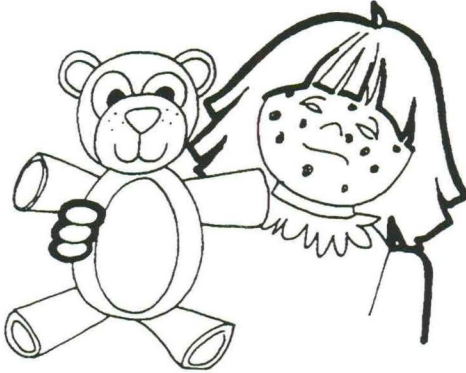
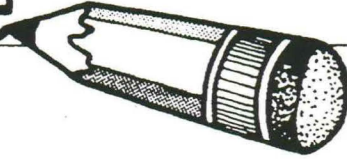


# Parenting Pipeline

a newsletter for parents of **kindergarten** children



## Childhood Diseases

Your child's age, habits, and classroom surroundings lead to contact with a variety of germs that affect his or her health.

Kindergarten children can learn to combat various germs with cleanliness. You can begin to teach your child general information about communicable diseases. You might say, "Germs are tiny, invisible creatures that make us sick. Germs travel from one person to another. Some can be washed away when we wash our hands, hair, and bodies. It's important to wash after using the bathroom and before we eat. Some germs can be killed with medicine from your doctor or by getting a shot..."

Prevention is the best treatment. Before your child came to school, he or she was immunized for protection against many childhood diseases. Parents should keep an up-to-date record of when and where the immunizations occurred.

### Chicken Pox

Chicken pox is a viral disease characterized by skin eruptions. It begins with a rash accompanied by measles-like eruptions or lesions. These skin eruptions appear mostly on the trunk of the body, but may appear anywhere. They develop in crops every three to four days and produce tiny blisters that leave a scab. Fresh lesions may begin to appear as others scab over.

The lesions progress to crusting within 24 to 48 hours. Some will just begin to heal or scab over when a new batch appears. High fever, headaches, swelling of lymph glands, severe itching, and discomfort are common symptoms. Most children will have the last lesions crusted within five to 10 days after onset of the disease.

Your child should remain home until the last lesions are crusted to prevent passing the disease to others. The disease takes seven to 21 days to appear after a child has been exposed to it. Treatment includes the following:

- Call doctor to confirm it is chicken pox.
- Apply calamine lotion, soda baths, something equivalent to Benadryl for the itching.
- Pat body dry — do not rub.
- Use Acetaminophen to reduce fever — DO NOT use aspirin. Aspirin use can result in Reye's Syndrome.
- Get plenty of bed rest.
- Wash hands often.
- Consult doctor if child's temperature remains high, complains of neckache, or seems confused or lethargic.



A vaccine for chicken pox has been developed and has Federal Drug Administration approval. Check with your doctor for its availability.

### Colds

Your kindergartner will be exposed to COLD germs daily. Teach the importance of:

- Covering the mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing.
- Disposing of soiled tissues properly.
- Using his or her own glass.
- Using soap and hot water to wash hands after every sneeze and every time tissue is used.

Because there is no cure for a cold, help make your child's cold as tolerable as possible. Provide fresh air, balanced meals, and fluids, and see that your child gets exercise and lots of sleep. Avoid chilling, overheating and dampness, not because they cause colds, but because they lower the body's resistance and ability to fight infections.

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### Impetigo

Impetigo is a bacterial skin infection most often seen around the lip, nose, and ears, but it can be anywhere on the body. It's caused by common skin organisms that are carried in the nose and on the skin.

The rash starts as small blisters that break out and crust over to become yellow-brown scabs that look like brown sugar. It is rarely serious, but highly contagious and should be treated at once.

- It is spread by direct contact — keep your child away from school until seen by a doctor and treated, usually with antibiotic creams and oral medications.
- Avoid touching the area.
- Proper hand washing is a must.
- Avoid common use of towels and toilet articles.
- Dispose of wound dressings in a safe and careful manner.
- It's more common among younger children in warm weather and among the chronically ill.

### Diarrhea

Loose and numerous bowel movements are embarrassing and uncomfortable to kindergartners.

- They are caused by intestinal organisms.
- Disease is spread from contact with fecal material.
- Thorough hand washing after bathroom use is essential.
- Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day.
- Missing school is necessary for child's comfort.

### Pinkeye

Pinkeye or conjunctivitis is the infection or inflammation of the thin membrane that covers the eyeball and lines the inside of the eyelid. The white part of the eye becomes more red and produces a mucous that is

sticky and builds up. It often dries on the eyelashes at night and eyes are "stuck together" by morning. It is the most common eye disease in the United States and spreads easily among children and families.

