

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

School District Of Ithaca  
Cindy Schmitz

## KID BITS



### Safety first

Keep your child safe at school with these clothing tips. Have her wear shoes that fit properly and either tie or velcro. They're less likely to cause accidents than floppy shoes such as sandals. Also, avoid baggy clothes and cords or strings on clothing that can get caught in playground equipment.

### You're the star!

Give your youngster—and yourself—a lifetime of priceless memories. On his birthday, tape him playing, singing, and telling a little about his life. Continue each year, using the same tape. You'll have a treasured record of your child growing up.

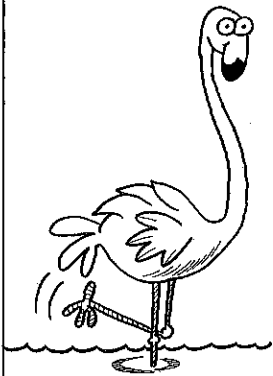
### Breakfast reading

Breakfast time is a great time to work on reading skills. Quiz your youngster about the sounds of consonants and vowels on her cereal box. Try saying the sound of a letter and asking her to find it on the box.

### Worth quoting

"Goodness is the only investment that never fails." *Henry David Thoreau*

### Just for fun



**Q:** Why does a flamingo hold up one leg?

**A:** If he held up both, he'd fall down.

## Better behavior

### Through loving discipline

As your children grow up, it's natural for them to challenge you. Sometimes, it seems easier to just let them have their way. But all youngsters need limits, and they need parents to guide them.

Discipline works best with a balance of love, respect, clearly defined rules, and understanding. Here are some secrets of effective discipline.

### Make the rules clear

Children do best when they know what to expect. Talk about family rules, explaining the consequences clearly. For example, for a rule such as "Take care of belongings," you might tell them if they leave their bikes out, they don't get to ride them the next day. As your youngsters learn to read, write down the rules and put them on the refrigerator as a reminder. *Tip:* Children are more likely to remember the rules if there are a few broad ones, rather than many specific ones.

### Be consistent and firm

You can expect your youngsters to "test" the rules from time to time.

### Pattern practice

Learning about patterns will give your child a head start in math. Try these activities together:

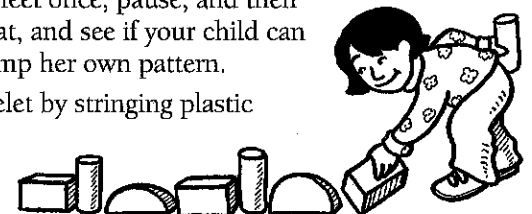
- Make a block tower, starting with a yellow block, then a blue one, and then another yellow block. Challenge your youngster to keep the pattern going.
- Clap your hands or stomp your feet once, pause, and then clap or stomp twice quickly. Repeat, and see if your child can follow along. Have her clap or stomp her own pattern.
- Let your youngster make a bracelet by stringing plastic beads or colored cereal rings on yarn. She can make patterns by alternating colors. ♥



When they do, try to stand your ground and apply the set consequences. Being firm and consistent lets them know that you mean business.

### Give positive feedback

Try to focus more on what your children do right than on what they do wrong. This will encourage them to try even harder to behave. So, when you see behavior you'd like repeated, let them know. *Example:* "Thanks for hanging up your coat and backpack!" ♥



# Q & A Telling the truth

**Q:** For the third time this week, my child told a lie. They weren't big ones, but how can I get her to stop? Why is she doing this?

**A:** Youngsters have vivid imaginations and are learning the difference between fantasy and fact. Talk with your daughter about what's real and what isn't. Example: "Do talking purple dinosaurs really



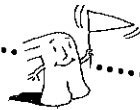
exist? Let's look up dinosaurs in the encyclopedia and find out."

Children also lie to avoid embarrassment. Confronting your youngster about eating a cookie without permission may prompt her to say a monster ate it. Remind her to tell the truth, even if she's done something she shouldn't. You might say, "It's fun to pretend there are monsters, but they aren't real. What is our rule about having snacks before dinner?"

Pointing out when your child tells the truth will help build honest

behavior. Write down when she admits to doing something wrong or tells you about what she has done before you are aware of it. Review the list with her, and tell her you're proud of her honesty. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER



### Waiting games

Waiting has become a part of our everyday lives. The next time you hear, "How much longer?" try one of these ideas to occupy your children:



▲ Play word games. Start with a simple word like *up*. Take turns thinking of opposites (*down*).

