

Early Childhood Parents[®]

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State Pre-K
Bakersfield City School District

make the difference!



Help your child celebrate spring with outdoor learning

The changes that take place every spring align perfectly with the changes preschoolers experience every day. That's why outdoor learning activities are a great way to foster your child's development this season.

With your child:

- **Investigate the wind.** Does your child know what blows around in the wind? Help him find out! Punch a hole in a plastic lid. Pull a piece of string through the hole and tie a thick knot at one end to secure it. Help your child rub petroleum jelly on the lid and hang it from a tree branch. Check after 30 minutes and see what the wind blew onto the lid.
- **Plant.** Show your child how to start something, tend it and watch it grow. Together, pick some plants

that are easy to grow. Depending on your climate, start seeds indoors or plant them outside in the ground. Demonstrate how to care for the plants and talk about what would happen to them if your child stopped taking care of them.

- **Keep track of animals.** As the plants around you start to turn green, you and your child will notice more animals returning. At first, you may not see them. But if you listen, you may hear them. Listen for the chirping of birds as they come back to your area. You and your child may hear the "ribbit" of the frogs and the sounds that different insects make. Listen for sounds in the morning and right before your child goes to bed. Write down what you both hear.

Follow these teacher tips for school success



Preschool teachers want children's early school years to be the best they can be. Here are

a few helpful suggestions from seasoned teachers:

- **Establish** routines at home. Children thrive when they have regular times to eat, sleep, play, read, etc.
- **Limit** screen time to one hour per day. Excessive unsupervised screen activities negatively affect kids' language development, literacy skills and cognitive abilities.
- **Encourage** playing by the rules. Talk about the rules in your child's classroom. Never tell her you think a rule is silly.
- **Stay up-to-date** on school news. Read the information the school and the teacher send home.
- **Tell** the teacher if something is going on with your child—both little things and big.
- **Be positive.** Don't say negative things about school or the teacher in front of your child.
- **Make** sure your child's schedule is balanced and includes time to relax with family.

Try a few counting games to boost your child's math skills



Your preschooler has opportunities to build math skills each time he plays. But math should not be something difficult to be “worked on.” It should simply be part of your child's everyday fun.

Foster that fun with these simple counting activities:

- **Count with stickers.** Label index cards with numbers. Give your child small stickers and ask him to put three stickers on the card with number 3, and so on. As always, supervise your child when he plays with small objects.
- **Make number trees.** Cut out trees from brown and green construction paper. Then, cut out some “apples” from red construction paper. Label the

trunks of the trees with numbers and ask your child to put the correct number of apples in each tree.

- **Count with cars.** Label toy cars with numbers. Make garages out of small boxes and label those with the same numbers. Then, ask your child to put each car into the garage with the matching number. The number 1 car goes in the number 1 garage, and so on.

“Too often we give our children answers to remember rather than problems to solve.”

—Roger Lewin

Four ways to celebrate Earth Day with your preschooler



April 22, 2020 marks the 50th annual celebration of Earth Day. This is the perfect time to teach your preschooler about

the importance of protecting the environment.

Here are four ways to celebrate:

1. **Make a family commitment** to use less of Earth's precious resources. Have your child turn off the water when she brushes her teeth. Encourage her to turn off the lights when she leaves a room.
2. **Find new uses for old things.** No one has the space to keep *everything*. Converting a few things instead of throwing them out will teach your child about

repurposing. Reuse an empty jelly jar as a vase for flowers. Decorate paper bags to make book covers. Save plastic two-liter bottles for use as bowling pins.

3. **Use natural materials** to create art. Go on a walk to find pebbles, leaves, feathers, fallen flower petals—anything your child thinks is pretty or interesting. Bring them home to make a collage, or to add to a picture.
4. **Talk some trash.** What happens to things after we throw them away? Show your child a garbage truck and explain that it is hauling trash away to a big dump, called a landfill. Talk about some things we can do to keep landfills from getting too full, such as recycling.

Are you teaching your child how to follow rules?



Children who are expected to follow rules at home have an easier time following rules when they get to school. Answer *yes*

or *no* to the questions below to see if you are teaching your preschooler how to follow rules:

- ___ 1. **Do you make a few basic rules** that help life run smoothly? The list should be short so your child doesn't get confused or overwhelmed.
- ___ 2. **Do you follow routines** that help your child cooperate? Doing things the same way daily makes them easier for kids to remember.
- ___ 3. **Do you explain rules simply?** Be clear and specific. “Say *please* and *thank you*” is better than “Be polite.”
- ___ 4. **Do you always enforce rules?** Bending the rules confuses children.
- ___ 5. **Do you adjust rules** when your child is ready? As he matures, show pride and confidence in his new abilities.

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are doing a great job encouraging your child to respect rules. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Teach your child the difference between *telling* and *tattling*



Preschoolers love to tattle on each other.

Most parents, however, do not love to hear it.

And teachers, who may have 20 or more little tattlers in their classes, love it even less.

Here are some strategies you can use to break the tattling habit in your child:

- **Tell your child** you will listen only to *telling*, not to *tattling*. *Telling* is when your child comes to you with information that can keep another child from harm. For example, your child informs you that her two-year-old sister is playing with matches.

Tattling is when your child comes to you with information that can get another child into trouble. For

example, she informs you that her sister went into the cupboard and ate the rest of the cookies.