- It's spread by contact with eye discharge.
- Use a clean cloth each time you cleanse the eye.
- Visit the doctor to get prescription antibiotics.
- Keep your child at home to prevent spreading the disease. Follow doctor's advice for return to school.
- Pinkeye usually clears up in 10 to 14 days, sooner with medication and prompt medical attention.

### Fifth Disease

Fifth Disease usually occurs during the winter and spring months. It usually affects children age five to 14 years. Its cause is unknown. The disease comes as a bright red rash that tends to appear, disappear, and reappear. It usually begins on the face and spreads to other parts of the body. After one week, the rash usually fades. There may be no other symptoms, or it may be accompanied by low-grade fever, headache, gastrointestinal symptoms, and lack of energy. Non-aspirin tablets may reduce discomfort.

### Fever

Fever indicates an infection in the body. Its purpose is to allow the body to kill infectious organisms. An oral thermometer (with a long thin bulb) will probably be most acceptable to your kindergartner; 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit

indicates normal temperature. Everyone has daily variations in body temperature with daily highs between 4 and 6 p.m. Fever increases the speed at which the body works — good nourishment is needed. OFFER FLUIDS OFTEN.



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File: Family life 8

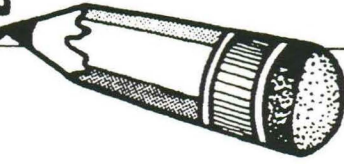
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# Parenting Pipeline

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## Developing Good Health Habits

Kindergarten children have a hard time thinking about abstract things such as the state of their health. Children may not understand that they must eat right when they're young so they will be healthy as they get older.

### Fitness and Food

The United States has been a country with a wealth of food. As a result, we also have a large proportion of young children who are overweight. Although it is wrong to put a child on a restrictive diet without advice from his or her doctor, it is important to establish healthy eating habits from the beginning.

The food your child eats is important to provide energy, to repair worn out cells, and to make new cells. Your child's health depends on your guidance and example. As you take a few minutes to reflect on the status of your child's health and eating habits, remember to reflect on your own! The example you set is the most powerful indicator of the habits your child will develop.

No single food has all the nutrients in the amounts needed by your child. As a result, it is important for your child to eat a variety of food every day.

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## Snacks

When your child arrives home from school, or comes in from play, he or she may appear tired and sluggish. The right kind of snack can satisfy a child between meals without "spoiling" the appetite.

Snacks are good for children, but a constant supply of junk food snacks is not good. An occasional treat or non-nutritional food is not a problem, but sending chips and candy every day for milk break and for after-school snacks can be harmful.

Good snack choices might include:

1. Breads, muffins and cereal, which provide fiber, energy, vitamins, and minerals.
2. Fruits and vegetables, which provide vitamins and minerals for good general health. Other foods, such as honey, molasses, and sugar can provide carbohydrates for extra energy.

## Name Your Snack

You might like to post a list of acceptable snacks for your kindergartner and have him or her "name a snack" when hunger strikes. Some possible suggestions for this list might be:

- Build a sundae with low-fat frozen yogurt, fresh fruit, and chopped nuts.
- Make cheese pops by poking pretzels into cheese cubes.
- Stir up a dip using 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese, 1/4 cup mayonnaise, 1 teaspoon dill weed, and 1 teaspoon dried onion. Serve with raw vegetables as dippers.
- Use frozen banana chunks, seedless grapes, strawberries, blueberries, pineapple chunks, and melon balls for refreshing snacks on a warm day.
- Make a quick-and-easy pizza using a split English muffin spread with prepared spaghetti sauce, topped with grated mozzarella cheese and microwaved until bubbly.
- Use whole-grain cereals as a topping for yogurt, or mixed with sunflower seeds, pretzels, and raisins for a take-along-snack mix or eaten straight out of the box.
- Make a simple, anytime snack with string cheese.
- Fix frozen waffles topped with plain yogurt and your favorite berries.
- Pour a bowl of whole-grain breakfast cereal anytime, not just in the morning.

- Sprinkle a hot bowl of soup with cheese or croutons.
- Stuff carrot sticks, raisins, or celery with peanut butter or cheese.

## Body Care

People need adequate exercise, otherwise their bodies cannot absorb and use nutrients in food. Muscle tone and body functions improve with good diet and regular exercise. Your child needs to get out and run, bike, skateboard, roller-skate, and have fun! As adults, we tend to think of this as “just playing.” But this activity is very important to both large muscle and fine muscle development.

