



TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*... A Parent Newsletter for Toddlers, Preschoolers and beyond! *2007 Issue One*

TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*... a learn-at-home parent newsletter created by Penn State Cooperative Extension welcomes you. This newsletter is designed to assist parents, grandparents, caregivers and all adults who care about and for children in all their interactions with children. We will continue to make these issues available on-line as well as in hard copy format.

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 children's learning process. **Contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension 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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Is Your Child a Rachel Ray or an Emeril?

Marcia Weber, Extension Educator
York County

Tie on an apron and pull up the stepstool. Kids love to help in the kitchen and want to be part of the action. Be patient, tolerate a little mess and your child will learn while having fun helping you. Kitchen prep helps children develop independence and self-confidence and improve their eye-hand coordination. In addition they learn math, reading and language skills. Children who are picky eaters are more willing to eat the food they have helped prepare.

A 2 year old can:

- ✓ Wash salad greens
- ✓ Snap green beans
- ✓ Put bread in a toaster
- ✓ Transfer ingredients

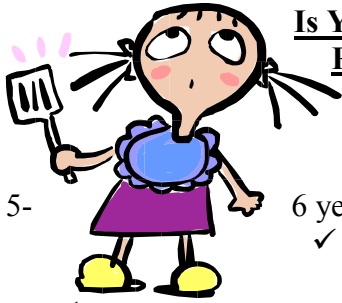
A 3 year old can:

- ✓ Spread soft spreads
- ✓ Pour liquids
- ✓ Pour cereal
- ✓ Place things in the trash
- ✓ Clear their place at the table
- ✓ Wrap potatoes in foil for baking

A 4 year old can:

- ✓ Peel oranges or hard cooked eggs
- ✓ Mash bananas using a fork
- ✓ Unload the dishwasher
- ✓ Set the table
- ✓ Cut parsley or green onions with dull scissors

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Is Your Child a Rachel Ray or an Emeril?
(Continued)

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6 year olds can:

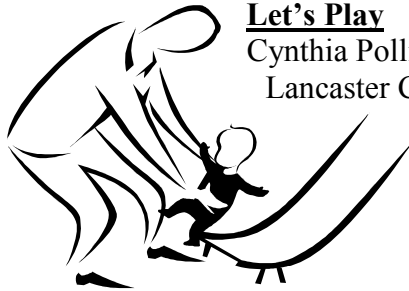
- ✓ Measure ingredients
- ✓ Break eggs into a bowl
- ✓ Use a hand egg beater
- ✓ Cut with a blunt knife
- ✓ Grate food

7-9 year olds can:

- ✓ Read simple recipes and follow directions
- ✓ Measure ingredients without help

Bon Appetit!

Source: Kids in the Kitchen prepared by Katherine Cason, Penn State University



Let's Play
Cynthia Pollich, MEd
Lancaster County

Play is crucial for your child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth. Children play to perfect their skills. Through imaginative play young children begin to understand the processes of symbolic thought. Play also helps a child to better understand the world around them. Both dramatic play and sociodramatic play promote social development. **Play is a form of emotional release for many children.**

Young children express their feelings of fear, anxiety, or anger through play. In addition, play gives children a sense of mastery over their environment. When actively involved in play, your child is in control of their environment, fostering positive self-esteem.

Through play, children learn to solve problems with creative solutions. In other words, they learn divergent thinking. Incorporate materials that stimulate your children's interest and expand the learning process. Observe children while playing to gauge their development levels. Participate in the children's dramatic play, if you are invited. It is important not to become the play leader; instead you should become a play participant. **The most authentic play**



experiences are child-initiated, freely chosen, and child powered.

Such play is pleasurable and fun, active and mind absorbing. Keep in mind that play is not only very important for young children, it is also important

for adults.

Play is the work of children (and cleaning up after play seems to be the work of parents). Through play, they practice independence, creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving. Play is a "brain food" to help brains develop in ways critical to school success. **Play is the foundation for learning language, reading, thinking and reasoning skills.** In addition, parent-child play provides important opportunities for parent-child bonding.

