

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2020



Doniphan R-I School District
Chera Dean, Title Director

KID BITS

Steps toward independence

Identify parts of your child's morning routine that she could take over, like brushing her hair and pouring her cereal. Help her until she gets the hang of each task. She'll become more independent, and mornings will go more smoothly for everyone.

Above or below?

Build your youngster's spatial awareness—his understanding of where objects are in space—with this fun activity. Sit back-to-back, and take turns describing what to draw using position words like *above*, *under*, *beside*, and *between*. ("Draw a boy sitting *under* a tree.") Now turn around and compare your pictures.

DID YOU KNOW?

You're better able to care for your children if you take good care of yourself—especially during trying times. Try to carve out alone time to relax, maybe to do crossword puzzles or knit. Also, consider limiting how much news you watch or read. And get a better night's sleep by turning off screens at least one hour before bed.

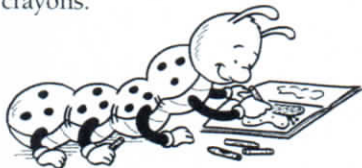
Worth quoting

"A problem is a chance for you to do your best." *Duke Ellington*

Just for fun

Q: Which hand is best for coloring?

A: Neither. It's better to color with crayons.



Settling in for a new year

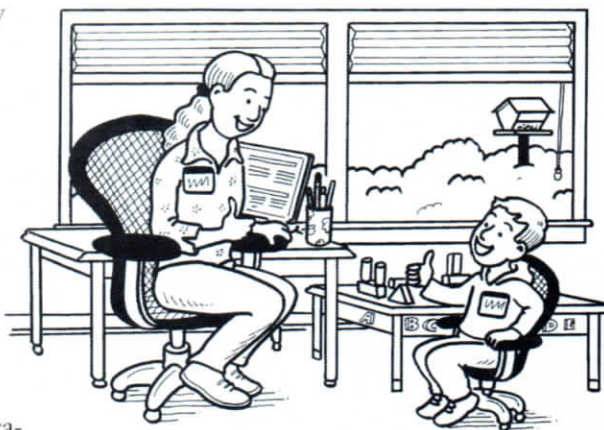
Parents and children may feel uncertain about how this school year will go because of COVID-19. Here's advice for helping your youngster learn and adjust to changes.

Q: How can I keep my child learning on days when he isn't in school?

A: Your youngster learns the most from what comes naturally to him—playing! Set out educational toys like magnetic letters, building blocks, and jigsaw puzzles. If you work from home, invite him to be your coworker. Let him make badges for the two of you to wear, and give him "jobs" (sort office supplies, decorate your work area).

Q: My son struggles with social distancing. What's the best way to explain it?

A: "Social distancing" is a tough phrase for little ones, since learning to socialize is an important part of their development. So try using different language. ("We need extra personal space because



there are extra germs going around.") Or encourage him to picture himself in an imaginary bubble. Gently say "Bubble" to remind him to keep his distance.

Q: My child misses his grandparents. What should I do?

A: This is a good opportunity to help your child learn about compassion and empathy. Explain that staying away from Grandma and Grandpa is a kind thing to do right now, because older people may get very sick from COVID-19. Encourage him to call his grandparents often, and, if possible, plan online chats so he can "see" them.♥

School success checklist

Is your little one ready for the school year? Help her master the skills on this checklist to start the year right.

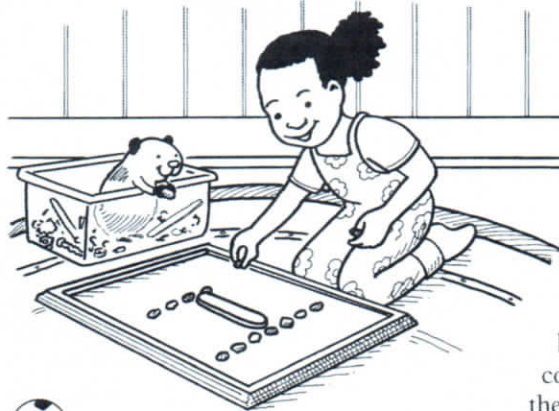
- I can follow directions:** Give your youngster one- and two-step instructions. "Hop to your bedroom, and put your shoes away." When she masters following two steps, add a third.
- I'm a good listener:** Ask your youngster to close her eyes while you make three sounds (clap your hands, tap a spoon against a glass, crumple a piece of paper). Can she name the sounds in order?
- I take turns:** Encourage your child to spot examples of turn taking, perhaps when your family passes food around at dinner or plays a board game.♥



Play and learn with loose parts

Nuts and bolts, bottle caps, marbles, and other “loose parts” you have around the house can inspire your child to think creatively and flexibly. Fill a box with loose parts, and try these ideas.