People also need adequate rest. If your kindergartner appears tired and run down, it may be related to his or her sleeping habits. Think about the pace your child has been keeping in the past week. Talk about ways the body tells us when it’s overtired.

Your kindergartner is now exposed to a variety of people in a variety of places. Since handwashing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infections, it is important to teach your child how to wash and to remind him or her to wash often. Children learn best by doing. Go with your child to the bathroom to help in establishing good habits. Most children love to wash and play with soap — they just don’t remember to do it! The following list of tips can become a part of their routine:

- Use soap in a dispenser. Cake soap becomes contaminated and serves as a source of infection.

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- Wet both hands and wrists well with warm water.
- Lather on the soap, palms first, but don’t forget the backs of hands and wrists.
- Scrub and scrub for at least 30 seconds, taking time to clean between the fingers.
- Rinse and dry completely.

## Choosing Styles

Your child may have been willing to agree in the past with most of your ideas about hairstyles and clothes. This may be changing. Kindergartners will react to the influences of their peers and teachers. They will think about how they fit in and try to find a comfortable position for themselves. Although it is important to encourage your child to dress sensibly and within the limits of your budget, it also is important to allow your child to make some decisions on personal styles.

When it comes to styles, most of the fads children go through are not life-threatening! If you let your child make some choices now, you will have saved your energy for the more critical choices that you will face down the road. Your child also will learn about decision making on his or her own. After all, your child’s peers will be more likely to point out when an outfit doesn’t match or the hair isn’t perfectly combed.

Good health habits are taught by your example and by you taking time to show and explain how to do it. Taking time to establish good health habits now will be a valuable investment in your child’s future.

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# Parenting Pipeline

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## Friends

“Mom, can Bobby come over and play?”

Sometimes you may feel you’ve heard that question one too many times.

However, friends are an important part of a kindergartner’s life. The degree of popularity or isolation children feel can affect their self-esteem and social skills. Often times, relationships with friends are similar to those with siblings — best friends one minute, enemies the next.

What about popularity? There’s so much emphasis placed on popularity that having only a few friends may seem like a failure. However, parents sometimes make more of the situation than the child. Don’t confuse quantity with quality. Children with a few friends aren’t necessarily lonely or social outcasts, and the number of friends varies considerably at this age. Respect the level of sociability your child chooses.

You can help your child make friends more easily:

- Do some role playing at home with your child. Together, think of questions that lead to conversation and activity with others. Use dolls, puppets, and books on friendship topics.

- Encourage your child to bring a friend home after school occasionally.
- Encourage your child to say hello every day to an unknown schoolmate.
- Teach your child to make eye contact and to smile when talking with others.
- Get together with others who have children near the age of your own child. Doing something specific as a group — picnic, zoo visit, bicycling — will relax the kids more than sending them out to play while the adults talk.
- Help your child learn good ways to talk to others. Try this little game: you say something negative (“that sweater is funny looking”) and have your child come back with something positive (“well, I like this sweater — my grandma made it for me”). Then switch roles — and have fun with it, because kids love to be silly while learning. Not only will your child learn good responses to teasing (still a big part of childhood), but this exercise can help develop a more positive outlook in general. Ignoring some teasing is a helpful skill to teach.
- Trust your child’s taste in friends. Unless there’s something dangerous (like drugs), tolerate your child’s friends. And if your child doesn’t like your best friend’s child, accept it. You may be disappointed that they don’t get along, but it’s not fair to insist that youngsters enjoy each other’s company, no matter how convenient for you.

Peers are important. They teach each other things about life that parents never could. They provide emotional support and teach acceptable behavior. It’s largely through a child’s interaction with peers that some of life’s most important attitudes and behaviors are shaped.

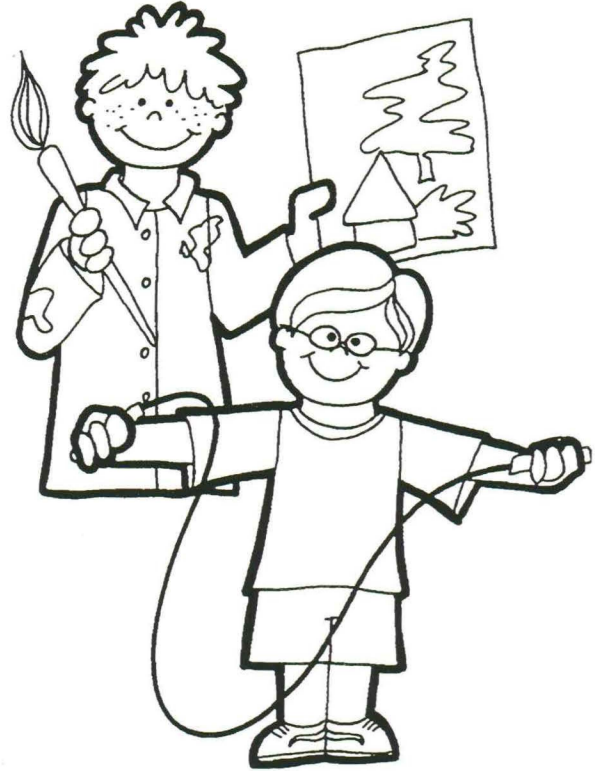
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## The Power of Play

