk about what to do next—move away from

the situation and tell a trusted adult. Teach your child that his body is his own. Always respect requests not to be touched. When tickling a child, always stop when the child asks.

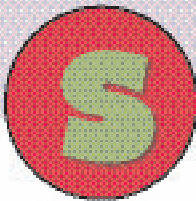
## SECURITY OBJECTS

Security objects like a pacifier, blanket, bottle, dolly or bear can help a child self-soothe and is a first step toward more independent behavior. A security object is usually associated with a parent. The object is used as a parent substitute providing comfort otherwise given by the parent. The child uses the item to calm, comfort and soothe herself. The item can assist the child in accomplishing a challenging task or getting through a difficult experience. Increased use of a security object offers parents a clue to the child's emotional state.



As a child grows, parents can put limits on the use of the security item (only used in the bedroom, or always kept at home). The child needs to be respected to give up the item when she is ready and not before.

Many adults have their own version of security items—a piece of jewelry, a favorite shirt, a four-leaf clover, a worry stone—to use when times are difficult.



## SLEEP

Sleep is essential for each member of the family. Sleep occurs in stages of REM and non-REM sleep. REM sleep is the dreaming state where the brain is active. There are four stages of non-Rapid Eye Movement sleep:

Drowsiness —ready to fall asleep

Light sleep—easily aroused

Deeper sleep—heart rate and breathing become more stable and more difficult to awaken

Very deep sleep—arousal is difficult, children in this state can easily be carried from the car seat to the crib without awakening.

Cycling between the stages of sleep occur more frequently in young children than adults. As children cycle through these stages, they may sense something is wrong: pacifier is missing, security object is not within reach, or “where is mommy?”, causing the child to awaken and cry out.

A good sleep may be affected by the following issues; also listed are strategies to help.

Health—earache, tummy ache, infection, pain, teething...

Keep your child close and contact your physician for further information.

Life events—moving, birth of a sibling, divorce, death, newschool...

Readage—appropriate story books with your child about relevant life issues, talk about what your child may be feeling, set aside special one-on-one time during the day.

Environment—noises, light from outside, temperature too hot or cold. Use room darkening shades and dress child in layers. Try white noise from a fan not directly facing the child or maybe soft lullaby music in the background.

Development—learning to walk or talk or experiencing separation anxiety can interrupt sleep. Give your child lots of time and help in practicing new skills during the day. Always say “goodbye” to your child when leaving so as not to heighten the child’s fears and separation anxiety.

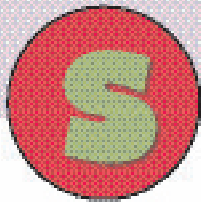
Nightmares—comfort and reassure your child, empathize with his fears.

Overstimulated or overtired—Consider your child’s schedule to determine if she is doing too much and becoming overtired. Overstimulated and overtired children sleep less well because they are unable to unwind and relax.

Parents need good sleep too. Rest when your child naps. Let go of some household tasks. Make refueling your parental energy the

priority. Seek help from family or friends to watch your child while you nap. Take care of yourself, so you can take care of your child.





## STRESS

Stress is the physical reaction in the body when a person is challenged physically or mentally. Some stress in life is normal; it can happen in positive and negative situations. Ideally, once a stress reaction has given the person a burst of energy to help her through the challenge, the body returns to a calm state. However, if the person remains in stress a great deal of the time, her health and well being is threatened.

In adults, too much stress can lead to overeating, drug and alcohol overuse, muscle tension, elevated blood pressure, anxiety disorders, depression, anger, a weakened immune system, increased distractibility, headaches, memory problems, sleep disorders, decreased enjoyment in life, decreased productivity and a decrease in the ability to relate to others.

Too much stress in children can lead to excessive bedwetting or wetting after toilet learning, being afraid or upset with no apparent cause, weight gain or weight loss, upset stomach, ear, hair or eyebrow tugging, defiance, irritability, explosive crying, nightmares, begging for attention, being withdrawn, an increase in fears, sleeping poorly, nervous tics, thumb-sucking, hiding, increased fighting or arguing, temper tantrums, seemingly sad or lonely, or excessive masturbation.

Typical causes of stress overload in both children and adults include a hectic schedule, major life changes like moving, birth of a sibling, divorce, new daycare, mastering new skills, being in new situations,

and high stress levels of other family members. A number of factors help children and adults cope with stress: high self-esteem, a sense of being in control of one's life, family and friends for support, a flexible and hopeful personality, the ability to express feelings honestly and directly, a sense of humor, satisfying work, being a good listener, good nutrition, routine exercise and time to relax.