▲ Take the change out of your pocket, and let your youngsters sort it. Tell them the names of the coins, and talk about how they're alike and different. "The quarters and dimes are both silver. But the quarters are big, and the dimes are small."

▲ Work on counting forward and backward. For an extra challenge, have your children try counting from a number other than 1. For instance, you say, "7..." they would continue, "8, 9, 10."

▲ Try an alphabet search. Look around the room and find the letter A on a sign or poster. Take turns finding the letters in order until you reach Z. ♥

### Routines for learning

When parents get involved in learning, children are more successful. Help your youngsters get off to a good start in school by creating habits like these at home:

- Remind your children of rules such as "reading before play or television." They show them that learning is a top priority. Also, give them a comfortable place to read or draw without distractions.
- Make time each day to look over school papers with your youngsters. Be on the lookout for notes from their teachers, and mark important dates on the calendar.
- Sharing at dinnertime is an activity that can go beyond passing the platter. Ask your children to think of one new thing they learned during the day. It might spark an interesting conversation among everyone at the table. ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT A calming effect

My daughter Amy always seemed to be "bouncing off the walls"—at home, at school, just about everywhere. I didn't know what to do.

Since my sister's son is also very active, I asked her for some advice. She suggested that Amy get as much exercise as possible. So, we try to go for a walk or play in the park almost every day. On other days, Amy rides her bike or plays running games with the other kids on our block.

I've noticed that Amy is especially "wired" when she's overtired, so I make sure she gets plenty of sleep. The difference these changes have made to her behavior is wonderful—and I'm calmer, too! ♥



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# Twenty Minutes a Day

By Richard Peck

Read to your children  
Twenty minutes a day;  
You have the time,  
And so do they.

Read while the laundry is in the machine;  
Read while the dinner cooks;  
Tuck a child in the crook of your arm  
And reach for the library books.

Hide the remote,  
Let the computer games cool,  
For one day your child will be off to school.  
Readers or not, you have a choice;  
Let them hear their first tales  
In the sound of your voice.

Read in the morning;  
Read over noon;  
Read by the light of the  
Goodnight Moon.  
Turn the pages together,  
Sitting close as you'll fit,  
Till a small voice beside you says,  
Hey, don't quit.

# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

April 2011

## Book Picks



### Read-aloud favorites

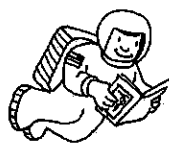
#### ■ *The Snail and the Whale*

How in the world can a tiny snail



help a stuck humpback whale? This rhyming story by Julia Donaldson tells how the whale gives his tiny pal a ride around the world. Then, the snail returns the favor when his friend needs to be rescued.

#### ■ *Ron's Big Mission*



When *Challenger* astronaut Ron McNair was little, he wanted to check out library books. At that time,

only white customers could take books home—and he was African American. However, Ron stood his ground until the librarian gave in. Written by Rose Blue and Corinne J. Naden, this book is based on a true story.

#### ■ *Miss Nelson Is Missing!*

In Harry Allard's classic tale, the students in room 207 learn a lesson. Miss Nelson disappears, and a "substitute" who seems to be the complete opposite of their sweet teacher takes over the class. Desperate to get Miss Nelson back, the children hire a detective. (Also available in Spanish.)


#### ■ *The Princess and the Pizza*

To marry the prince, Paulina must pass three tests: detect a pea beneath her mattress, fit into a glass slipper, and make a delicious pizza. But after she wins the prince's hand, she decides she'd rather open her own business—a pizza parlor. A new fairy tale by Mary Jane and Herm Auch.

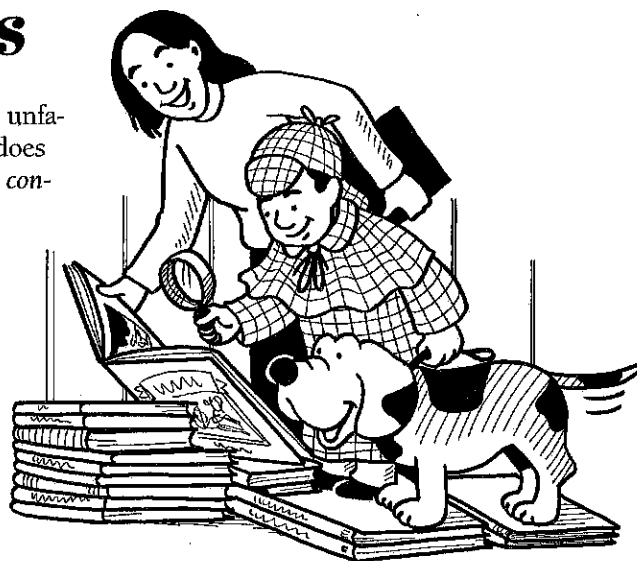


## Story clues

When your child spots an unfamiliar word in a story, what does he do? One strategy is to use *context clues*—hints that can help him read the tricky word. Here are some fun ways to practice.