Children today grow up in a rapidly changing world filled with pressure to succeed in all areas. They have less time and opportunity to play and “just be kids” than children of previous generations. However, research confirms the importance of play in the development of children.

- **Physical development.** Because play often involves physical activity, it's closely related to the development of children's motor skills and body awareness.
- **Psychosocial development.** As social beings, we all need to belong and feel part of a group. Play provides experiences needed to learn social skills and to share power, space, and ideas with others.
- **Cognitive (thinking) development.** Studies show that play can improve planning skills, problem-solving abilities, academic skills, attitudes, and language development.

How do children like to play? Kindergartners begin by building and creating with objects, taking on roles, and using props. They'll move on to formal and informal games with their peers (hopscotch, jump rope, etc.). Imitative play and freedom to use paints and blank paper instead of coloring books are helpful to the development of creativity.



Sometimes play seems like chaos. Arguments over which game to play and what rules to follow seem to take up a lot of time. We'd like to step in and organize it all so they have more time to play. However, it's best if we don't interfere. Left to themselves, children develop their abilities to reason, to judge, to weigh arguments, and to get along with others.

Play teaches many important skills and lessons for life. Build time into your child's schedule for play.

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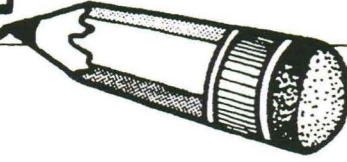
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# Parenting Pipeline

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## School Days . . . Ready or Not?

Children are ALWAYS in a state of change regarding their knowledge, skills, experiences, and understanding. School readiness is not something a child does or does not have. It is an ongoing process.

Readiness is a child's ability at a given time to perform activities and take part in processes. Readiness is a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development at a particular time. A child's level of readiness in August will be different than what it is in December, and so on.

Adults need to be reminded that it's OK for children to be at different levels. A child's uniqueness should be welcomed and accepted. A group of children will always show a variety of readiness levels.

In a quality kindergarten program, the learning opportunities vary so that all children find challenges to their current level of development. Some may learn to read, but that will not be expected of everyone. Kindergarten is not the place where "school" learning begins. It's a continuation of the real learning that has been going on for children every waking moment of their lives. A quality kindergarten focuses on what the child is currently able to do. Children have the right to experiences that meet their current needs and interests. Children should be welcomed and warmly received regardless of their stage of development.

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## Recommended Standards

To assist schools, the National Association of Elementary School Principals has developed recommended standards that are very similar to those outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The recommendations include:

- Schools should be ready for the child and not expect the child to be ready for the school; early childhood programs must be based on the ways children learn, not on how adults prefer to teach.
- Since young children learn best through direct sensory encounters, learning should be the outcome of hands-on experience, especially play.
- Children should be assigned to classes as close to recommended class sizes as possible: ratios of 2:20 for three- to five-year-olds, and 1:15 for six- to eight-year-olds.
- Children should be assessed and measured by observation, not tested for success or failure. Letter grades should not be used.
- Children will learn more quickly if they have been read to, have acted out what they have learned, have touched the objects described, have seen some of the places or people described, and so forth.

## Standard Questions

Think about the following questions and how your child is progressing. No child should be expected to accomplish each of these items perfectly before kindergarten or first grade. Can your child:

- Be away from you all day without being upset?
- Pay attention to a short story when it is read and answer questions about it?
- Create things with paper, colors, scissors, markers, and glue (it is NOT important to stay in the lines!)?
- Tie a knot, bow, or scarf?
- Repeat simple messages?
- Remember instructions and carry out two or three tasks after being told once?
- Put a simple puzzle together?
- Draw a picture of a person that includes the head, body, arms, and legs?
- Draw or copy shapes?
- Visit comfortably with others outside the family?
- Tell his/her phone number, address, birthday?
- Identify several colors?
- Try to write or copy letters and numbers?
- Admit he/she doesn't know or needs help?

## Assess Your Child

You know your child best. Your child's teacher, counselor, pediatrician, and school psychologist (or a private child psychologist) know about children and the school setting. Together, you can talk about what is best for your child.

