

Tips for Interacting With Your Child

Young children are constantly learning — everything is new to them. Here are some adult-child interaction strategies that will help foster children's active learning and development.

- **Join children in their play.** Get on the floor with children, join them at a table or in the sandbox, play games with them — become engaged in what they are doing!
- **Imitate what the children are doing; that is, play with the same materials in the same way as the children.** For example, an adult gives Emma a portion of play dough that has marbles hidden inside. Emma squeezes the dough with both hands. The adult also squeezes the dough with both hands.
- **Make observations and comments about what you see the children doing.** While watching Emma squeeze the play dough with the marbles hidden inside, the adult comments, "It looks like you have lots of marbles in your dough." Emma responds, "Yeah, and I am going to pick them out and line 'em up."
- **Ask open-ended questions, but ask them sparingly.** Open-ended questions encourage children to talk more, because these types of questions cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. For example, an adult lays out puzzle pieces and asks Nathan, "What do you think this puzzle picture might be?" Nathan responds, "I think it's a bear because...look...it's furry." Rather than asking more questions about why Nathan thinks it looks furry, the adult waits until he completes the puzzle and comments, "It looks like you were right; it is a big, grizzly bear." Questions can help get a conversation going, but it is more important not to overwhelm a child with too many questions.
- **Follow children's pace and interests.** Belinda was measuring the number of giant steps to the garage at her grandma's house. She then turned around at the garage door and decided to make "tiptoe" steps to the sidewalk. Her grandma followed Belinda by making tiptoe steps to the sidewalk.

Active Learning at Home Throughout the Day

Just as children engage in active learning throughout the preschool daily routine, parents can incorporate learning into different parts of the day at home. For example, you can do the following:

- Engage your child in early math experiences by having him or her help you match socks when you take the laundry out of the dryer.
- Count various items – fruit in the fruit bowl, toys on the shelf, or even mosquito bites on an ankle!
- Foster early literacy experiences by making a grocery list together.
- Name colors on packages when you do grocery shopping together.
- Remember to use transitions between activities as opportunities for learning. For example, if children are playing in the living room and it's time to clean up before the evening meal, you might suggest children choose what way they want to move as they put toys away — for example, move like an animal, dance, jump, skip, tiptoe.
- Have fun together!

How to Read With Your Child

- 1. Read slowly and naturally.** Pronounce the words carefully.
- 2. Read with interest.** Make your voice expressive. If you are interested, your child will be, too.
- 3. Use different voices.** Give different voices or other qualities to the different characters in the story. Let your child come up with different voices.
- 4. Follow the words with your finger.** This shows your child that spoken words can be represented as written words. Your child will learn to associate the sounds of speech with specific letters and letter combinations.
- 5. Pause in your reading and encourage your child to talk about the pictures, story, and characters.** Answer your child's questions. Ask your child to predict what will happen or to imagine different events or endings for the book.
- 6. Follow up on what you've just read.** Give your child drawing materials to illustrate events or characters of the book. Encourage your child to act out parts of the book or do things the way a character might. Visit the kinds of places and do the kinds of things that appear in the book. Make up stories and play games that build on the book's ideas.