Does your child have enough play time in their day? **Go play with your child and have some good old fashioned fun!**



Play Resources

Playful Parenting by Lawrence
J. Cohen

Play Together, Learn Together:
Over 400 Activities To Do With Your Child
by Melanie Rice

Make-Believe: Games and Activities for
Imaginative Play by Dorothy G. Singer and
Jerome L. Singer

Cool Parent: 101 Fun Things to Make Your
Kids Say WOW! By Alecia T. Devantier
and Carol A. Turkington

School Readiness

Laurie Welch, Extension Educator
Clinton County

It's never too early to start preparing your child to succeed in school. **School readiness means your child is ready academically and socially with good communication skills plus independence.** Getting your child ready for school requires parents and caregivers to spend time reading, talking and playing with your child.

To assist your child academically:

- Read to your child every day and talk about what you have read.
- Visit the library and borrow books.
- Sing songs.
- Help your child recognize their own name and have them try to write it.
- Let your child color, draw, cut and paste.
- Play with puzzles to improve problem solving abilities.

- Play games and sing songs to help teach the alphabet and numbers.

To assist your child socially:

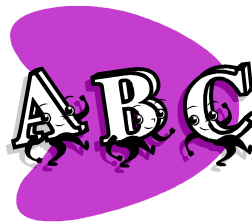
- Have a regular routine for meals and bedtime.
- Set rules and have consequences for not following them.
- Encourage your child to play with other children.
- Teach the basics of sharing and taking turns.
- Teach your child not to hit, scream, hurt others or use negative behaviors.

To assist your child to gain independence:

- Buy clothing that is easy for your child to do on their own.
- Have your child do simple chores around the house.
- Let your child solve puzzles and win games by themselves.

To assist your child in developing communication skills:

- Have conversations with your child.
- Teach your child to listen when others speak.
- Help children learn and use new words.



If your child is enrolled in child care, make sure they have well planned activities that encourage and promote learning.

Preparing your child ahead of time will help make school a more rewarding experience.

Sensory Play



Rendy L. Knepper, Better
Kid Care Coordinator,
Dauphin County

Play that engages a child's senses makes an impression. Mix hands-on fun with learning as you try this activity. (Make sure you supervise or participate to keep child's fingers out of their mouth and eyes.)

Mix shaving crème (read the label and find one that is non-toxic) and glue in equal parts. Allow your child to finger paint on black paper. This mixture will dry puffy like snow!

Another option is to simply squirt shaving crème on a washable table and allow your child to draw in it. First draw a letter or number and watch them mimic.

Raising a Reader

Office of Commonwealth Libraries.
Pennsylvania Department of Education.

In this issue, we will begin to list tips from the bookmark publication: **Easy Things You Can Do At Home to Raise Readers...**

Read to your child every day. Make it a special time when you both can relax, snuggle and enjoy books.

Build your home library and fill it with your child's favorite titles.



Sing nursery rhymes and finger plays to introduce an awareness of speech sounds and patterns.



Book Review

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Youth Services
York County Library System

Most public Libraries have a Parent/Teacher section. Toddler Topics Plus... 2007 issues feature a book review designed to send you in search of a great resource that will help make learning fun for the whole family.

Preschool Math by Bob Williams, Debra Cunningham, and Joy Lubawy, 2005 Gryphon House Inc.

This book has 140 math games and activities that will involve your child and get them thinking mathematically, setting the stage for future learning in school. No matter your child's preference, you are sure to find something to please in these nine chapters: Art Math, Block Math, Body Math, Cooking Up Math, Moving Math, Outside Math, Small Group Math, Whole Group Math, Wet and Messy Math.