If you are concerned about your child's readiness for first grade, you can ask for more information from your school counselor and classroom teacher. For more serious concerns, you can have your child evaluated by the school psychologist. This is not a test that children pass or fail. It is a measurement of your child's development.

An evaluation measures readiness skills and behavior, such as language, independence, impulse control, interpersonal skills, background experiences, and physical and mental health. These items are important for success in school. Each child's progress should be measured through observation, recorded at regular times, and reported to parents.

Children progress at their own rate; each child is unique. Parents and schools guide this process. An evaluation will give you information about your child that will help you support your child.

Because children progress differently, they should be allowed to progress in all areas of the curriculum as they acquire competence. Retention often is avoided because it may lower children's self-esteem.

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## Support Your Child

At this age, there is a VERY WIDE range of normal development. Avoid comparing children. Susie may be ahead of most when entering kindergarten, may lag behind when entering first grade, and may move ahead again when entering second grade.

The challenge for schools and parents is to provide a program and experiences that meet the needs of children, instead of waiting for children to meet the pre-determined standards of the curriculum. In order for education to have a positive, long-range impact on a child's life, parents and teachers must work as a team in the best interest of the child. A quality program recognizes that parents, schools, and the child are equal parts of a triangle, each having something to give and learn from the other.

Parents can best support their child by providing a positive environment beyond the classroom, by keeping in regular contact with teachers and counselors, and by attending conferences and workshops that help them understand their child.

Most important, parents can respect their child's unique characteristics and capabilities. Children need to feel accepted and valued for who they are. Avoid sibling or friendship comparisons that judge or rate your child. Allow your child to progress at his or her own rate, and consistently support the child's efforts.

### Information Sources

- Morrison, G. *Early Childhood Education Today*, 4th Ed., 1988, Merrill Publishing, pg. 255-259.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children, Position Statement, *Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement*, 1987.

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File: Family life 8

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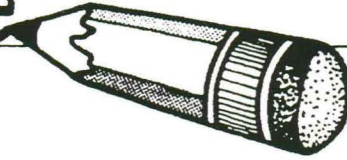
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## Keeping Your Child Safe

Kindergarten is a time when your child wants to be more independent and often may attempt new adventures. However, a child this age lacks the judgment of an older child, and requires more supervision. It is never appropriate to leave kindergarten age children unattended. It is your responsibility to provide a safe environment.

There are, however, several ways you can help your children to keep themselves safe.

- Teach them to recite their name, address, phone number, and place of parent employment.
- Teach them to use the telephone, and the 911 system if it is available. They should know where emergency numbers are.
- Teach them a regular pattern of travel to and from school, parks, stores, and so on.
- Identify "safe houses" in your neighborhood in town, or "safe places" for farm and rural children.
- Practice fire drills at home.
- Teach procedures for securing windows, locking doors, hiding house keys, and so on.
- Teach what is and is not safe to play with around your home.
- Teach the proper way to answer the phone and take messages.

## Talk to Your Child about Strangers

The specific advice you give your child will depend on the age and personality of your child, as well as on circumstances in the community. Here are some safety suggestions appropriate for many children.

- Never get into a car with a stranger.
- If a stranger calls your name, hurry immediately to a place of safety and then look back to see who was calling you.
- If someone tells you that your mom or dad is hurt, first check whether this is true by telephoning your parents or talking to an adult you know.
- If grabbed by a stranger, scream, struggle, and say, "I am being kidnapped!"
- If you escape, keep running and don't stop or look back until you have reached another adult who can keep you safe.
- If at home alone, never let a telephone caller know that there is not an adult in the house.
- If you think you are being followed to your house and you know nobody is home, don't go home. Go instead to a place where you know there is someone who can help you.

Do not scare your child when talking about safety. Remain relaxed, calm, and check on the child's understanding of these procedures periodically.



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## Child Safety Alerts

Children and safety is an issue that requires parents to constantly keep up-to-date on product safety information. Here are five areas of concern to parents with young children.

**Garage Doors.** Children have died after being trapped under automatic garage door openers. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the children were between the ages of two and 14, and some were playing with the opener when the accident occurred. Suggestions for prevention? Keep remote control devices secured in the glove compartment. Wall-mounted controls should be located so they are inaccessible to children. Prohibit children from playing with openers. Replace any opener that does not have an automatic reverse function. Test the reverse feature once a month to be sure it is functioning.

**Pools.** Many of the children who will drown this year in backyard pools could be saved if homeowners completely fenced in the pool and used self-closing and latching devices on gates. A pool should be completely surrounded by a fence that is at least four feet high — five feet or more is better.

