



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

## Learning the neighborhood

To help your children learn important information about where they live, make it a game.

In addition to knowing their own addresses, they can learn your neighbor's names, which house they live in, and where kids can go in the neighborhood if they need help.

To make the game interesting, kids can draw a map showing which children live where and finally, color the houses on the block – the correct color for each one. □



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Social Skills

## Building trust in children

How can you encourage trust in your child?

- Keep your promises. To begin with, make only promises you can keep. Suppose your son wants you to take him to the zoo on Saturday, but you know you may be called to work that day.

Explain the predicament. Reassure him that you do want to take him to the zoo, and set a definite date when you will go, regardless of what comes up.

- When the answer to a request is no, explain why. If your child asks for something you don't want him to have, be honest with him and yourself.

One child asked to go to a video arcade. His parent didn't approve of video arcades but was tempted to soften her negative answer by saying, "Not today, dear." If she had said that, her son would have reached the conclusion that on another day, she might allow him to go.

Instead they discussed her reasons for the decision and planned some alternative activities, which he might enjoy.

- Answer honestly. Try to answer all questions honestly. Choose words to suit the child's level of understanding.

For example, when a four-year-old asks what the moon is

made of, it isn't necessary to launch into geological terms and explanations. A simple answer about rock and sand will be easy for her to understand. If she needs more information, she'll ask.

- Don't evade. Sometimes we're tempted to give our children evasive answers because we're afraid they won't grasp our meaning or they may be upset by the answer.

Death and sex, for example, are both topics that make parents uneasy. Both are realities about which all children must learn eventually.

Protecting a child from learning about the experience of death may hinder his ability to cope with the experience in the future.

Holding back information about his sexual nature won't prevent your child from misusing it. The less he knows, the more likely he is to have problems. When appropriate, share your knowledge and values.

This doesn't mean to tell children everything you know about these topics, but you can answer questions simply and truthfully.

- Admit shortcomings. When you don't know the answer to a question, admit it, and then offer to find out. The reality is that no one has all the right answers. □

## ‘You can’t tell me what to do!’

If you have a preschooler in any kind of childcare arrangement, you may hear sometime that the child was “fresh, impudent, rude and insulting” or something to that effect.

This happens to single parents raising their children alone. It happens to two-parent families where both parents work, and it happens to families where one parent is at home most of the time and the childcare is only occasional.

Why? It’s because preschoolers feel that their parents—their mothers especially—are the only ones who have the right to correct them.

Mother and father have the right to “make me do things,” to talk to children about “wrong” things they’ve done, and to tell children what they can and can’t do. But children sometimes resist this mightily from anyone other than their parents.

When caregivers—or even close relatives—take on these rights, children react—quickly. And this reaction is logical to a child. “They” are not the authority: mom and dad are.

While it doesn’t seem right that the child should get by with such “smart backtalk,” punishment by the caregiver will not be logical to the kids. They believe that parents, the authorities, should give punishment.

When you learn of such a situation, don’t correct the child with an angry reaction. Try to keep your relationship with your child intact. Withhold judgment until you’ve had a chance to find

out the whole story.

Remember, the incident will have happened long enough before you and your child see each other again. As far as the youngster is concerned, it never happened.

A conference with the caregiver to exchange information about your child’s present behavior and needs may be helpful. It may help to explain to the child that when she is at home, her parents are in charge.

In the same way, at childcare, when a parent can’t be there,

another adult may sometimes need to make choices and decisions and direct her behavior. That person is concerned about her safety and wellbeing.

You also could tell your child that that person must not only be responsible for her, but for the welfare and wellbeing of the rest of the children. Therefore, the caregiver may need to take on some of the same type of authority as the parents.

Remember, this type of behavior is temporary, and it will pass. □

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## Developmental

### Sex education begins in the home

Sometime around 3-1/2 years, children may acquire an interest in the facts of life. From that time on, parents can expect questions.

The best advice for parents is to answer the questions simply but truthfully. Good sex education begins in the home.

Children at this age don’t want the whole story of sex and conception. But they do want some simple answers to their questions.

When they ask, “Where does a baby come from?” tell them it grows in a special place inside the mother.

Then you should expect further questions like, “How does the baby get inside?” or “How does it get outside of the mother?”

Children have a natural curiosity about where babies come from. Reassurance from a parent — “A seed was in the mother all of the time” —will usually suffice as an answer for preschoolers.

As for how baby gets out, a conventional answer (such as, “When the baby is old enough to be born, a special opening for just this purpose is readied for baby to come out”) will be accepted.