Each adult handles stress differently.

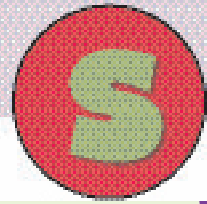
Try these proven stress relievers:

- Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning.
- Turn needs into wants; our only true needs are food, water and keeping warm.
- Minimize the amount of caffeine in your diet, get enough sleep, take a lunch break even if it's just fifteen minutes.

- Do something you really enjoy each day.
- Count to ten s-l-o-w-l-y before doing or saying anything that could make matters worse.

Help your child to unwind in times of stress. Try some of these activities together to relieve stress in young children:

- Breathe in/out.
- Hug and cuddle under a soft blanket.
- Give back or foot rubs.
- Tell stories.
- Draw a warm bath.
- Color a picture.
- Play with play dough.
- Blow bubbles.
- Pet an animal, real or stuffed.



## SHARING

Sharing is a learned behavior. Sharing has to do with ownership and respect.

Don't expect children under the age of three to share. Have plenty of toys around or be prepared to distract your child if two children want the same toy. Children three

and older can learn to be respectful and ask the owner if it's OK to play with a toy. It's OK for a child to decide not to share some toys. These should be put away if playmates come over. Sharing includes more than material possessions. It can also mean sharing time, sharing feelings or sharing ideas in the family.

## SEPARATION ANXIETY

Separation anxiety is the conflicting feelings children have when they are apart from mom and dad. While children are experimenting with their independence, they may leave the parent for a moment at a time, keeping the parent within sight. If the parent tries to do the same thing and leave for a moment, the child may react by crying. Separation anxiety peaks between ten and eighteen months. Young children have a limited sense of time and memory, so they do not know when or if the parent will come back. As children's memories and sense of time develop, they can hold the parent in their thoughts and learn that the parent will come back.

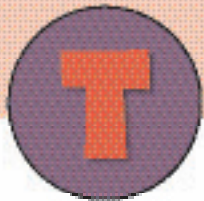
## SPOILING

Parents need to assess whether their behavior is lovingly responsive to the child or excessively indulgent (spoiling). A parent's consistent, timely and loving responses creates the bond and trust a child needs to grow and flourish.

A child (one year old and older) who exhibits spoiled behavior:

- May be very demanding
- Gets everything he wants
- Gets little of what he really needs—limits, love and attention
- Expects everything to be done for him
- Cannot handle frustrations
- Cannot recognize the needs of others
- Expects much and gives little
- Expects instant gratification

When parents give instant gratification, when they do not allow the child to struggle or be frustrated, when they say "yes" and the answer should really be "no", they may temporarily increase their popularity with the child. In the long term, parents will be nurturing expectations and behaviors that will ultimately make children unpopular with those around them, nor will they like themselves.



## TANTRUMS

Temper tantrums are a normal part of growing up for many children. Tantrums are most common in children from about one year old until about age four. Children experience temper tantrums when they are tired, hungry, frustrated, want an adult's attention or want to get their own way. These are big feelings for a small child so the child needs his parent's help and understanding.

Some common reasons for tantrums are:

- Inability to effectively communicate his needs, feelings and desires
- Frustration at getting his body to work as he wants it to
- The young child's struggle for independence and the pull for dependence
- Too many choices can overwhelm a young child
- Stress or changes in home life

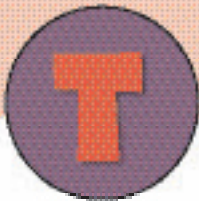
The parent's first line of defense against tantrums is prevention. Avoid frustrating situations especially when the child is hungry or tired. Make sure your limits and expectations are reasonable and appropriate to the child's developmental level. Choose your battles carefully. Consider the situation that needs a NO answer and then be consistent with your NO response.

Once a tantrum begins, there are several things you can try:

- Remove the child from the situation or remove the object around which the child is having the tantrum.
- Try distraction or substitution. "Look at the big red truck."
- Empathize with your child's feelings. Identify your child's feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's frustrations.
- Ignore the tantrum.
- Let your child know you will be available as soon as the tantrum subsides.
- If the tantrum occurs in public, go to the car or to a private place to allow the child time to regain control, or you may have to cut your errands short and go home.
- Some children will regain control when the parent gently yet firmly holds the child close.







- Most important, remain calm yourself. From a child's perspective, an out-of-control parent is even more frightening than his own out-of-control feelings and may prolong the tantrum.
- When the tantrum is over, move on as if nothing happened. Children's feelings are intense yet fleeting.
- Tantrums become a tool of manipulation only when children are given what they want as a result of the tantrum.