**Look at pictures.** Illustrations in books often act as context clues. For example, the sentence "The boy saw a green frog" might be under a picture of a green frog. Your child can practice using illustrations by making his own *rebus*—a story in which pictures or symbols replace some of the words ("We listened to "). Take turns adding sentences to your story, making sure that each line includes at least one drawing.

**Guess the word.** Secretly choose a sentence from a book and write each word on a separate index card. Line up the cards in order, but turn one card over and write only the first letter of that word. (Example: The children ride a s \_\_\_\_\_ bus.) Have your child read the



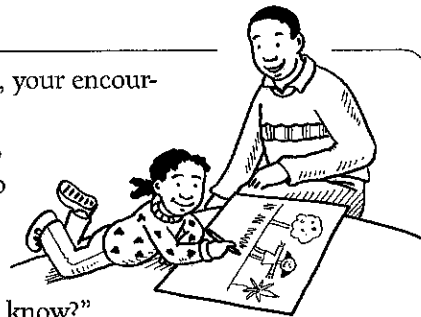
sentence, and ask questions to help him figure out the hidden word. "What kind of bus can children ride?" (school, yellow, city) "Which one starts with an s?"

**Talk it through.** Let your youngster hear you think out loud as you read. For example, while reading a newspaper, you might say, "It says the county used *funds* to buy computers for your school. Hmm, *funds* can buy something—that must mean money." Then, when your child stumbles on a word while reading, ask, "Can you talk it through?" ♥

## Words of encouragement

As your youngster begins to read and write, your encouragement can inspire her. Try these tips:

- Pre-readers might hold a book and make up a story while turning the pages. You can say to your child, "That sounds like a good story. Can I listen?" When she's finished, help her take the next step toward actual reading by asking her, "Can you show me any words you know?"
- If your child adds letters to a picture or writes a sentence, ask, "Will you read it to me?" Encourage her to write more by saying, "I can't wait to find out what happens next!" She'll probably add to her writing if she knows she'll get to share it with you. ♥



# Dear diary

Writing a little each day can keep your child's imagination sharp. Try giving her a notebook to use as a journal. She can record activities, books, and even dreams with ideas like these.

## Activity Journal

Does your youngster like to jump rope, roller-skate, or play soccer? Have her write about the time she spends being active. She might draw and describe her T-ball game, playing hopscotch at recess, or a family bike ride. Consider special outings (hiking on a trail, doing a half-mile fun run) to give her a variety of activities to include.



## Reading Journal

Writing and drawing after she reads can help your child think more deeply about books. Help her make a list of writing prompts and staple it to the inside of her notebook. *Examples:* "A character I'd like to be friends with is..." "If this story took place on the moon..."

## Dream Journal

Encourage your youngster to keep her notebook beside her bed where she can write down her dreams. She can also draw scenes from them. If she wakes up before a dream ends, that's okay—she can practice creative writing by coming up with her own ending!♥

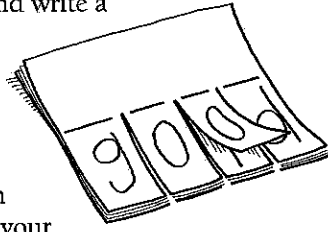


## Fun with Words Flip book

Turn *good* into *gold* with this activity that can help your youngster become a better speller.

First, have him layer four sheets of paper and fold the stack in half horizontally. Then, help him unfold the stack and make three vertical cuts from the bottom of the papers to the fold. This will form four vertical flaps.

Refold, and write a word with four letters (*good*), one letter on each strip. Now the fun begins! Ask your youngster to read the word, lift any flap, and think of a letter that could make a new word.



Take turns creating new words. *Examples:* Write "l" under the second "o" to make *gold*, and then "f" under the "d" to make *golf*. When you can't create any more words, fold more pages to start a new flip book!♥

## Library scavenger hunt

This adventure can encourage your child to become more familiar with the public library.

Before you head to the library, work together to list items to find. Pick topics that interest your youngster, and be sure to include materials from different areas (fiction, biography, magazines). *Examples:* a story about the beach, a biography of a famous athlete, a magazine article that features an animal.

