

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2015

Lexington School District One

## KID BITS



### Memory bag

Build memory skills with this easy activity. Show your child a small object, such as a yo-yo, and put it in a pillowcase. Have her add something—perhaps a block—and without peeking in the pillowcase, name the items. Take turns adding objects and naming all of them until someone forgets one. Then, dump out the pillowcase, and play again.

### Huddle up!

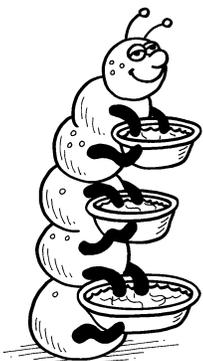
Family meetings can teach your youngster to problem-solve with others. Get everyone into a football-style huddle, and introduce a household problem. *Example:* “How could we waste less food?” Give each person a chance to share ideas (take smaller servings, remember to eat leftovers).

### Old toys = new toys

Where’s that toy garage or farm that your child hasn’t played with in ages? Every now and then, rotate his toys so he plays with a variety of things. He may find creative ways to use toys he hasn’t seen in a while. *Idea:* Encourage him to donate those he has outgrown or is no longer interested in.

### Worth quoting

“All people smile in the same language.”  
*Anonymous*



### Just for fun

**Q:** What’s worse than a giraffe with a sore throat?

**A:** A centipede with sore feet.

## Number of the day

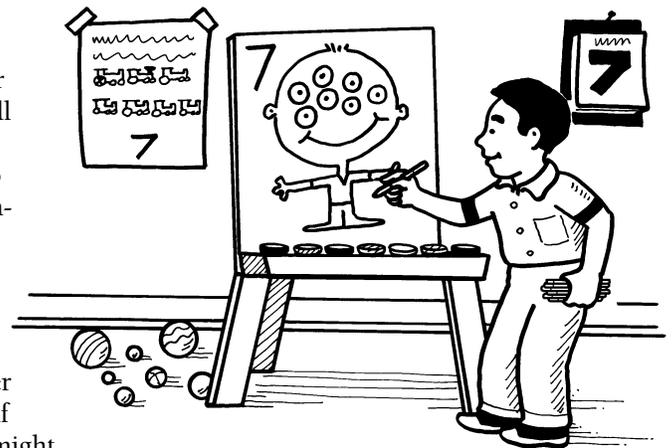
“I have 8 grapes on my plate.” “Look—it’s 8 o’clock!” Have your youngster pick a number to explore each day. You’ll help him develop number sense—the ability to understand and use numbers. Try these ideas.

### Recognize it

When you’re out, ask your child to point out the number wherever he sees it. For instance, if today’s number is 2, he might notice it on a license plate (LSJ492). Suggest that he carry a small notebook and pencil and make a tally mark each time he spots the numeral. At the end of your trip, he can count the tally marks to see how many times he saw 2.

### Count it

When your youngster counts, he is learning that each number stands for a specific amount. Have him count people or objects that equal the number of the day. If the number is 5, he could count 5 people at a restaurant table, 5 ants



crawling on the ground, or 5 bushes in your yard.

### Play with it

Fit the number of the day into your child’s play time. If he’s drawing, and the number is 7, you might ask him to give his monster 7 eyes. Or when he plays with his railroad track, tell him to show you 7 trains. *Idea:* Have him separate the 7 trains into groups to see what numbers make up 7 (for instance, 5 trains + 2 trains or 3 trains + 4 trains).♥

## Laugh fest

Laughing together brings families closer and reduces day-to-day stress. Here are ways to include laughter in your child’s day:

- Spice up dinnertime or time spent waiting by reading riddle books or telling jokes you remember from when you were little.

- Hold a silly face contest. Count how many different funny faces you and your youngster can make. Also, try calling out, “Face freeze!” and see who holds a goofy face the longest.

- Sit opposite each other, and stare into each other’s eyes. But there’s one rule: No one can smile or laugh. Chances are you’ll both break down laughing in no time!♥



# Stick with it

It's important for youngsters to have *grit*—the determination and persistence to keep trying instead of quitting when something is difficult. The following suggestions can teach your child to persevere.

**Learn-it list.** Would your youngster like to learn to catch a ball or draw more realistic animals? Help her make a list of challenges she wants to take on. Every time she works



toward one, she could draw a star beside the item. When she accomplishes her goal, have her mark it off and add a new one. She'll see how practice and perseverance help her improve.

**Plan B (and C, and D...).** Kids who have grit see “mess ups” as opportunities to learn. If your child keeps missing the ball or gets frustrated and crumples up her drawing, encourage her to take a break and then try a different

approach. She might say, “Throw the ball again, and I'll hold my hands closer together.” Or she can focus on what she likes about a drawing—and practice the parts she needs to work on. (“I like my horse's face and tail, but I need to make his legs thinner.”)♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER My post office



Making and delivering “mail” lets your youngster practice reading and writing.

**1.** 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”).



**2.** 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.)

**3.** 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.

**4.** Help your child read his mail. Then, reply to each other's messages—and send more mail!♥

## Q & A Is phone play okay?

**Q:** My daughter always wants to play with my cell phone. Should I let her?

**A:** When young children spend time looking at a screen, they miss out on the world around them and the opportunity to learn from it.

To make your phone less tempting, keep it out of sight (and out of mind). Instead, offer your daughter a shoebox filled with items that invite her to discover her world. For example, provide a pair of toy binoculars, sit together on the front porch, and ask what plants or buildings she can see. Or include a big magnet, and have her find things it will stick to. Save the box for those times when you're tempted to let her use your phone.

*Note:* Experts recommend less than two hours of screen time per day for children this age—and that includes phone play.♥



## PARENT TO PARENT An indoor adventure

My son Adam's preschool teacher sent home a list of skills the kids are working on as they get ready for kindergarten. One category that caught my eye was “large motor,” including things like balance, strength, and coordination.

So I suggested to Adam that we make an indoor obstacle course. We put a strip of masking tape on the kitchen floor

to walk on and pillows on the family room floor to jump over. Then, we wore a giant web for him to wriggle under by crisscrossing birthday streamers around and over our living room furniture.

Adam had a blast—and so did I. Next we're planning to make an obstacle course outside. I'm happy because this is getting him to use his thinking skills, as well as his large motor ones!♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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