



TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*...

A parent newsletter for Toddlers,
Pre-schoolers and beyond!

2006 – ISSUE ONE

Welcome to the premier of
TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*...

a learn-at-home newsletter created by Penn State Cooperative Educators. Our previous version - TODDLER TOPICS has helped parents and grandparents for years. This year, in an ongoing effort to serve the families in our community, we have expanded our intended audience to include the families of not only Toddlers but Pre-schoolers and beyond! Our 2006 Issues continue to be available on-line as well as in hard copy.

We hope you will find helpful tips and techniques to improve your family's time together while providing you with information that will enrich your child's learning process. **Contact the Penn State Cooperative Ext. office in your county for information on other educational programs of interest to you and your family.**

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Editor

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Helping Children Become Readers and Writers

Nancy Crago, PhD., C.F.C.S.
Senior Extension Educator, PSCE

Reading begins by reading simple books to toddlers or just pointing at pictures and telling children what they are seeing. Your child is learning how to hold a book, how to turn the pages, and how to treat a book. Preschool children learn to read and write by being readers and writers. Parents can do many things to help their children become successful readers and writers.

Read aloud to your child - Reading aloud to your child is the most important thing you can do to help your child become a successful reader in school. Spend time reading aloud to your child for at least 30 minutes every day.

Choose books about things that interest your child - Different children have different interests. Some like stories about animals. Others may like cars and trucks. Start with books that are familiar, like a book about a pet cat. Later, choose a book that is about tigers.

Keep reading a happy time - Never force young children to sit and read. Shorten up books that are too wordy. If your child gets antsy, choose a simpler book or activity. A natural time for reading is bedtime or naptime, when children are likely to sit.

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Helping Children Become Readers and Writers (cont.)

Making it a part of your child's routine will help him to relax and get ready for sleep.

Have conversations with your child -

Talk about everyday activities. Use short, simple sentences. Children's experience with oral language prepares them for the same words in print. A fun way to remember past events is to "read" photo albums. Children love to retell good times. This helps children learn many words.

Visit the library – Take your child to the library. Get a library card. Let him pick his own library books. Ask your librarian about children's story hours. You can also ask your librarian to suggest appropriate books.

Show by example that reading is

important – Your attitude about reading and writing influences your child's attitude about reading and writing. Have books, newspapers, and magazines in your home. Let your child see you reading and writing. Studies show good readers in school have parents who have a lot of books in the home and read themselves.

Set up a reading area in your home -

Set up a comfortable and cozy place for children and adults to sit and read. Buy your child their own books. Teach her how to care for books. Do not let your child

write in books or leave them on the floor. Have a place for your child to store her books where she can reach them. Teach her to return the books to the storage place when she is done.

Nurture your child's interest in writing -

Set up a writing area for your child. Include a variety of writing tools – colored markers, chalk, and pencils of different sizes, pens, notepads and unlined paper. Only help to write if asked. Don't spend a lot of time correcting her spelling. Show her that you are interested in the stories and ideas she is writing. Children learn how to spell correctly over time. Let your child see you write and use print in your work and leisure time. Your child will sense the power and pleasure that comes from being able to write and read.

The Story Lady's Tip

Ellen Helfrick (A.K.A.: Miss Ellen)

Library Do's and Don'ts

As Director of Children's Services in a library, I see a variety of approaches to library use. As a mother and a former Home Child Care Provider, I can relate to how overwhelming it can be to take your children to the Library. I offer these simple thoughts to help make your visit amazing.

- ❖ **DO** plan your library visits for a time when you and your child are not tired, hungry or rushed.
- ❖ **DON'T** give up if your first visit is not what you had expected, try again and again!!



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...BUT I WANT IT!!!

Controlling the Gimmies!

Karen Bracey, County Extension Director
Wyoming County

Let's face it – there are *a lot* of cool things out there. Imagine being a child and coming face to face with a three foot tall fairy princess or test driving that fancy new toy sports car. Your favorite TV and movie characters come to life in everything from cereal to underwear. Walk through a toy aisle and you are bombarded with sights and sounds that can't help but be exciting. Then enter the educational toys. We have videos that claim to develop speech before age one, computers to speed up reading and math skills, and complex technology brought down to a toddler's level with bright buttons, cute characters and catchy tunes. Parents don't want their children to fall behind educationally and feel that they need these items in order for their child to keep up with everyone else. So, what is a parent to do?

First and most important, remember that it is not only OK to say 'NO' to your child, it is your duty as a parent. Children who get everything they want grow into adults who expect the same. Since there is no limit to what we could want, many children and adults never feel satisfied with what they have. **It does not help your child if you give them everything they ask for.**

Set a good example. Many adults overspend on items that will not really add

any joy to their life. Children see this and learn from it. Let your child see you admire something and then walk away from it, with a statement of, "That was really nice, but I don't need it."

Let children enjoy spending some time in a toy department knowing they can come back another time. Have fun without buying anything. If you see another child throwing a tantrum, ask your child if he thinks that is a good way to behave in a store. What they may not recognize in themselves, they may see in someone else. You can say, "It looks like she has a bad case of the Gimmies." Then if you see a fit starting in your child, remind them what a bad case of the 'Gimmies' looks like. Ask if they really want to look like that in the store. **Never give in to your child's tantrum, leave the store or the toy department, if necessary.** If your child always has a difficult time in the store, you might not want to take them until they grow a little more and can understand better how they need to behave.