At the library, you can either play as a family or divide into teams. See how quickly you can find everything on the list. Players can use the database, ask the librarian, or just browse through the shelves.

When you find everything, take the materials to a table and enjoy reading them together.♥



## Q&A Good grammar

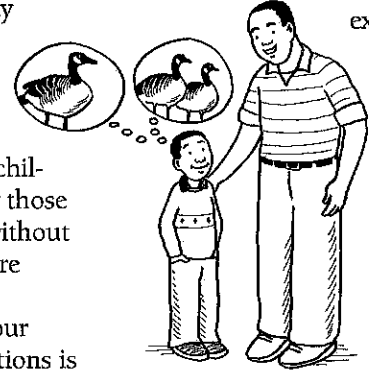
**Q** My son still says things like "I goed" and "two mouses." Should I correct him?

**A** When your son talks that way, he is showing that he understands grammar rules. He knows we say "ed" at the end of a word to show past tense, and we add "s" to mean more than one. However, young children sometimes apply those rules to every word, without understanding there are exceptions.

One way to help your youngster learn exceptions is

by rephrasing his words. For example, if he says, "I *seed* a rainbow," you can ask, "Where was the rainbow you *saw*?" or "Oh, you *saw* a rainbow?"

You might point out unusual exceptions by saying, "This is silly...are you ready? Instead of 'two geese,' we say 'two geese'!" Chances are, calling his attention to these examples will help them stick in his memory. And as your son hears correct grammar over time, he will make errors less frequently.♥



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# Home & School

Working Together for School Success

## CONNECTION®

Ithaca School District  
Ms Cindy Schmitz, Title I Director

### SHORT NOTES



#### Picture this

Good readers form mental pictures as they read. To improve your child's comprehension, read a book without letting him see it. Then, ask him to guess what the illustrations look like. *Examples:* How are the characters dressed? Is the setting bright or gloomy?

#### Be there!

Regular attendance in elementary school sets up a good pattern for your youngster's entire school career. Show your child that school comes first by trying to keep days off for illnesses and family emergencies. Also, schedule routine doctor and dentist appointments for after school or over school breaks.

#### Line them up

Sometimes kids get math problems wrong simply because they haven't lined up the numbers correctly. Try this. Have your child work problems on graph paper, using one box per number. Once she gets used to this system, she'll be able to transfer her lining-up skills to regular paper.

#### Worth quoting

"Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much." *Blaise Pascal*

### JUST FOR FUN

**Teacher:** Name one important thing we have today that we didn't have 10 years ago.

**Brian:** Me!



## Pitching in

Would you like your child to be more responsible, hardworking, and persistent? Here are ideas for working as a family to help your youngster develop these important traits.

#### A group approach

Thinking of herself as a "team player" can encourage your child to be responsible. Explain that your family operates as a team. Everyone must play a part to get things done. *Example:* You take her shopping for her clothes and sports equipment. She chooses her outfit each morning and keeps track of her bat and glove.

#### Hard workers wanted

Your youngster probably has regular chores to do. You can motivate her to work extra hard by placing "want ads" on the refrigerator. Choose a challenging job, and offer a benefit. *Example:* Wanted— a hardworking family member to clean



out a corner of the basement. Reward—a place for your child and her friends to play.

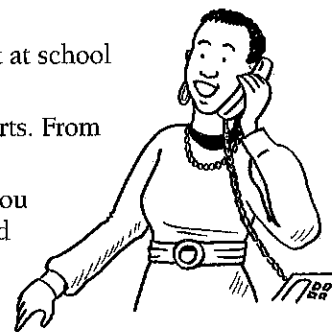
#### Sticking it out

Working toward small goals can make it easier to complete a big task. Perhaps your family room needs a fresh coat of paint. Write down the steps (move furniture and lay down drop cloths, prepare walls, roll paint on walls, paint trim). Tell your child you'll take a fun break after each step is done (go to the playground, take a bike ride).♥

## Parent power

There are many ways you can support your child's learning and school. Here are a few ideas:

- Spend a few minutes every evening looking over handouts your youngster brings home. Fill out forms to return the next day.
- Tell your child's teachers if you can help them out at school or home.
- Make sure teachers know you appreciate their efforts. From time to time, send a thank-you note or an email.
- Contact your youngster's teacher immediately if you see a problem. Working together will help your child succeed.
- Attend conferences, parent meetings, and school events regularly.♥