Frame a picture. Place a frame (glass removed) on the table, and let your youngster arrange loose parts inside it to create pictures. She



might make a random design, or maybe she'll form letters, numbers, or shapes. For example, she could use pebbles and craft sticks to make the first letter of her name inside the frame. Now she can clear the frame and make a new picture.

Find the similarities. Hand your child a loose part (say, a pom-pom). How many other objects in her box match it in some way? Ask her to tell you what they have in common. She may notice a marble is the same shape (round), a block is the same color (red), and a sponge has a similar texture (squishy). Then, put the item back in the box, and let her choose something for you to match up.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Make life more predictable

With all the disruptions to our lives this spring and summer, my son Diego became clingy and whiny. My aunt, who raised five children, pointed out that a predictable routine could help him feel more secure.

So together, Diego and I made a picture schedule that showed what we would do each day. We listed items like “Eat breakfast after getting dressed for school,” “Play outside before dinner,” and “Read a bedtime story.”

Diego drew a picture beside each one—a bowl of cereal for eating breakfast, a soccer ball for playing outside, and a book for story time.

We hung the schedule on our bathroom mirror, so Diego sees it first thing in the morning and knows what to expect that day. Life may still be stressful, but having a routine has made things feel a little more normal.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Get up, get moving

Young children need up to three hours of active play each day to build healthy bodies and minds. Use these activities to get your little one moving.

Gallop like a horse

Let your child pretend to be a horse. He can roll a die and gallop forward that number of times. Then, he should roll again. How many gallops does it take for him to get from one end of the room to the other? How about through your whole house?

Dance with a balloon

Turn on music, and have your youngster bat a blown-up balloon straight up into the air. Now everyone dances like crazy until the balloon touches the ground. When it lands, dancers freeze in place for a count of five. Launch the balloon, and dance again.♥



Q & A Introducing ... me!

Q: How can I work with the teacher to help my daughter do her best this year?

A: Start by writing an email or a note to the teacher. Ask your daughter what she would like you to include—perhaps information about your family or about her favorite things. *Examples:* “Ellie has a baby brother” and “Her favorite color is green.”

Then, add information to help the teacher understand

your daughter’s needs. *Examples:* “She goes to her dad’s house every other weekend.” “Ellie might not always speak up when something is hard for her.”

Be sure to touch base with the teacher throughout the year. From time to time, send an email or a note—both when things are going great and when you have a question or concern. The teacher will be happy to hear that your child enjoyed a book she read to the class, and the regular communication will make it easier to work as a team if a problem arises.♥

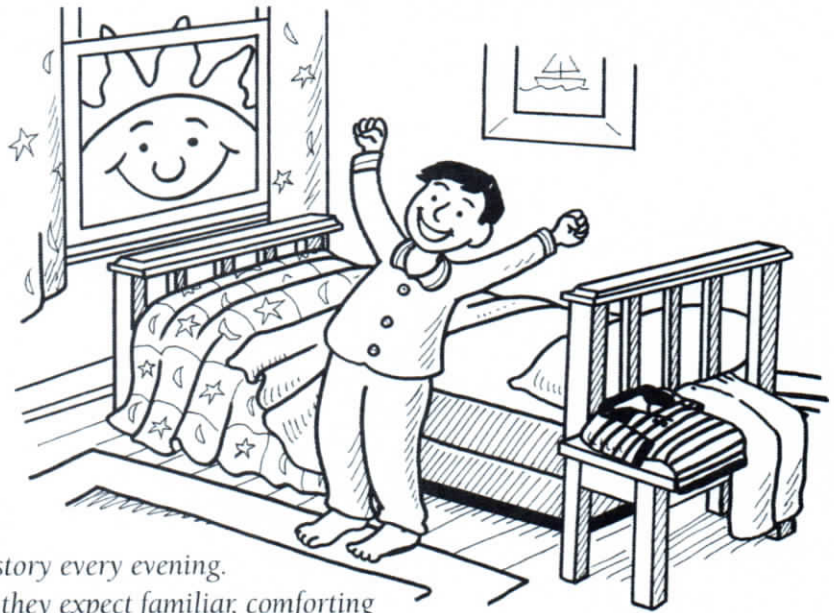


OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfcustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5567

Routines for a Great Day!



Adam looks forward to big hugs from his parents each morning. Stephanie's favorite part of the afternoon is when her mom picks her up from day care and asks about her projects. And Miguel knows he can count on a cozy bedtime story every evening.

These youngsters' days go smoothly because they expect familiar, comforting rituals. A daily routine can help your child behave well, develop good character, and stay connected with you. Try these tips for successful mornings, afternoons, and evenings.