Sometimes following many tantrums during the day, parents feel frustrated, tired, inadequate, incompetent, alone—all common feelings.

During this time, it is important for parents to take steps to ensure good mental health:

- Allow a more neutral person to help child with tasks.
- Schedule breaks by hiring a babysitter, trading off child care with a friend or having a partner take over.
- Do one thing each day that feels positive and nurturing.
- Find something enjoyable to do during your child's nap time.
- If the child doesn't nap, start a quiet rest time to give both parent and child a break.
- Come up with a mantra to repeat during the child's tantrum, or whisper Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.
- Practice deep breathing.

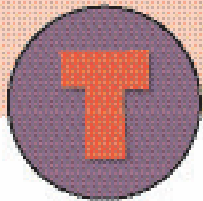
## TALKING BACK

We've all heard it—a child gives a bold, rude or disrespectful reply to an adult. Children may not realize that they are being disrespectful with back talk. It is a normal way for children to practice being assertive. Children test a parent with behaviors like talking back only if they feel safe with that adult. They feel confident that they will be loved no matter what. Children need help learning how to be respectful. Children who hear polite, respectful language will eventually adopt it.

### How to handle talking back:

- Discuss the situation calmly and present an alternative phrase.
- Give the child a choice when he is being disrespectful: either talk respectfully or don't talk to the adult at all.





## TOILET LEARNING

To be developmentally ready for the toilet learning process, a child must:

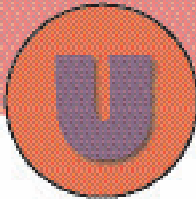
- Have an understanding that she has eliminated.
- Tell someone that her diaper is wet or soiled.
- Make the connection of body signals and going to the potty.
- Have muscle control, allowing the child to hold it.
- Have an increased attention span.
  - Understand and follow 2-3 step directions



## Toilet learning basics

- Each child is different.
- There is no right or wrong way to learn toileting skills.
- Books, DVD's and demonstrations can introduce the child to the process.
- Parents emphasize to the child that they trust the child can learn the skills when he is ready.
- Discuss toilet learning in a matter of fact manner, be devoid of emotion.
- Remember, the biggest reward of all is mom and dad's attention.
- If a child shows resistance, stop the process.
- Involve the child in choosing big boy/girl underwear.
- Try to choose a time for toilet learning when there are few other interruptions, stressors or distractions.
- Accidents are inevitable. Plan for them. Accept them without shaming your child.
- Toilet learning is a process that the child owns.
- Sometimes short-term incentives like stickers or treats are helpful.

This process may take days, weeks or months for the child to successfully master the skills in toilet learning.



## UNHAPPY HOUR

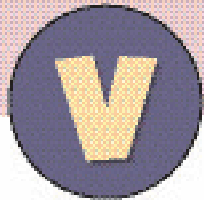
Many children experience fussy times during the day. It may be around dinner time when a parent is trying to prepare something to eat, and the child needs to release some tension. Plan ahead. Maybe prepare a couple of meals, freeze and warm as needed or use the crock pot. About an hour before the child usually gets fussy, provide a light snack, read a book together or head outside for a walk. This may ease the unhappy hour for parent and child.



## UNIQUE

Every child is unique. Children are always different from their parents and from one another in a great many ways, and each child is uncharted territory. Children don't come with an instruction manual. Parenting is a matter of gaining experience on the job, observing how the child grows and learns, and loving the child enough to let the natural process of growth take place.

Enjoy your parenthood journey with your unique child.



## VOICE

Babies love hearing voices, yours in particular. When you answer your child's sounds with sounds of your own, she learns that what she "says" has meaning and is important to you. Talk to your baby often. Answer her coos, gurgles and smiles. Talk, touch, and smile back. Get her to look at you. You can also play simple talking and touching games with your baby.

Ask "Where's your nose?" Then touch her nose and say playfully, "There's your nose!" Do this several times, then switch to an ear, knee or her tummy. Stop when she grows tired of the game.



## VALUES

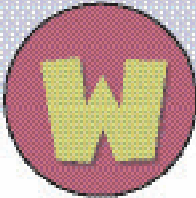
Children are not born knowing what is acceptable and unacceptable. They watch how you behave and how you treat them and others. Values are best taught in the home. Every family differs in the values that they want to instill in their children.

Parents can teach their children good old fashioned values. Teach your child not to interrupt adult conversation. Explain to your child that you are talking and that it will be a few minutes. Thank your child for waiting. The best way for your child to learn Please and Thank You is to hear you model those phrases everyday. Teach your child to greet adults by making eye contact and saying hello. Practice this with your child.