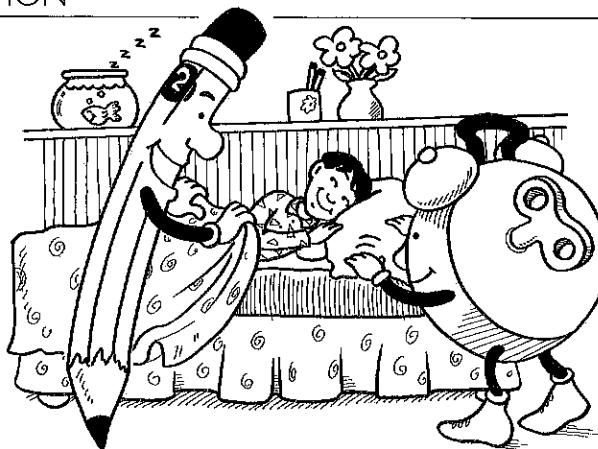


# Standardized tests

## Choose to do well

True or false: standardized tests are tough. The answer depends on how prepared your youngster is. Here are four ways to help him handle test week:

1. Explain that the tests will show how much he has learned. Encourage him to try his best, but don't put so much emphasis on them that he feels stressed.
2. Practice the test format. For example, your child might have to read a paragraph and answer questions. Using one



of his textbooks, have him look at the questions at the end of a section first and then read the passage. That will help him know what to read for and how to find the answers.

3. Limit activities the night before tests. You may want to avoid having guests for dinner or skip his brother's baseball game if it means being out late. Be sure your child gets to bed on time and sets an alarm for the next morning.
4. On test day, give him an energy-boosting breakfast. Try to include both protein (eggs, yogurt, milk) and carbohydrates (fruit, oatmeal, toast).♥

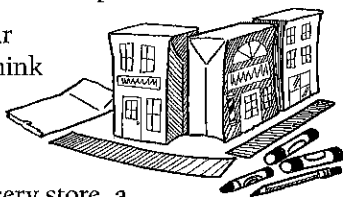
### ACTIVITY CORNER

### Paper bag city

Let your child create her own 3-D community. She'll practice map skills and learn about urban planning as she decides where to put the buildings in her town.

**Materials:** paper lunch bags, newspapers, crayons or markers, black construction paper, scissors, tape

Have your youngster think of buildings to include, such as a bank, a grocery store, a school, a library, and houses. She can make them by drawing doors, windows, and signs on flat bags (on the side without the flap). For every bag she decorates, have her stuff a second one with newspaper. Then, she should open each decorated bag and slide it over a stuffed bag so her "buildings" will stand up. For the roads, she can cut black construction paper into strips and tape them together.



Finally, have your child lay out her roads and arrange her buildings alongside them to make her very own town.♥

### Q & A

### Bullying: The bystander's role

**Q:** My child came home from school upset because kids were picking on a classmate and wouldn't let her play with them. What advice should I give my daughter?

**A:** Tell your youngster that her classmate was being bullied—and that she may be able to help stop it! There are several things she can do. If she feels safe, she could say something like, "That's not nice," and then walk away. She might invite the child who is being bullied to join her in a game or school project.

Also, remind your youngster to report bullying to a teacher or other adult when she sees it. Let her know this is not tattling, but a way to help someone who is being hurt. You can explain: "Asking an adult to help a child who is being bullied is like asking the nurse to help a child with a scraped knee."♥



### PARENT TO PARENT

### Thinking games

Between school, errands, and activities, my family spends lots of time on the go. I decided to use some of it for "thinking games."

I taught my kids a game my parents used to play with me, called "Would You Rather?" I offer two options and ask which they prefer and why. For example, I might say, "Would you rather live near the beach or the mountains?"

My son came up with a game he named "Three Favorites." Someone picks

a category (outfits, movies), and we all tell our top three choices. My daughter thought of "What Doesn't Belong?" We take turns naming items and asking the others to explain which is the odd one out and why. The kids especially like this game because there can be more than one "right" answer. For example, when I named "owl," "ostrich," and "eagle," my daughter said, "Ostrich, because it can't fly."

My son's answer was, "Owl, because it hunts at night."

Now they want to play all the time. I'm glad because we're having fun—and they've gotten better at thinking through their ideas.♥



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Cindy Schmitz

### SHORT NOTES



#### Ticket, please!

If you want to limit your youngster's TV time, try this idea. Every week, give her seven slips of paper. Each is good for an hour of television. Remind her to plan ahead. For example, if she wants to watch a two-hour movie on Saturday, she'll need to save an extra ticket during the week.