The concern is that the children’s curiosity at this time be satisfied without burdening them with information beyond their understanding. □

## Number of the day

Here's a fun way to introduce the idea that numbers can stand for a quantity. It can be an introduction for numbers for young children, and practice for older learners.

To start, pick a number for the day — let's say it's three.

So, for today, look for the number three in headlines, books, articles, signs and so forth. Point these out to your child and tell her, "There's a three."

If you're getting ready to eat cookies or grapes, count out three and say, "Here are three grapes: one, two, three."

During the day look for natural places where the number will occur: three buttons on a coat; three birds sitting on a wire; three fingers; three people at a bus stop. Point out these groups.

Don't expect perfection, and don't hold a quiz at the end of the day. Just enjoy this little game of looking, listening, matching and counting, wherever you are.

In a few days, pick another number and start over.

It's the way kids learn. □

### Something New!

"Grandma Says" is a twice-monthly special message that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children's book reviews. To receive your free issues, go to: [www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays](http://www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays) and enter your e-mail address.

## Encouraging Youngster's special gifts

One of the best ways to encourage and support a youngster's development of her talents is to be careful not to discourage it.

There are so many off-hand comments, made without thinking, that can turn off a child's excitement and interest in an activity. And once turned off, it's hard to rekindle again.



Here are some of the kinds of "roadblocks to creativity" to watch out for:

(a) "Don't bother me now. I'm too busy to look at your picture."

(b) "What's this mess? Didn't I tell you to stay out of the kitchen?"

(c) "That's for girls (boys). I don't want to see you do that again."

(d) "That's a what?" What is this stupid, (ugly, weird) thing?"

(e) "Is that the best you can do?"

(f) "That's nice" (said without interest or even noticing what the child is showing you).

(g) "That's not the way to do it." "That doesn't look right."

(h) "Why can't you do it like your sister (brother, cousin)?"

We all have busy times and we have our moments of impatience and annoyance with our children, no matter how much we love them.

It's hard to be alert to the effects of our reactions (or non-reactions) to Youngster's every word and deed. But it's worth the effort because parents' opinions are so very important to Youngster.

With parents' help and encouragement, Youngster can develop her special gifts to their fullest. □

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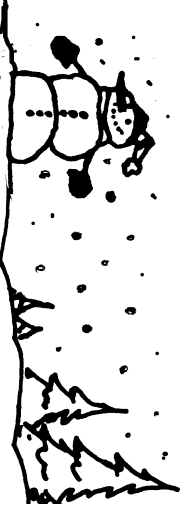



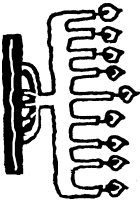



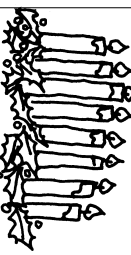


Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

[www.growingchild.com](http://www.growingchild.com)

# December, 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1</p> <p>Go outside and look for five birds.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Play with magnets on the refrigerator. NO small pieces for little ones.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Look for things outside that are unique to winter.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>How many nursery rhymes do you know? What's your favorite?</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Try a different kind of pizza.</p>	
<p>6</p> <p>Cut a grapefruit in half, scoop out the inside, fill with birdseed and set outside.</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>How much water can you hold in your hands?</p>	<p>8</p> <p>How many different colors can you name?</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>What games can you play outside?</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Draw a special holiday picture and hang it for everyone to see.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Hanukkah.</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>Make a donation of food or time to a local food pantry or soup kitchen. Talk about how this helps other people.</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Take a cheer basket to a shut-in. Sing a carol or two.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Talk about the animals that live where there is lots of snow.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Talk to each other through a paper towel tube.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Warm up some applesauce for a special treat.</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Have a conversation with the baby. Repeat every sound she makes.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Day of Hai.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Take a nighttime walk or drive and look at the lights and decorations.</p>
<p>20</p> <p>Go to an outdoor park where you have lots of room to run and play.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>First day of winter.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Read a poem out loud: "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Count your toes. How many are on your left foot? How many are on your right foot? How many are there all together?</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Go outside and look for some icicles. What color are they?</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Merry Christmas!</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Kwanzaa begins.</p>
<p>27</p> <p>Has it snowed? If so, build a snowman or a snow fort, or a snow family.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Can you find the color green on any of your toys?</p> 	<p>29</p> <p>What color is your toothbrush?</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Sing a lullaby before going to bed.</p> 	<p>31</p> <p>New Year's Eve. Make a special hat to wear.</p> 