## VISION

A baby's sense of sight develops gradually over 6 to 8 months, at which point he will see the world almost as well as you do. While your newborn's eyes are physically capable of seeing just fine at birth, his brain isn't ready to process all that visual information, so things stay pretty fuzzy for a while. At birth he cannot focus farther than 8 to 15 inches away—just far enough to make out the face of the person holding him. As his brain develops, so does his ability to see clearly, giving him the tools he needs to understand and manage his environment. His range of clarity grows steadily, month by month. True eye color may not become apparent for several months.

Did you know that a baby's eyes are virtually full-grown? Eyes enlarge only a few millimeters throughout one's life.



## WRITE RIGHT

Preschool children are starting to write their names and maybe some letters of the alphabet. Encourage



## WHINING

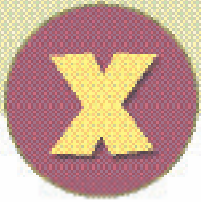
Whining may top your list of annoying behaviors. This fussy tone of voice — halfway to a real cry — is extremely common in toddlers and doesn't necessarily mean that your child is spoiled. You're most likely to hear it when something in his little world is awry: he's ill, anxious, hungry (for food or your attention), bored, overstimulated, or in definite need of a nap.

Whining is the child's way of seeking attention. Each time your child whines, scoop her up and say, "I bet you need a hug." Another way would be to say the whining is annoying and that if the child whines, you will leave the room. Make sure to follow through. Tell your child you will be happy to spend time with her when she uses a respectful voice.

## WORDS

Words are powerful! One way to help your child ultimately do better in school is to help him build a large, rich vocabulary now. Research has shown that the academic successes of nine and ten year old children are attributed to the amount of conversation they experienced from birth to age three.

By giving young children positive interactions with adults who take the time to teach new words, oral language concepts, and emergent literacy concepts, children should have a better chance to succeed at school. Talk, read and sing to your little ones throughout each and everyday. You'll be very glad you did!



## Hugs and kisses demonstrate your love...

### XXX AND OOOO

Here are simple rules for families to love and live by:

**BE GENEROUS WITH HUGS AND KISSES.**  
People need to feel loved everyday.

Say those three simple words...  
"I LOVE YOU!"

Tell your family through words, as well as actions that you think **THEY ARE SPECIAL.**



Try gentle **MASSAGE** on your child's back or feet.

**READ** to your kids.

Spend time **TALKING** to your kids and your partner on a daily basis. This encourages open, honest communication.

Set up individual **TIME** to spend with your kids. It makes them feel special and important.

**BE PATIENT**, even



## Yourself As a Parent

when it seems impos-  
sible.

Taking care of ourselves  
as parents includes  
attending to the physical,  
emotional, mental, social  
and spiritual needs—  
allowing parents to be the best  
they can be for their children.  
Studies show that warmth, caring  
and responsiveness from adults are  
what's most important for the well  
being of children.

Time for you is not a luxury but a  
necessity. Everyone benefits from  
taking time to refresh  
and care for them-  
selves. Balancing the  
care of children and  
self requires choices,  
compromises, delegating,  
simplifying, and learning to



# The days are long the years are short.



say No.

Here are some ways  
to be good to yourself.

Commit to caring  
for yourself.

Actively maintain your health.

Stop expecting to find time,  
instead create time.

Keep smiling. Make time for

Parenting is a hard job to do by yourself. Do not feel alone.

Ask for help from family, friends, neighbors, community groups and Early Childhood Family Education  
to learn ways to understand and respond to your child.



# Resources

## **The Field Guide to Parenting**

Shelly Butler

Deb Kratz

## **Positive Discipline A-Z**

Jane Nelson

## **Quick Tips: A Bedside Guide to Parenting**

Marcia Treno

Jean Breitenbucher

## **Touchpoints, The Essential Reference**

T. Berry Brazelton, MD

American Academy of Pediatrics

Family Information Services

Just In Time Parenting

Mayo Clinic

MELD

Minnesota Department of Education

Minnesota Medical Association

NAEYC

Scholastic Books

Talaris

Zero to Three



Being a parent is demanding, challenging and rewarding work. It's important to know how your child grows and develops so you can focus on your child's needs. Find trusted parent information at <http://www.MNParentsKnow.Info>

Today's parents can get needed information and support from others through parent education. In Minnesota, one of the most common and readily available forms of parent education is delivered in the public schools through Early Childhood Family Education. ECFE offers education and support to all families and their infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

To find an ECFE class near you visit [www.ecfe.info](http://www.ecfe.info)