#### Be there!

Regular attendance in elementary school sets up a good pattern for your child's entire school career. Show him that school comes first by trying to keep days off for illnesses and family emergencies. Also, schedule routine doctor and dentist appointments for after school or over school breaks.

#### Better concentration

Looking for a fun way to improve your youngster's concentration? Try this quick game. The first player makes one motion, like clapping or spinning around. The second person copies him and adds another movement. Continue adding new motions until someone forgets the sequence. The last player to get it right starts a new game.

#### Worth quoting

"Life doesn't require that we be the best, only that we try our best."  
H. Jackson Brown Jr.

### JUST FOR FUN

**Teacher:** Name one important thing we have today that we didn't have 10 years ago.

**Brian:** Me!



## Study smarts

From a history test at the end of each month to a spelling quiz every Friday, studying is a skill youngsters will need throughout their years of school. Help your child study with these tips.

**Start a habit.** Encourage your youngster to treat studying as a daily assignment, not just something he does the evening before a test. For example, he might study 15 minutes every night for a spelling test on Friday. After he finishes his regular homework, he can spend a little time reviewing his notes and handouts.

**Tackle textbooks.** When your child has a chapter to study, have him "preview" it to increase his understanding. He should glance over headings, graphics, and photos and go to the glossary to look up boldfaced words. *Tip:* If he finds a section hard to grasp, he could read a picture book on the topic. For a science unit on matter,



for instance, he could try *What Is the World Made Of?* by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld.

**Mix it up.** If your youngster reviews information in several ways, he'll be more likely to remember it. He might use colored pencils to copy each spelling word or math fact onto a separate index card. Then, he can shuffle the cards and study them in a different order each time. For extra reinforcement, suggest that he spell each word or recite each fact aloud.♥

## After-school chats

"What's in your backpack?" Greet your child with this question, and you'll discover a lot about what she does in class.

- Set aside time each day to go through her papers. Try to do it first thing after school when her day is fresh in her mind.
- Look over your youngster's work together. Help her feel proud by making a specific comment about something she's done. For instance, if she shows you a picture she drew in art class, you might say, "The gray sky and big waves look just like our rainy day at the beach."
- Have her talk through math problems or science experiments to show you what she's learned. She might explain how she finds the perimeter of a triangle or why ants dig tunnels, for example.♥





# A recipe for respect

Ava listens quietly when her teacher talks. Ben claps for each performer at his piano recital. These children show respect for others. Here's how you can encourage your youngster to do the same.

## Demonstrate

Your child will learn respectful behavior by watching the way you treat others. When she makes a mistake, for instance, gently tell her what she's done wrong—and out of earshot of others. Also, let her see you respect ideas and beliefs that are different



from your own. For example, point out that you're happy a friend is voting in an election even though you each favor a different candidate.

## Notice

When you see your youngster acting respectfully, let her know that you've noticed ("I like the way you asked your sister before borrowing her sweater"). Your words and attention will encourage her to show respect in the future.

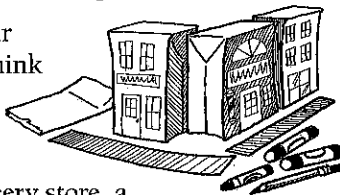
*Tip:* If you see disrespectful behavior on TV (a child rolling his eyes or talking back to a parent), tell your youngster that isn't okay in real life. Then, ask her to be on the lookout for respectful actions by characters. How many can she spot before the program ends? ♥

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Also, remind your youngster to report bullying to a teacher or other adult when she sees it. Let her know this is not tattling, but a way to help someone who is being hurt. You can explain: "Asking an adult to help a child who is being bullied is like asking the nurse to help a child with a scraped knee." ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT Thinking games

Between school, errands, and activities, my family spends lots of time on the go. I decided to use some of it for "thinking games."

I taught my kids a game my parents used to play with me, called "Would You Rather?" I offer two options and ask which they prefer and why. For example, I might say, "Would you rather live near the beach or the mountains?"

My son came up with a game he named "Three Favorites." Someone picks a category (outfits, movies), and we all tell our top three choices. My daughter thought of "What Doesn't Belong?" We take turns naming items and asking the others to explain which is the odd one out and why. The kids especially like this game because there can be more than one "right" answer. For example, when I named "owl," "ostrich," and "eagle," my daughter said, "Ostrich, because it can't fly."

My son's answer was, "Owl, because it hunts at night."

Now they want to play all the time. I'm glad because we're having fun—and they've gotten better at thinking through their ideas. ♥