Morning

A warm wake-up

Let your little one know you're happy to see her when she wakes up. You might come up with a special way to say, "Good morning." It can be simple ("Get out of bed, sleepy-head") or silly ("Rise and shine, porcupine!"). Your youngster will look forward to hearing your greeting first thing, and that can set the tone for a peaceful day. *Idea:* Learn greetings in other languages, and surprise each other with different ones. The next time your family visits the library, you could look up "Good morning" in bilingual dictionaries. Or ask friends who speak other languages to teach you greetings.



Morning announcements

Children often behave better if they know what's ahead. Try putting your youngster in charge of announcing the day's events at breakfast. When he comes into the kitchen, he can look at the calendar to see if it's a special day (cousin's birthday, a holiday) or if anyone has a dentist appointment or sports practice. This is also a

good time for you to go over any schedule changes ("Remember, Katie's mom is picking you up from school today").

Snappy dressing

Checking the weather the night before will save time in the morning. Plus, your child will feel grown-up when he learns to choose the right clothes all by himself. Let him look at the forecast in the newspaper or on a computer or phone. Talk about whether he will need short or long sleeves, pants or shorts, a sweater or a light jacket. *Tip:* Be sure he always puts his clothes in the same spot (say, on his nightstand or on a chair) so he can find them easily in the morning.

After school

Catching up

To find out what your youngster did in school or day care, ask her to show you what's in her bag. Talk about each item. ("Can you tell me about this map you drew?" or "How did you choose those colors for your painting?") Expressing interest in what she's learning will show her that school is important and help her take pride in her work. If she doesn't have much to say, start talking about your own day ("Today I took a fun new dance class at the gym"). She might decide she wants to share, too!



continued



Running errands

Chances are that part of your child’s routine will be to accompany you on errands. Make things more pleasant with on-the-go activities. While you wait in line at the bank, let him count coins or practice writing numbers on a blank deposit slip. At the gas station, ask him to identify the letters (“s-t-a-r-t”) or words (“on”) on the pump.

Physical activity

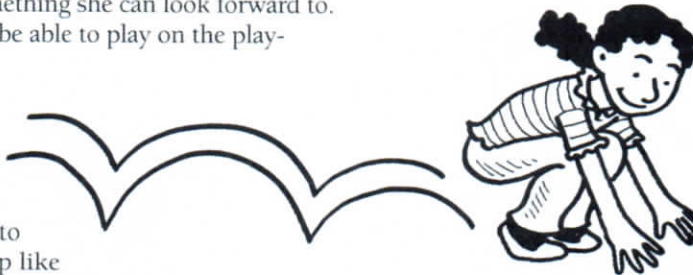
Make exercise a regular part of your youngster’s day by encouraging her to play outside after school or day care. Provide active toys like a jump rope, a hula hoop, roller skates, and a variety of balls. *Idea:* You might see if several neighborhood parents can take turns supervising children riding bikes or playing tag outside.

Terrific transitions

It’s not always easy for little ones to stop one activity and start another. These clever ideas can make switching gears easier.

● **Keep good-byes pleasant.** Does your child sometimes have a hard time making the transition from home to school or day care? Try arriving in the classroom or building a few minutes early, and name something she can look forward to. (“It’s nice out today—you’ll be able to play on the playground again!”)

● **Be creative.** Let your youngster decide how to move from one place to another. You might say, “It’s time to go. Would you like to walk like an elephant or hop like a frog on our way to the car?”



Evening

Dinnertime

Regular family meals help parents and children stay close. You can enjoy time with your youngster by letting him help you cook. He might make fruit salad, mash potatoes, or arrange rolls on a cookie sheet. While you eat, be sure to compliment him on foods he helped prepare.



Chore basket

When everyone pitches in, your home is a nicer place to live. Keep your child interested in doing her part by turning chores into a game. On index cards or slips of paper, write jobs she can do by herself (dust, use a handheld vacuum, fold towels and washcloths). Let her illustrate each one. Every day, look through the cards and put the chores that need to be done in a basket. Then, she can close her eyes and pull one out.

Story hour

Make reading the focus of bedtime. You’ll help your youngster learn to love reading—and he’ll be eager to get ready for bed. Try saying, “Fifteen minutes until story time!” (instead of “It’s bedtime”). Tell him you’ll meet in his room after he puts on his pajamas and picks out a book. Then, shut out all distractions (close the bedroom door, put away your phone), and enjoy a story together.

● **Use a timer.** Show your child how to set a timer by himself, and explain what the numbers mean. (“The first number is a three—that’s three minutes. When it gets to zero, we’re going to T-ball.”) Then, place it near him so he knows how much time is left to play.