**Poisons and Pesticides.** Teach children what's dangerous: soaps, bleaches, starch, stain remover, and other cleaning products; drain cleaner; paints and related products; fuels; certain garden and household plants; plants that have been sprayed or

treated with pesticides. At least half of the U.S. deaths from pesticides are to children under age 10. Do not allow children to be on recently treated grass or ground. Check labels for safe re-entry time. Keep all toxic substances (including spigots, hoses, pumps, and rags) on high shelves in either a locked building or inaccessible area. Do not mix poisons in containers once used for food or drink. Mark containers with poison decals. Discard dangerous substances properly in a way that children have no access to them.

**Lawnmowers and Tractors.** About 15 lives a year could be saved if adults refused to allow children to ride on mowers and tractors, and kept children from playing in the area when machines were being used. Deaths occur when children fall off and are run over by the machine. Keep children indoors and supervised at all times when power equipment is being used. Never assume children will stay where you last saw them! Use extra care when approaching trees, shrubs and corners. Although the total number of deaths may not seem high, injuries not resulting in death exceed this number and may disable or disfigure your child.

**Children's Balloons.** Of all children's products, balloons are the leading cause of suffocation death, according to the CPSC. Most victims are age six and under. Children have suffocated from uninflated balloons or pieces of balloons. Children should not play with balloons without supervision. A completely inflated balloon does not present a major hazard as long as parents collect the pieces after it is broken. Children attempting to inflate the balloon may suck the balloon into their mouth, and may draw it into their throat. Another hazard results when children chew on a balloon and accidentally draw it into their throats. Close supervision is a must.

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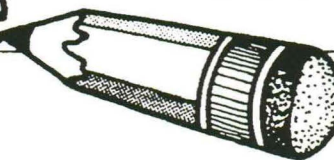
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Welcome to *Parenting Pipeline*

## School Days

Parents want to do the best possible job of building their children's self-esteem, of developing their creativity, and of helping them reach their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual potential. This newsletter, designed to help you better understand your kindergartner, will be distributed at the beginning of each month of the school year.

We need to remember that school has the same importance to a child's life that a job has to an adult's. School is where children spend a large percentage of their time. It's where failures and achievements are measured in structured ways and where children are compared to each other.

Stress comes from facing the "first day," from being in a system that challenges too much or too little, and from dealing with adults (teachers) that are not very well known. Peer and parental expectations can add pressures, too. How can you help?

- Talk to your child about what will happen at school, such things as learning quietly and listening, standing in line, getting permission to go to the bath-

room, and so on. Try role-playing and practicing some of this at home. Even though the teacher probably will explain these things, it's better if they are explained first at home by familiar trusted folks.

- Keep a positive attitude about school. Your enthusiasm and positive feelings will be contagious. By the way, your own anxiety (however much you try to hide it) can quickly be sensed by the child. As one child authority states, "Take your child to school cheerfully, then go home and have a good cry if you have to."
- Listen. If your child, from kindergarten on, gets in the habit of telling you almost everything that happens in school, you'll be better able to spot sources of stress for your child. And the window of communication will stay open through your child's school days.
- Get to know your child's teacher and the school environment. Find out what teaching and learning methods are used with your kindergartner. These methods vary greatly from school to school. Your interest and input is needed.
- Provide your child's teacher with helpful information about your child. Teachers appreciate knowing about habits, likes, and dislikes.

**What about failures?** Sooner or later every child will fail to measure up to someone's standards — teachers', parents', or peers'. Maybe your child will forget lines in the school play, wet pants in school, etc. Any failure or disappointment hurts. Here are some ideas to help your child (and yourself) through these times.

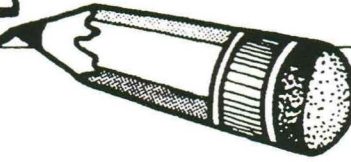
- Resist the urge to "fix" the situation for your child. If you do, kids don't have a chance to learn how to pick themselves up and move on. Instead, acknowledge that the event happened and that the feelings your child has about it are real and are

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Ames, Iowa

# Parenting Pipeline

a newsletter for parents of **kindergarten** children



## Communicating with Your Child

"No one really listens to me."

Children in particular sometimes have this feeling.

Listening means hearing and trying to understand messages in another's words. Taking time to listen and to encourage self-expression builds and maintains positive communication between parents and children. Listening gives you a chance to better understand how your child's ideas and thinking abilities are changing.

One of the best ways to foster children's language development is to talk with them. (To "talk with" is more than an adult talking **to** a child or directing a series of questions **at** a child. It includes listening to the child.) Sometimes adults find it hard to talk with young children. Here are some hints that may help.