Each activity includes an introduction, the Mathematics Concepts used, Vocabulary, and Materials needed. Easy to follow directions are broken down into these four categories: Before the Activity, What to Do, Math Skills Assessment, and Additional Activities. Here is a sample:

Clip It – Counting This activity is a fine motor skill builder, and the children can work alone or in pairs. When working in pairs, one child can count the cards and the other child can check to results. Use wooden clothespins because they are sturdier and easier to write on. (Continued)

Clip It – Counting (Continued)

Mathematics Concept: Counting

Vocabulary: clothespin, names of numerals

Materials: black marker, 10 clothespins, index cards

Before the Activity: Using the black marker, write the numerals 1 to 10 on the clothespins, one numeral per clothespin.

What to Do:

Ask the children to pick up a clothespin and identify the numeral on it.

Encourage them to count out the correct number of index cards and clip the index cards to the clothespin.

Repeat this with the next clothespin, and continue until all the clothespins have the right number of index cards attached to them.

Math Skills Assessment:

Does the younger child notice that the clothespins open wider for larger quantities of cards?

Does the older child correctly associate the quantities of cards with the appropriate numeral?

Additional Activities:

Use numerals from 11 to 20 to make the activity more difficult.

Reinforce the concept of odd or even by placing only the odd or even clothespins as a set.



Dealing with Public Misbehavior (part 1)

Karen Bracey, Extension Educator
Wyoming County

Before you had children, if you saw a parent struggling with a child throwing a temper tantrum, chances are you thought: “*That will never be my child!*” Now, here you are in a store with your three year old, and all of a sudden it is you in the middle of this story. As most parents eventually realize, children at one time or another have a ‘meltdown’ in public. Some children are much more prone to tantrums than others. It may seem like children have a sense of how to use the ‘power of a tantrum,’ to their advantage.

There are many techniques that lay the foundation for effective guidance of a child’s behavior, but we are going to focus on what to do with public misbehavior.

Preventing Tantrums Obviously, our first choice is to simply prevent a tantrum from occurring. It really can be simple, if you remember a few basic facts.

The Child’s Condition A hungry, tired, over-stimulated child in a grocery store, mall, or at a large family gathering, is a time bomb ready to explode. **When a child is tired or hungry, their ability to deal with a simple situation is greatly impaired.**

- ❖ If you are running errands and notice your child starting to fade and grow weary, take a break.
 - ❖ If your child is hungry, allow some time for a meal or a good snack.
- (Continued)

Dealing with Public Misbehavior (part 1) (Continued)

- ❖ If your child is tired of being in a car seat or stroller, make time for some running around and playing.
- ❖ If your child really needs to take a nap, delay some errands to allow for this.



Clear Expectations

Look at a situation from your child's point of view. If this is the first time they are going to a family banquet in a restaurant, they may have no idea of what to expect and even less of an idea of how to behave. Preparing a child ahead of time can really help everyone feel more comfortable.

Explain to your child how things will look, who will be there, what sounds they might hear and any thing else you think might be important. Put these expectations into clear statements, like this: *"When we sit at the table to eat dinner and you don't like the food, just leave it on your plate. You don't have to say anything."*

If you are going to a store and you know that your child will not be getting a treat, tell him ahead of time but give them something to look forward to. Try this: *"We are not going to get any candy at the store today because we have some at home. When we get back from the store, and you have behaved well, then you can pick out a piece of candy at home."* Or, *"We will not be getting any toys today at the store, but you need a new shirt, so you can help pick one out."*

Know Your Child

Some kids are very happy to go "visit" the toys in a store and then walk away. For others, this is a traumatic experience and they might be better off not going near the toys. **You need to know what works best with your child.** Avoid circumstances that delivered a tantrum recently until your child and you have recovered. Allow time to pass and then set clear expectations in order to prevent a repeat. Provide items for your child that will distract and satisfy your child instead. If you are not carrying a diaper bag any longer, allow your child to carry some items in a child size backpack.

Leave Your Child at Home

There are certain ages and situations that simply don't mix. **If you have the option to leave your child with a trusted someone, take advantage of this option while you do what needs to be done.** Factor your child into the equation when deciding when and where you will shop or visit the 'patience required' adult world.

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