● **Sing songs.** Music can make anything more fun. Your youngster might pick up her toys to a special cleanup song. Or the two of you could invent words to “The Wheels on the Car” (to the tune of “The Wheels on the Bus”) while you drive from one place to another.

Early Years

COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION:

Learning Activities for Young Children

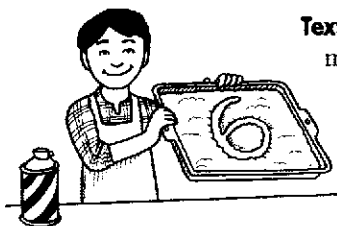
“Let’s play!” Playtime is learning time with the hands-on activities and games in this guide. Below, you’ll find at-home ideas to try with your children. Page 2 features a fun bingo-card format—your youngsters will be excited to mark off each item as they complete it!



Editor’s note: Guidelines are changing rapidly. Make sure to follow all local, state, and federal laws and recommendations on social distancing and other practices when using these ideas.

Number writing

As your child learns to write numbers, a little creativity will add some fun.



Textures. Give him different materials. He might finger-paint numbers. Or spread shaving cream in a pan and let him make a number, “erase” it, and make another one.

Glitter letters. Encourage him to write numbers on construction paper and trace over them with glue. Then, have him sprinkle on glitter (or sugar). When the glue dries, he can shake off the extra glitter.

My post office

Making and delivering “mail” is a good way for your youngster to work on reading and writing.

Let each family member create a mailbox by decorating a file folder and stapling the sides closed. Hang your mailboxes on your bedroom doors, and add addresses (“Hallway Door 3”). Encourage everyone to write messages for each other. *Examples:* “Let’s read a book together” or “Thanks for playing Chutes and Ladders with me.” (If your child isn’t writing yet, he could dictate his messages to you.)

Seal each message in an envelope, and write the recipient’s name and address on it. Stickers can go in the corner for a stamp. Now, your youngster gets to deliver each letter to the correct mailbox. Help your child read his mail. Then, reply to each other’s messages—and send more mail!

ABC strips

Letter by letter, your child can spell and read with homemade alphabet strips.

Cut colorful paper into four long strips. Help your youngster write the alphabet in large letters, leaving about an inch of space between each letter. Have her tape the pieces into one long alphabet strip.

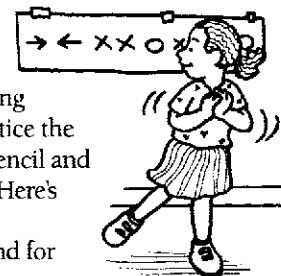
Now, say a short word (*car, box, sit*), and ask her to spell it by pointing to each of its letters on the strip. As she points, she can say the letters aloud (“c-a-r”) and then write the word on another strip of paper. (Give hints as she needs them.) Then, she could use those strips to work on reading the words.

Dance-step coding

Coding is not just for programming computers! Let your youngster practice the same problem-solving skills using pencil and paper—even if she isn’t writing yet. Here’s how to get her started.

Together, think of symbols to stand for different dance steps, and print them on paper as a key. For example, an arrow could mean to take a step forward, backward, right, or left, depending on the arrow’s direction. An X might mean “clap your hands,” while an O may mean “twirl around.”


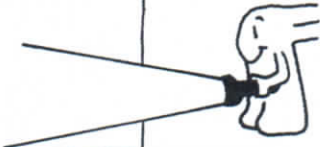



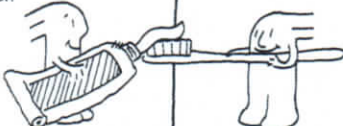




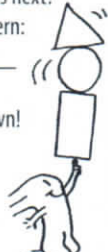



Once she finishes, ask her to use the codes to write a “program” for you to follow. As you dance around the living room, be sure to tell her she’s thinking like a programmer. Then, make up one for her to follow. Put on music and →←XX→OXO →→X the night away!



continued

Instructions: Do the activities on this bingo card in any order you choose. When you get five in a row (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally), you've earned BINGO. Keep going until you've completed the entire card—that's Super BINGO!














