

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2009



## KID BITS

### Holding a pencil

Has your child mastered the “tripod” pencil grasp? Help him rest his pencil on the side of his middle finger and curve his thumb and first finger to make a triangle shape. If your youngster finds it awkward at first, practice together. You can tell him that it will make handwriting more comfortable—and faster—in the long run.

### Save favorite schoolwork

Encourage your child to take pride in her schoolwork with this idea. Let her decorate a cardboard box and write the year (2009–2010) on it. She can put her favorite projects inside. As she grows, you’ll both have a reminder of her accomplishments.

### Practice fire drills

Get your child ready for school fire drills by doing trial runs at home. Set an alarm clock, and teach him to walk out of the house quickly and calmly when it goes off. Just as he’ll do at school, line up quietly at a chosen meeting spot while you count to be sure everyone is out.

### Worth quoting

“It is books that are the key to the wide world.”

Jane Hamilton

### Just for fun

**Q:** What belongs to you, but others use it more than you do?

**A:** Your name.



## A smooth beginning

A new school year brings lots of excitement—and a little uncertainty. Knowing what to expect can reassure your youngster as she gets used to her new teacher, classroom, and routine. Here’s how to send her off smiling and ready to learn.

### Make a book

Ask your child to draw several pictures of her school (teacher, friends, classroom, cafeteria). Staple the drawings together to make a book, and help her label each one (“Mrs. Hart”). Then, read her book together to make her feel more comfortable about school.

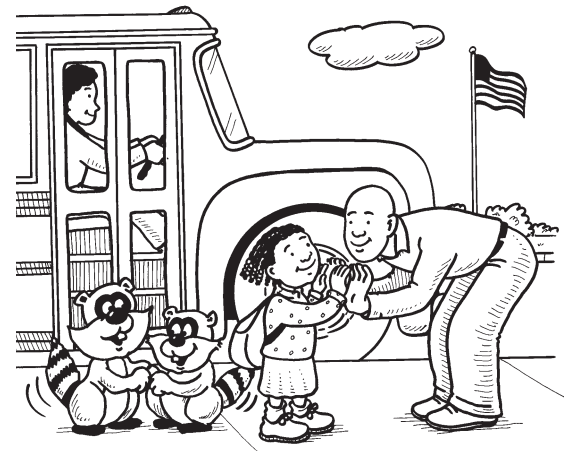
### Talk about worries

Give your youngster the chance to ask questions and talk about her concerns. *Examples:* “What if the other kids don’t like me?” “What do I do if I get sick in school?” Let her know that she can always ask a teacher or other adult for help.

## Healthy routines

What do you get when you take a healthy breakfast, add an hour of exercise, and finish with a good night’s sleep? A great school day for your child! Try these suggestions:

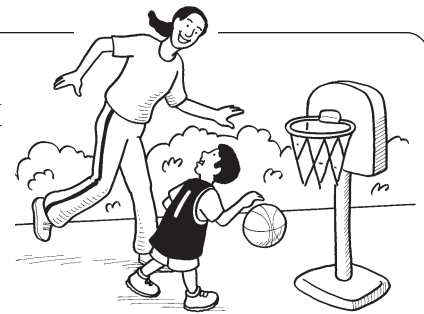
- Let your youngster help you write a weekly breakfast menu. He’ll enjoy eating meals he helps plan—and eating breakfast will give him more energy in class.
- Motivate your child to stay healthy and fit by exercising together. Jump rope, take walks, shoot hoops, and play tag.
- Enough sleep (11–12 hours) will help your youngster learn more easily. A regular routine, such as snack, bath, and story, will encourage him to make it to bed on time.♥



### Start a good-bye ritual

Saying good-bye the same way each morning will help your child feel secure. For one idea, read *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn. Like the mother raccoon in the story, place a kiss in your child’s hand for her to carry all day. Or make up your own ritual. Try a combination of high fives, knuckle bumps, handshakes, and hugs.

*Tip:* Speak positively about school in front of your youngster: “You’re going to have so much fun.” “You’ll learn how to write all 26 letters.” Your attitude will be contagious!♥



## Building character

Learning to read and write are important for school success. So are respect and responsibility. Teach these character traits at home, and your child will be more likely to use them when he's in school.

**Respect.** Listening quietly when a teacher or classmate is talking shows respect. At home, have family members take turns speaking and listening. If a sibling interrupts your youngster, say, "Luke is talking. I'll listen to you when he's finished." *Note:* When your child acts respectfully, let him know that you appreciate it ("Thank you for waiting quietly while I was talking to my friend on the phone").



"Put the caps on the markers," try, "You've finished coloring. What's next?" ♥

**Responsibility.** At school, your youngster will be expected to take care of his belongings and finish classroom jobs. At home, choose a spot where he can put his backpack and jacket after school. Give him ways to help around the house, such as emptying the bathroom trash can or setting the table. *Tip:* Offer gentle reminders. Instead of,

### ACTIVITY CORNER



## Playground map

Maps are everywhere! They can help your youngster find a water fountain at the shopping center or elephants at the zoo. Teach her to use maps by having her draw one of the playground.

First, show her what a map looks like. Point out the symbols, such as a box with up and down arrows for the elevator or the letter P for the parking lot.



Next, head to the playground. Let your child make up symbols for the equipment. She might choose a ladder for monkey bars or a curvy line for the slide. As she draws her map, help her pay attention to locations: "Is the picnic table next to the swings or the seesaw?"

Finally, hide an object, such as a tennis ball, on the playground. Show your youngster where it is on her map, and see if she can find it. Then it's her turn to hide something for you. ♥

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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### PARENT TO PARENT

## Read around the house

While visiting my daughter's classroom, I saw children reading everything on the walls—signs, charts, poems, and labels. As they read, they pointed to the words with rulers.

Mandy's teacher explained that they were "reading around the room." The activity teaches kids to read things they see every day, like the class rules and the student birthday chart.

It looked like fun, so I decided to try it at home. Mandy helped me label household items with index cards ("table," "chair"). I also showed her things around the house that she could read, like the days of the week on the kitchen calendar.

For a pointer, Mandy stuck a heart-shaped eraser on an unsharpened pencil. She loves to use it to "read around the house." And she's always coming up with new things for us to label so she can learn more words. ♥



### Q & A

## Parent + teacher = success

**Q:** I want to have a good relationship with my son's teacher. What should I do?

**A:** Getting in touch early will help you and the teacher form a strong team. Start by introducing yourself at back-to-school night or when you drop off your child.

Follow up with an e-mail, a note, or a call. Let the teacher know the best way to reach you if he has concerns about your child throughout the

year. And be sure to keep him informed about things that might affect your youngster in school (birth of a new sibling, parent away on a business trip).

From time to time, let your youngster see you sending a note to his teacher: "Todd is really enjoying school. We're very proud of his printing." You'll keep the lines of communication open, and you'll show your son that you and the teacher are working together for his success. ♥