**Be interested and attentive.** Children can tell whether they have your interest and attention by the way you reply or don't reply. Forget about the telephone and other distractions. Maintain eye contact to show you are really with the child. Showing interest in children and their activities will encourage them to express their feelings and make them feel important. Get down on the child's level; don't stand and tower above the child. Children tend to feel very close to an adult who, by expressing concern and caring, gets them talking about themselves.

**Encourage talking.** Some children need an invitation to start talking. You might begin with "Tell me about your day at school." Children are more likely to share their ideas and feelings when others think them important. Ask children questions that will require more than yes and no or right answers. Simple questions such as "What is the dog's name?" often lead a conversation to a dead end. But questions, such as "What do you like about the dog?" or "What other dogs have you played with?" may extend the conversation.

**Extend conversation.** If a child says, "I like to watch TV," then you in your response should use some of the same wording the child has used. ("What are some TV shows you like best?") If the child says "Sesame Street," your response could be "What happens on Sesame Street that you like seeing?" Avoid asking too many questions, though. Provide some information — for example, "I think Ernie and Bert are my favorite Sesame Street characters."

**Listen patiently.** Children often take longer than adults to find the right word. Listen as though you have plenty of time. Hurrying children or calling attention to their use of the wrong word while they are talking is upsetting and confusing. Avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking. Correcting grammar or pronunciation can inhibit a child. Correction can take place in a different context or you can model correct grammar in your own speech. As parents, you can set an example of consideration by waiting your turn to speak.

**Reflect feelings.** Sometimes just reflecting a child's feelings encourages talking. Saying "You're really feeling sad today, aren't you?" is more likely to invite a child to share and confide feelings than asking "What's wrong?" Restating or rephrasing what children have said is useful when they are experiencing powerful emotions which they may not be fully aware of.

Child: "School is dumb! I hate it!"

Parent: "Sounds like you're pretty angry at something that happened at school today."

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Children need to learn it is okay to have angry feelings but it is not always OK to act on them. You might say, "I know you are mad at her for breaking your toy and you feel like hitting her, but say it with words, don't hit."

**Be an example.** Communication skills are influenced by examples children see and hear. Parents who listen to their children with interest, attention, and patience set a valuable example. The greatest audience children can have is an adult who is important to them and interested in them.

## Communicating with Your Child's Teacher

During this first year of school, you can demonstrate how important you believe school is by your reaction to absences, minor illnesses, and truancy. Also, plan home-based learning activities and set guidelines for bedtime and TV watching that show your child how much school matters.

When you visit with your child's teacher, be ready to find out what is expected. When you know what the teachers are trying to achieve, you can reinforce those expectations at home.

If the teacher has some suggestions for improvement, try to listen and determine how you can help your child meet those expectations. Be sure to ask questions so you can understand any problems.

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It sometimes is a good idea to have a list of questions ready for the teacher. "Does Johnny finish his assignments?" "Can Susie keep up with the others on the playground?" "Is Bill too tired in the mornings?" If you've wondered about these things, write them down so you won't forget to ask. Try to provide your child's teacher with information that may help explain your child's behavior. "Jane is looking forward to fishing with her grandparents this weekend. She may find it difficult to sit still and concentrate today."



Don't fall into the "Where have I failed" trap! If the teacher has some recommendations for your child, it doesn't mean your skills as a parent are at fault. In fact, it can give you an opportunity to work with the teacher and child to improve your parenting skills. Try not to be defensive. Teachers are attempting to guide your child in a positive direction, but they need your support. They are not trying to pass judgment on your parenting skills.

During the first year of school, it is very important for you to bolster your child's confidence in his or her abilities and potential. An encouraging word, praise for a new work of art or a job well done, or an unexpected hug can help your child feel good about his or her abilities. Explain that everyone differs in their talents and abilities, and that he or she is an entirely worthwhile and precious person.

Adapted for use in Iowa from *Parenting Pipeline*, North Dakota State University Extension Service, by Virginia Molgaard, specialist in human development and family life, Iowa State University Extension. Edited by Carol Ouverson, communication specialist, Iowa State University Extension.

File: Family life 8

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# Parenting Pipeline

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- argue with peers frequently.
- like immediate results; not remote goals.
- have difficulty understanding and remembering rules.
- change his or her mind often.
- be very curious.
- procrastinate in completing tasks, particularly adult-directed tasks.

You can help in meeting the developmental needs of your child by encouraging participation in selected activities. Let your child:

- ask permission to use the possessions of others. (Teach your child to understand that respect for personal property is a "two-way street.")
- go shopping with you, make a purchase, pay for the item, and receive the change.
- talk on the telephone with friends and relatives so he or she gains experience in answering the phone and in asking to speak to the person called.