B	I	N	G	O
<p>Pitch a reading tent! Drape sheets over chairs, and get books, pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals. Now snuggle up inside to read.</p> 	<p>Gather small toys like a rubber duck and a superhero figure. Use a flashlight to cast their shadows on paper. Trace around the shadows, then color in the outlines.</p> 	<p>Cut out pictures from magazines and catalogs. Glue them on a sheet of paper, and make up a story about them.</p> 	<p>Write the numbers 1–12 on separate craft sticks and put the sticks in an "exercise cup." Pull out a stick and do that number of any move you choose. <i>Example:</i> 5 bunny hops.</p> 	<p>Choose several board games, and mix and match the boards and playing pieces to invent a new game. Teach your family to play. Don't forget to return all the pieces to their original boxes!</p>
<p>Engineering challenge: Build the tallest tower you can using index cards and plastic cups. Experiment with different arrangements. How many cups can you stack?</p>	<p>Turn empty cardboard tubes into cute critters like butterflies, elephants, and penguins. Glue on yarn for hair or fur, googly eyes, pom-pom noses, and pipe cleaners for ears or antennae.</p> 	<p>Illustrate the steps involved in washing your hands. Post your paper on the bathroom mirror. Now make a sign that shows how to brush your teeth.</p> 	<p>Find one item in your home that starts with every letter—from apple to zipper! Draw pictures of all the objects you found.</p>	<p>Have your stuffed animals put on a play—maybe one based on your favorite book. Assign a role to each one and speak their lines for them.</p>
<p>Be a rock star! Record yourself singing your favorite songs. Then, make up new words ("Meow, meow, little cat" to the tune of "Twinkle, twinkle, little star").</p> 	<p>Design a paper bag city. Decorate each bag to create a building your city needs (school, post office, grocery store). Use tape to make streets on the floor, and place your buildings along the streets.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FREE SPACE</p> 	<p>Read a grocery store circular. Use the pictures to help you read words like <i>lettuce</i>, <i>milk</i>, and <i>bagels</i>. Count the letters. What's the longest word you read?</p>	<p>Make a picture menu of healthy snacks. You might draw celery sticks with cream cheese and raisins ("ants on a log") or a bowl of fruit salad. Post your menu on the refrigerator.</p> 
<p>Start a journal. Each day, color a picture of something you did or saw. Write letters or words to describe the picture. Decorate your journal cover with pictures or stickers and write your name on it.</p> 	<p>Use a "pointer," such as a chopstick or ruler, to read words around the house. Look on food packages, book covers, game boxes, and clothes.</p>	<p>Which shape comes next? Complete the pattern: □ △ □ _ Now draw shape patterns of your own!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Answer: ▽</small></p> 	<p>Study your reflection in a mirror, and draw a self-portrait. Display your portrait on the fridge, and encourage family members to add their own.</p>	<p>Set up ramps for toy cars to "drive" down. Stack books and prop one book against the pile. Or lean a piece of sturdy cardboard against the couch. Which ramp lets cars travel the farthest?</p> 
<p>Observe the animals outside your window. Maybe you'll spot birds, squirrels, or lizards. Make "trading cards" by drawing each one on an index card.</p> 	<p>Create a counting book. Label separate sheets of paper 1–10 and staple them together. On each page, draw the matching number of objects. <i>Example:</i> One cat on page 1, two stars on page 2.</p>	<p>Build the entire alphabet out of Legos or other blocks. Arrange the letters to spell words you know.</p>	<p>Invite your stuffed animals to a pizza party. Make a play dough "pizza" with toppings like pepperoni and green peppers. Then, divide it equally among your "guests."</p> 	<p>Graph family members' names. Spell each name (don't forget pets!) with letter tiles. Line up the tiles in even rows and columns. Whose name is the shortest? The longest?</p>

Early Years

Note: Fill in the month and dates, and post this calendar on your refrigerator. Then, encourage your child to do an activity a day.

