Grow responsibility on Earth Day

Earth Day is celebrated on April 22. You can use this day to begin teaching your child about responsibility for our planet. Many activities are simple and free. Here are some ideas:

- **Teach your child** to turn off the lights and TV when leaving a room. Have your child be the “reminder” for the family.
- **Ask your child** to help you sort items to recycle from the trash.
- **Keep a small cup** in the bathroom. Teach your child to fill it with water before she brushes her teeth. She can use the water in the cup to rinse out her mouth—rather than leave the water running while she brushes.
- **Consider putting tap water** in reusable bottles instead of buying water in plastic bottles.
- **Plant something together**. Use seeds to plant flowers or vegetables, outdoors if you can or indoors in a container.
- **Hang reusable shopping bags** on a hook your child can reach. Ask your child to be in charge of carrying them along when you head out to go shopping.
- **Participate in a clean-up day**. Many communities plan these to celebrate Earth Day. If you can’t find one near you, rally neighbors to clean up a section of your own neighborhood or block.


Let your child know you won’t respond to whining

Whining irritates everyone. But if parents respond, children will keep trying it. To curb your child’s desire to whine:

- **Model the difference** between whining and an appropriate tone.
- **Be firm** and say, “I’m sorry, I don’t understand whining.”
- **Respond quickly** when your child remembers his appropriate voice.


A secret hideaway can boost kids’ independence

Young children strive for independence. (That’s why they say no so often.) Why not create a secret hideaway for your child? Drape a blanket over chairs to make a “cave.” Tell your child it’s his own special place to play. When he wants company, he’ll probably let you know.

Have fun ‘writing’ letters

Recognizing letters is an important step toward reading. To make it fun:

- **Give your child** tasty supplies to create letters, such as circle-shaped crackers and straight pretzels.
- **Have your child** follow a flashlight beam as you use it to write letters on the wall. Give her a turn writing, too.
- **Draw a circle** or line. Let your child add to it to make a letter. Switch roles.

Source: J. Silberg, Reading Games for Young Children, Gryphon House, Inc.
Q: I’m worried about my son’s social skills. His preschool teacher agrees that he is a little behind, but that with more social time, he should catch up. I’d like him to be successful when he gets to kindergarten. How can I help?

A: You’re right about the importance of social skills. Kindergarten teachers never worry about whether their students can read or write on the first day. Their first interest is whether a child has the social and emotional skills needed to support his or her learning.

Sending your child to preschool is a great start. You might also consider a playgroup. Or invite other children to your home (one at a time). Here are some social goals to keep in mind:

• **Taking turns and sharing.** If your child has trouble, try setting a timer. When it goes off, he should hand the toy to his friend.

• **Following rules.** State rules ahead of time. "We put our toys in the toy box before we watch TV." Enforce all rules consistently.

• **Using self-control.** Work with your child to say, “I’m sad” or “I’m angry,” instead of crying or hitting.

• **Playing alone or with others.** Your child should be able to play without having you right next to him. He should also work on inviting others to play. For example, "Want to play trucks?"

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**Teaching about winning & losing promotes fairness**

Teachers who work with young children make an effort to keep things fair. This can be difficult for a child who always wants to win or be first. Here's how you can help:

• **Tell your child** if she had fun, she succeeded, whether she finished first or last.

• **Teach your child** to say, “I’ll try again another time.”

• **Encourage your child** to always be proud of herself if she gave her best.

Source: N. Samalin, Loving Without Spoiling, McGraw Hill.

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**Look ahead to the summer**

The school year isn’t over yet—but the end is starting to seem pretty close. And children need to keep learning over the summer. If they don’t, they may suffer a learning loss.

Now is the perfect time to ask your child’s teacher for ideas to keep your child learning all summer long. You’ll be able to plan ahead, and your child’s teacher won’t be as busy now with end-of-year issues.

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**Relationships with parents boost children’s motivation**

Studies show the closer kids feel to their parents, the more motivated they are to learn.

To maintain a close relationship with your child, show him you’re interested in his life. Ask specific questions about preschool. Did his teacher read a story? What did he do when playing outside?

When kids feel connected and supported, they’re more likely to make better grades in elementary school and beyond. So set a strong foundation now, in preschool!

Source: D. Stipek and K. Seal, Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning, Henry Holt and Company.

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**Are you enjoying time at the library?**

The library is an amazing resource, but sometimes families don’t realize how to take full advantage of it. Answer the following questions yes or no to see if you’re enjoying all the library has to offer:

1. **Have you requested** a schedule of activities for young children?

2. **Do you ask** librarians for suggestions for books your child is likely to enjoy?

3. **Do you check out** audio books for use at home and on trips?

4. **Do you look** for different kinds of reading material, such as child-friendly magazines?

5. **Do you attend** story hour for your child’s age group?

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**Q&A How can parents work on children’s social skills?**

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**Parent Quiz Are you enjoying time at the library?**

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