Spend time with your child having fun with simple things. Playing in the yard or doing something outside enjoying nature and being together. **Let your child know that family and time together are more important than "things"**. Encourage play that does not involve bought things; try building forts with blankets, baking cookies, using big boxes to climb in and around... the list is endless.

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Controlling the Gimmies! (cont.)

As your child gets older go through their toys with them, and talk about how much things cost, how much they played with it and if it was worth it. **Help them to understand the value of money and how to save it.** Visit yard sales or thrift shops to help them enjoy a good bargain.

As your child asks for things, tell them you'll put it on a list. As they add more to the list, start to narrow it down by asking, "Would you rather the baby doll or the dress up kit?" By the time a holiday or birthday comes around you will have an idea of what they really want. Sometimes just putting something on a list is enough to satisfy the child until the whim blows over.

Finally, teach your child to appreciate.

Being and acting "spoiled" is not a result of how much we have, but of how little we appreciate what we have.

Gifts to Give your Children

Karen Bracey, County Extension Director
Wyoming County

THE GIFT OF THANKFULNESS:

It is a great joy to be able to look at life no matter what, and find the areas for which we are thankful. *"Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching them what counts is best."* Bob Talbert

Yes, You Can Teach Math!

Phyllis Wright, Extension Educator,
Warren County

A secret to math is giving children real problems to work on and real objects to count, measure, and explore. **To help toddlers learn about math use math terms everyday during these hands-on activities.**

Ideas for counting and comparing:

Are there two candy bars for three children?
Who has four trucks to play with?
You have five buttons to button.
You need one cup of water.
We need a big spoon to stir.
There are six toys to put away.
Let's skip on 10 sidewalk spaces.
Where are 5 trees in the picture?
Find the square piece, or will the round piece fit in the square?

When on a walk ask:

Do you see a triangle?
Find 9 yellow flowers in the garden?
Where is the little shovel for the snow?
You need the big boots today.
Which car is bigger?
How many black bugs do you see?
How many big windows and little windows are in the house?

Sorting and problem solving at home:

Put only the forks on the table.
Please get 2 apples and 5 grapes.
Put the bigger socks in daddy's drawer.

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Yes, You Can Teach Math! (cont.)

Graphing using any like items - Example

Cut out ice cream cones. Make three flavor columns. For each child, put a cone in a flavor column -

How many like vanilla ice cream?

How many like chocolate ice cream?

How many like strawberry ice cream?

Family Table Tips

Vanessa Dickson – AmeriCorps Member
Penn State Coop. Ext.– Indiana County

Tip #1

Have each family member bring an object to the table and talk about it.

Tip #2

Go through old family photos and tell a story about a family member from the past who a younger family member might not know well.

Tip #3

Fill a container with conversation starters. Pick out a question and have everyone answer it.

Tip #4

Try to pronounce everyone's name backwards.

Tip #5

Practice tongue twisters. Here are a few to get you started:

Strange strategic statistics

Black bugs blood

Rubber baby buggy bumpers

She sells sea shells by the sea shore

Tip #6

Play Simon Says at the table.

Tip #7

Play word and memory games. For example: Animal alphabet: one person names an animal. The next person must name an animal that begins with the last letter of the first animal's name. Continue until someone gets stumped.

Tip #8

Sing a song in the round, such as "Row-Row-Row Your Boat".

Teach Children to Embrace Diversity

Patreese Ingram, Associate Professor of Agricultural and Extension Education, University Park, PA

As the face of America continues to change, a growing number of neighborhoods and communities are becoming a complex mix of races, cultures, languages, and religious affiliations. The need to prepare children to function in a diverse society and world is becoming more important. Parents can take steps to help youth understand, appreciate, and value the many different cultures that make up America. **Remember that parents are a child's first and most important teacher.** The following are some tips to help parents build appreciation of diversity into the everyday lives of their children.

- Model the type of behavior you want your child to imitate.
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Teach Children to Embrace Diversity (cont.)

- Be ready to talk about diversity issues when they come up. Avoid making certain topics “taboo” (such as skin color, disabilities, religious dress). Avoiding the topic sends the message that there is something wrong with the difference.
 - Use gender-free terminology (such as firefighter, police officer, salesperson). This sends the message that both males and females can fill these roles.
 - Include books with multicultural themes. Include stories about people from different cultures, different parts of the world, who celebrate different holidays and traditions, etc.
 - Point out stereotypes and cultural misinformation depicted in movies and in TV shows. Failure to point out misrepresentations to children sends the message that the stereotype or misinformation is accurate.
 - Include your child in play groups that include children from diverse backgrounds.
 - Attend services with your children in a variety of religious settings.
- Make multicultural toys and art materials available in your home. These might include dolls of different races and genders, people-colored paints and crayons.
 - Include music from different cultures and pictures that represent diversity in your home.

What’s to Eat?

Fran Alloway, Nutritional & Family Living Educator, Delaware County

Fruit Fun -Most toddlers love fruit and fruit juice. Fruit juice should be limited to no more than one cup a day to prevent filling up on liquids instead of meals. Some fruit beverages contain very little or no fruit juice and lots of sugar. Read labels to buy wisely. Many fruits contain vitamin C which is essential for a healthy immune system and skin. Fresh fruit also contains fiber, minerals and adds sweetness to meals and snacks. Cut grapes in half and hard fruit into bite size pieces to prevent choking.

Here’s a recipe for fruit fun.

- 1 half of canned peach
- 2 raisins, 1 dried cranberry
- Small pretzel sticks

Place peach in a small bowl, cut side down. Make a face with dried fruit, using pretzel sticks for hair and arms.