Early Years Daily Calendar











MONTH						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			<p>Here's a fun way to start the day: Read a story at the breakfast table. Ask everyone what they liked best about it.</p>	<p>Draw three shapes, such as a square, triangle, and hexagon. Tell someone what the shapes have in common (straight sides) and what they don't (number of sides).</p>	<p>Ask a parent to hide a stuffed animal and give you step-by-step instructions for locating it. Be an "echo" by repeating each step aloud as you follow it.</p>	<p>Find a science hobby. You might collect and identify rocks or take up stargazing. You could even start a club and invite friends or cousins to join.</p> 
<p>Draw a picture menu for tonight's dinner. Label the pictures by copying food words (<i>pasta, carrots</i>) from recipes or packages.</p>	<p>Splish, splash! Use washable markers to write and draw in the bathtub. Practice writing letters, numbers, or words, then wash the ink right off.</p>	<p>Choose a toy you own that you think a sibling would enjoy playing with. Show kindness by sharing it with him or her.</p> 	<p>Be an engineer! Find a small plastic toy that won't float in water. Make a life vest for it out of craft supplies or materials from the recycling bin, and test it in the sink.</p>	<p>Sort and stack spare change into towers of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Which tower is the tallest? Count the coins in it.</p> 	<p>Set a goal, such as learning to ride a bike. Draw a picture of yourself reaching your goal, and hang it in your room to remind you to keep trying.</p>	<p>Take a walk around the neighborhood with your family. At each corner, say whether you're turning left or right.</p>
<p>Put on a puppet show based on your favorite book. Paint scenery on cardboard, and draw characters' faces on brown paper lunch bags.</p> 	<p>Take turns naming three objects, two that have something in common and one that's different. Which one doesn't belong? <i>Example:</i> Ravioli and teddy bears are stuffed, but a cup isn't.</p>	<p>Use teamwork to draw a picture. Take turns adding one part (say, a roof on a house). What will the finished picture look like?</p> 	<p>Cut out the numbers 1–20 from old newspapers or magazines. With your eyes closed, mix them up. Now put them in order!</p>	<p>Go outside to observe animals. Draw pictures of them, and make up cute names for them based on their behavior (Hops-a-Lot for a rabbit, Zippy for a squirrel).</p>	<p>Read library books with characters from other cultures. What do you have in common with the characters?</p> 	<p>Have family members take turns saying a word that describes today (<i>rainy, busy</i>). Say as many words as possible without repeating one.</p>
<p>Get creative with empty paper towel and toilet paper tubes. A spiral cut makes a snake. Glue two side by side for binoculars. What else can you make?</p>	<p>Tell family members something about yourself that you're proud of. ("I'm a good friend.") Ask them what they're proud of about themselves, too.</p>	<p>Brainstorm a list of silly sentences. <i>Example:</i> "A skunk followed me home today." Choose your favorite, and have a parent help you write a story that begins with the sentence.</p> 			<p>Use tape to create a large square, rectangle, or triangle on the floor. Arrange toy blocks to fill the shape.</p>	<p>With a friend or sibling, take turns acting out feelings for the other person to guess. <i>Example:</i> Smile and do a little dance to show "happy."</p> 
<p>Be generous with your time. Make "coupons" that family members can redeem. You might give a sibling a coupon that says, "I will do one of your chores."</p> 	<p>Hold a silent conversation with someone. Get your point across by drawing or acting out what you want to say.</p>	<p>Ask parents about family traditions they enjoyed when they were your age. Then, vote on a new tradition to start together, like Saturday bike rides or Waffle Wednesdays.</p>				

Early Years

Note: Fill in the month and dates, and post this calendar on your refrigerator. Then, encourage your child to do an activity a day.

Early Years Daily Calendar

MONTH

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<p>Make a list of words you know how to spell. Post it on the refrigerator, and add to it as you learn new words.</p>	<p>Good citizens wear seat belts! The next time you get in a car, fasten your seat belt and call out, "Safe rider check!" Is everyone buckled up?</p>	<p>Start a collection of small objects (buttons, erasers, marbles, paper clips) that you could use to do math problems. Keep your "counters" in a clear jar.</p>		<p>Read a book, and create a "souvenir" from it. Draw a treasure map after reading a pirate adventure. Sculpt play dough planets for a book about space.</p>	
<p>Read color words on crayons. Then, walk around the house and try to match each crayon with something of the same color. Maybe your orange crayon matches your cat!</p>	<p>Design a rubber band-powered car using toys, boxes, and craft supplies. How far can your car go? Redesign to try to make it go farther.</p>	<p>At dinner, take turns describing a mistake you made today—and what you learned. ("I forgot to put my name on my drawing. Next time I'll write it before I draw.")</p> 	<p>Look for things around the house that your family doesn't use. <i>Examples:</i> plate on the wall (phone jack), black machine with a big slot (VCR). Ask a parent what they're for.</p>		<p>Create a "calm down spot" for when you need time to relax. Fill a basket with activities like a coloring book, crayons, and puzzles.</p>	
<p>Think of different ways to sort a collection. Maybe you'll sort Legos according to size, color, or shape. Ask someone to guess your sorting "rule."</p>	<p>Turn items in the recycling bin into storage containers. A coffee can makes a good domino holder. And you could store paper in a cereal box.</p> 	<p>Notice when a family member is busy, perhaps working on a computer or doing yard work. Show kindness by bringing them a glass of water or offering to help with their work.</p>	<p>Remember your table manners by decorating a paper place mat with "manners" cartoons. You might draw one of yourself chewing with your mouth closed, for instance.</p>	<p>Touch your throat and hum a song. Now stop humming. What do you notice? Humming makes your vocal cords vibrate. That's because vibrations produce sound.</p>	<p>Learn to do a new chore like making your bed or using a hand-held vacuum cleaner. Have someone take a photo of you doing the chore so you can see what responsibility looks like.</p> 	
<p>Make a new friend by finding something you have in common with a classmate. Maybe you both play soccer or love to write stories, for example.</p>	<p>Hand-clapping games can stretch your memory—and they're fun. Ask your parents to teach you any they know or to help you find some in library books or online. Or make up one of your own!</p>	<p>Technology isn't just video games and smartphones—it's any tool that makes life easier. Brainstorm examples of tools that aren't electronic (scooter, pencil, fork).</p> 		<p>Play Dragon Tag. Players line up touching the shoulders of the person in front of them. The leader (head) has to catch the last person (tail) and becomes the new tail.</p>	<p>Take turns rolling a die and adding that number of blocks to a tower. If it falls, count the blocks, then try to build a taller one next time.</p>	<p>Rhymes are fun! Choose a rhyming book like <i>The Cat in the Hat</i> (Dr. Seuss) or a nursery rhyme like "Hey Diddle Diddle." Now "rap" the words aloud.</p>
<p>Put magnetic letters in ABC order on the refrigerator. Try to think of a word that starts with each letter.</p> 	<p>Build a marble run using blocks, cardboard tubes, and other household items. Test, redesign, and retest until a marble will roll through without getting stuck.</p>	<p>Make up new rules for your favorite game. Maybe you'll go backward in Chutes and Ladders or try to win checkers by losing all of your pieces.</p>	<p>Have each family member gift-wrap a random object, perhaps a spoon. Exchange "gifts," and everyone has to say something honest and positive. ("I love how shiny this is!")</p>			