- **Reinforce the difference** between *telling* and *tattling* by always asking the same two questions when your preschooler tattles:

1. *Is somebody hurt?*

2. *Is somebody going to get hurt?*

If the answers are *no*, simply say, “No tattling,” and turn your attention to something else.

- **Offer empathy.** You can acknowledge your child’s feelings about what her sister did without punishing her sister for what you didn’t see. “I can tell how upset you are that your sister ate all of the cookies. I’d like to hear you use your words to tell *her* instead of me.”

Give your preschooler plenty of opportunities to solve problems



Your child has the ability to think. But how far he takes this ability will depend on how much practice

he gets. During the preschool years, no one is in a better position to stimulate your child’s thinking than you.

To provide your preschooler with opportunities to practice thinking and solving problems:

- **Help him anticipate.** Commanding “Put your toys away right now!” may in fact result in your child doing what you ask. But it doesn’t do much to engage his brain.

Instead, try, “I am going to set the timer for three minutes. I want you to get as many toys put away as you can before the timer rings.” Now

your child has time to think:

“It’s time to put the toys away. What should I put away first? Where should I put my toys?”

- **Question, question, question.** Few activities make your child think more than having to answer questions with more than one word. Make a habit of asking your child “Why?” You can even turn his “why” questions back on him. If he asks, “Why are you getting your umbrella?” ask him, “Why do you think?” Be sure to always use a friendly tone.
- **Do not run to the rescue.** If your child says, “I can’t get my shoe on,” don’t do it for him. Instead, give him a suggestion: “What would happen if you loosened the shoelaces?”

Q: On weekends, I spend most of my time playing with my four-year-old daughter. We read, do puzzles, play with blocks and go outside. However, I think it would be beneficial for her to play on her own a little bit, too. How can I encourage her to play independently?

Questions & Answers

A: You’re absolutely right. By the time a child is four, she is ready to learn to play on her own for short periods of time. Children often come up with some of their most creative moments when their parents are not hovering over them.

Try these strategies to boost independence and create a little space for your child:

- **Be there when she needs you.** If your preschooler *really* needs your attention, give it to her for a few minutes. Then suggest a fun activity she can do on her own. Most children play alone best after they spend some one-on-one time with parents.
- **Designate special toys, games and supplies** for your child to use during alone time. Hold back some favorites, such as a puzzle, paper and washable markers, or a box of old clothes for dress-up. Bring them out only when you want your daughter to entertain herself.
- **Let her work alongside you.** If your child wants to be with you, but you have work to do, let her do some “work” of her own. If you are paying bills, give her a notebook and crayons. If you are busy making dinner, give her a task she can work on at the kitchen table, such as matching and folding clean socks.

The Kindergarten Experience

Restock books with weekly trips to the library



It is wonderful to have a home library stocked for your kindergartner, but many families have neither the money nor the space for dozens of books. But with a weekly visit to the library, your child can have a fresh supply of free books.

Here are some tips to help you make the most of library trips:

- **Help your child** get his own library card. Getting him his own card will give him a sense of pride and make him even more excited to check out books.
- **Encourage your child** to bring a tote bag from home so he can carry the books he has selected to the front desk all by himself.
- **Decide ahead of time** how many books your child can take home. This will help you avoid power struggles at the check-out desk.
- **Review library rules.** Remind your child, “We use quiet voices so we don’t disturb others who are reading.”
- **Introduce your child** to the children’s librarian. Encourage him to ask her a question, such as, “Do you have books about animals?”
- **Find a spot** in the library to sit with your child after he has picked out some materials. Let him look through them and make his final selections.
- **Make sure your child** has a special place to keep his library books at home. Talk to him about the importance of taking good care of books so that other children can enjoy them, too.

Support your kindergartner’s oral language skills at home

Language is the bedrock of the kindergarten experience. Your child uses language to get and share information. She uses it to express her needs and process what she hears. Practicing oral skills can even help build a strong foundation for reading.

To strengthen your kindergartner’s language skills at home:

- **Give her opportunities to talk.** Offer your full attention and use eye contact and facial expressions to show interest.
- **Don’t finish her sentences** for her. If your gets stuck trying to think of a word, allow her the time she needs to think and express herself.
- **Expect her to listen** and look at you when you are speaking to her. Sometimes, have your child repeat back what you said.



- **Build her vocabulary.** Introduce new words in regular conversation. For example, “Thank you for helping me organize your toys for helping me organize your toys this afternoon. We had a very *productive* day today!”

Keep your child moving to improve thinking and memory



Exercise makes your child’s heart beat faster and increases oxygen to the brain. Research links this to improved thinking and memory.

To keep your child active:

- **Schedule regular times** for exercise and stick to them. Think about when your child is likely to have the most energy.
- **Take turns** choosing kinds of exercise. If your child loves soccer, for example, play at least once a week.
- **Plan activities** that make your child feel successful. Don’t play sports that require too much agility or are too hard for him.
- **Drive less** and exercise more. Brainstorm with your child about when driving is unnecessary. Could you walk to the library? Ride bikes to the store?
- **Use exercise** rather than food as a reward. “After you pick up your toys, we can go to the park.”
- **Monitor passive activities**—like playing video games or watching television. Balance that time with physically active play.
- **Keep an activity log.** It’s fun to look through it and see all the ways your family keeps active!