Helping your preschool child

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The first five years of a child’s life are a time of tremendous physical, emotional, and cognitive growth. The amount of support children receive during these formative years can be strongly connected to the level of success they achieve later in school. Children whose families involve them in activities that allow them to learn outside of school often have better language, social, and cognitive skills. The parents’ role is to help their children enjoy learning and to develop a love of learning.

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Letters, letters, everywhere (ages three to five)
Sharing the alphabet with children helps them learn letter names and shapes, and understand the sounds of oral language.

What you need:
- Alphabet book, alphabet blocks, and alphabet magnets,
- Pencils, crayons, and markers,
- Glue.

What to do:
1. With your child, point out individual letters in signs, billboards, posters, food containers, books, and magazines.
2. Look for educational videos, DVDs, CDs, and television shows such as “Between the Lions” and “Sesame Street” that feature letter-learning activities for young children. Watch these programs with your child and join in with the rhymes and songs.
3. Place alphabet magnets on your refrigerator or on another smooth, flat surface. Ask your child to name the letters until the words he or she may be trying to spell.
4. Whenever you work with your child, point out individual letters in signs, billboards, posters, food containers, books, and magazines.
5. Use up-alphabet blocks and have your child say the name of each letter. Your child can use these blocks to spell his or her name.

Tips for parents

The following checklist, although not exhaustive, can help guide you as you prepare your child for school. It is best to look at the items as goals, which should be accomplished, as much as possible, through everyday routines or enjoyable activities.

1. My child:
   - Watches television when monitored by an adult;
   - Is read to everyday and has access to books and other reading materials;
   - Understands concepts when reminded by an adult;
   - Is encouraged to help decide problems and sort and classify things;
   - Is learning to count and play counting games;
   - Is learning to identify shapes and colors; and
   - Has opportunities to draw, trace, and learn to make music.

2. My child:
   - Eats a balanced diet and gets plenty of rest;
   - Is learning to count and plays counting games;
   - Understands concepts when reminded by an adult;
   - Is encouraged to help decide problems and sort and classify things;
   - Is learning to count and play counting games;
   - Is learning to identify shapes and colors; and
   - Has opportunities to draw, trace, and learn to make music.

3. My child:
   - Runs, jumps, plays outdoors, and participates in other active pursuits;
   - Has opportunities to be with other children and is learning to cooperate;
   - Is beginning to work independently;
   - Can follow simple instructions.

4. My child:
   - Is learning to identify shapes and colors; and
   - Has opportunities to draw, trace, and learn to make music.

5. My child:
   - Is learning to count and plays counting games;
   - Understands concepts when reminded by an adult;
   - Is encouraged to help decide problems and sort and classify things;
   - Is learning to count and play counting games;
   - Is learning to identify shapes and colors; and
   - Has opportunities to draw, trace, and learn to make music.

Activities

Good health and physical well-being

My child:
- Is learning to count and plays counting games;
- Understands concepts when reminded by an adult;
- Is encouraged to help decide problems and sort and classify things;
- Is learning to count and play counting games;
- Is learning to identify shapes and colors; and
- Has opportunities to draw, trace, and learn to make music.

Resources

The brochure was drawn from the larger booklet in the Helping Your Child series, “Helping Your Preschool Child,” which provides tips, resources, and facts that parents can use with children from birth through age five. For more information on how you can help your child enjoy learning and to develop a love of learning, visit the Parents Portal: www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html.

To provide parents with the latest information based on the larger booklet in the Helping Your Child series, “Helping Your Preschool Child,” which provides tips, resources, and facts that parents can use with children from birth through age five. For more information on how you can help your child enjoy learning and to develop a love of learning, visit the Parents Portal: www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html.

For more information on how you can help your preschool child, take a look at the following resources from the U.S. Department of Education and other organizations:

- U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov or 1-800-U SA -LEA RN
- www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html
- www.ed.gov/program s/pirc/index.html
- www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html
- www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html
- Head Start: www.acf.dhhs.gov/program s/hsb
- Parental Information and Resource Center: www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html

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—Mrs. Laura Bush