Early Years

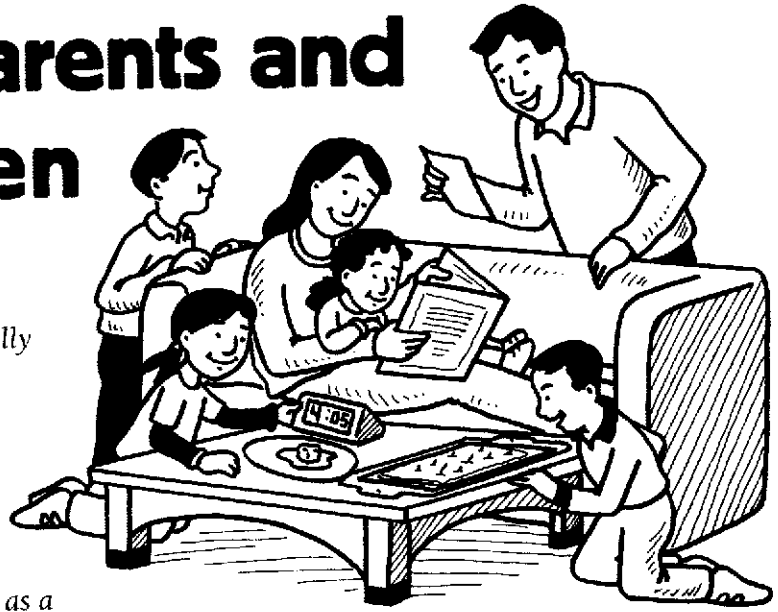
APRIL 2020

COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION:

Support for Parents and Young Children

Your children's world has changed dramatically in the course of just a few weeks. They're home from school, missing their friends and teachers, and confused about why they can't visit with relatives or go to the playground.

As a parent, you may feel overwhelmed and uncertain about what to do. Use this guide as a starting point for supporting your youngsters during the coronavirus crisis.



Editor's note: Guidelines are changing rapidly. Make sure to follow all local, state, and federal laws and recommendations on social distancing and other practices when using these ideas.

Boost well-being

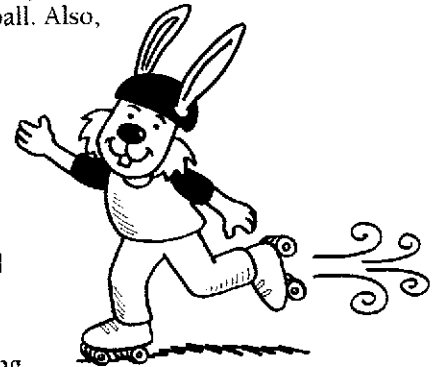
Your child is likely experiencing conflicting emotions. She's probably happy to be home with you—but also bored because she can't go anywhere. Here are ways to maintain some semblance of normalcy.

Find the positives. Look for bright moments each day. For instance, maybe you don't have to commute to your job right now, so you have time before work to snuggle up and read with your youngster. Or perhaps a family birthday party was canceled, but now even people who live far away can celebrate with you...via video chat.

Encourage play. Children need plenty of time to play—especially in difficult times. Together, pull out old toys he may not have played with in a while. It'll be like getting brand-new toys! He can also turn household items into toys. A large cardboard box could be a space station or an art studio (he can color the inside with crayons or markers). A blanket might become a cape or a pond.



Stay physically active. Play catch or kick around a soccer ball. Also, let your child set up a backyard obstacle course. She could arrange outdoor items like pool noodles, jump ropes, hula hoops, and old towels—and then lead the whole family through her course.



Do for others. Thinking of others gets your child outside of thinking about the situation he's in. He might make cards for people who are working hard to help us, such as nurses and paramedics. He could also use chalk to draw pictures and leave thank-you messages on the sidewalk for delivery truck drivers and mail carriers.

Enjoy the great outdoors. Spending time in nature is a proven stress reliever. Plant a garden. Try stargazing at night or bird-watching in the daytime. Have breakfast, lunch, or dinner picnics in the backyard or on the balcony—and invite stuffed animals to join.

continued

Early Years

Learning activities at home

Teachers don't expect you to homeschool your youngsters—but you can keep the learning going. Encourage your child to participate in any online school activities like virtual circle time or PE class. In addition, use these ideas during your free time or when you do your own work.

Story time. Read to your youngster each day. Enjoy favorites from your bookshelves, and download e-books from the public library. When you're busy, she could listen to authors, teachers, and librarians read at storylineonline.net or on YouTube.

Kitchen math. Ask your child to take "inventory." He can sort pantry items by food group, such as protein (canned tuna, beans) or fruits and vegetables (raisins, tomato sauce). Then, suggest that he make a graph by lining up the packages in even rows and columns. Together, count the foods in each group. Which group has the most? The least?

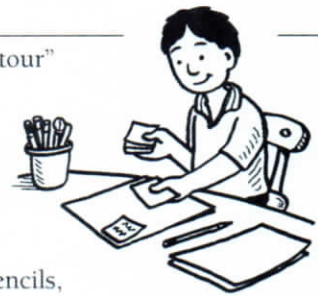
Nature walks. Go outdoors so your child can observe trees, flowers, and animals. Take along a notebook for drawing and labeling items, and carry a bag for collecting rocks, acorns, and other natural items from the ground. At home, she could create a "science museum" to display her pictures

and objects—and give you a "tour" when you're not working.

Writer's den. Help your youngster set up a special spot for drawing and writing, perhaps near your workstation. He could decorate containers to hold utensils (pencils, crayons, markers, pens) and things to write on (paper, sticky notes, paper bags, index cards).

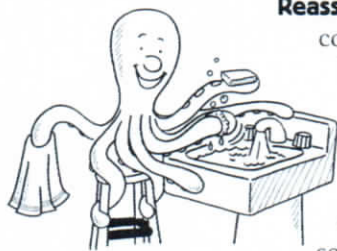
Science lab. Encourage your child to conduct hands-on experiments. She could predict which household items will sink or float in the kitchen sink, then test her predictions. Or have her predict which objects are magnetic and use a refrigerator magnet to see how many she got right.

Idea: Give your youngster a stack of index cards. On each one, have him illustrate a quiet activity to do independently during your working hours. He might draw a book on one card, a can of play dough on another, and a jigsaw puzzle on a third. Then, he can pick one card at a time and do that activity. Be sure to let him show you his work!



Reduce anxiety

It's normal for youngsters—and adults—to feel stressed when their schedules change or life is unpredictable. Consider this advice for helping your little one cope.



Reassure your child. Having some control over a situation can limit anxiety. Talk to him about what your family is doing to stay safe—and to help others be safe. Examples include washing hands often, staying at home, and social distancing (staying at least

six feet away from people who don't live with you).

Stick to routines. Have your youngster go to bed and wake up at her usual time. Also, encourage her to dress in regular clothes. If she asks to stay in pajamas, consider setting aside a special PJs day each week. Wearing daytime clothes on other days contributes to a sense of normalcy. And plan regular mealtimes rather than letting everyone snack all day.

Turn off the news. It's important to stay informed, but news can make your child anxious. Try to tune in after he goes to bed. Use kid-friendly language to explain the situation. *Example:* "A lot of people are sick right now. We are staying home to be healthy and help stop the germs from spreading."

"See" friends and relatives

Help your little one stay close to the people who are important to your family. Try these suggestions for keeping in touch via Skype, FaceTime, or other video-chat platforms.

Play with friends. Help your child find ways to "get together" with her classmates. They might have a virtual concert by singing favorite songs or playing homemade instruments. Or they could perform magic tricks, hold a pet talent show, or tell jokes.

Spend time with relatives. Set up video calls with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Encourage your youngster to ask how they're doing and tell them about your family's day. You might even have virtual game nights.

Play Mother May I? (or Grandma May I?), Simon Says, I Spy, and Red Light, Green Light.



Early Years