## What Can I Expect?

Beginning kindergarten children come to school with very different backgrounds and personalities; yet despite this diversity, they often share certain characteristics. A child entering kindergarten will probably:

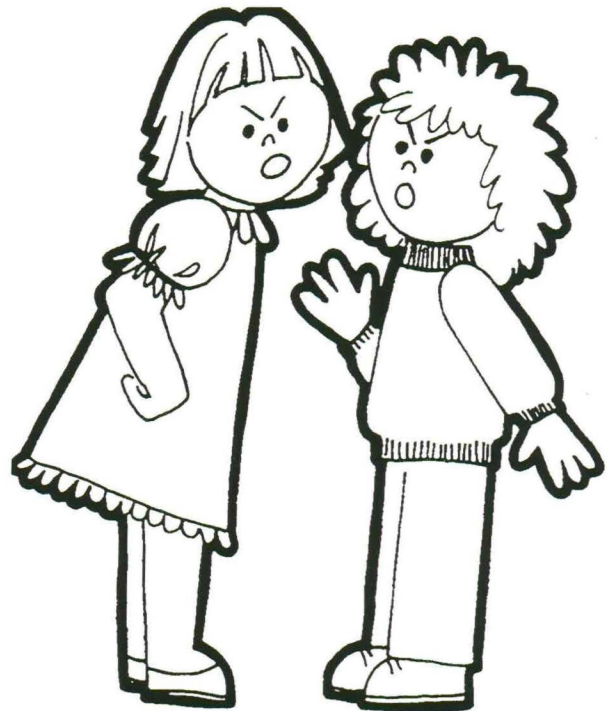
- like a fairly routine schedule.
- perform better under consistent discipline.
- like opportunities to show independence.
- seek affection and security within the home.
- be independent in eating, dressing, and sleeping.

Physically, most children will be:

- extremely active for short periods, separated by longer periods of calm and quiet.
- maturing in large and small muscle control.
- susceptible to childhood diseases.
- beginning to lose primary teeth and get permanent teeth.
- somewhat far-sighted as their eyes are not yet mature.
- lacking full development of eye-hand coordination.
- learning to snap fingers, whistle, and wink.

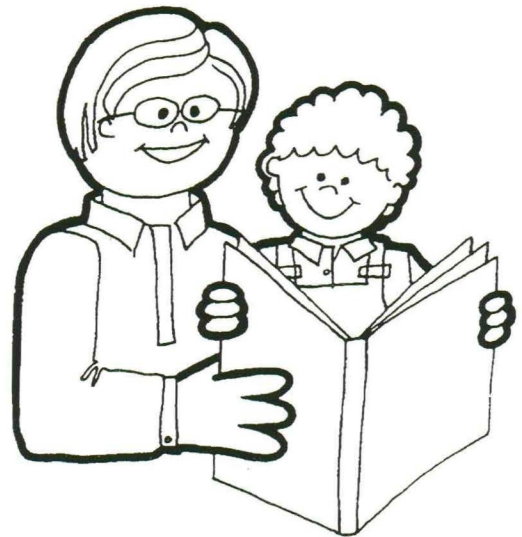
Socially and emotionally, a child in kindergarten will probably:

- have a creative and vivid imagination.
- show pride about personal possessions.



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- know that words like “excuse me,” “please,” and “thank you” should be used daily as a form of courtesy to others.
- know that he or she can expect a reasonable amount of personal privacy (knock on your child’s door before entering and expect him or her to do the same when entering your room).
- have to wait for his or her turn in group activities (but allow your child to be first at times).
- establish relationships with friends his or her age (allow visits at a friend’s home).
- have opportunities to talk about himself or herself and personal activities (listen ... parents tend to talk *to* their children, rather than *with* them).
- have responsibilities that fit his or her age, such as picking up toys, setting the table, hanging up clothes.
- know that he or she is accepted (refrain from openly comparing your child to other children, especially siblings, and realize that terms such as “dumb,” “stupid,” and “clumsy” should be avoided when addressing your child).
- have a reading session every day, even if you only have time to read 10 to 15 minutes (sit close together so your child can see the book and feel secure while you read).
- be relaxed and happy during the reading period. You want your child to enjoy reading. You DO NOT want to make a big chore of it.
- become interested in the book before starting to read. (Ask a question or two about what has been read. This encourages good listening habits, which help develop reading comprehension.)
- know that he or she is loved. The greatest gifts you can give your child are time and encouragement.



## Know What Fits Your Child’s Age

Knowing what to expect at this stage of development is important. Kindergarten classrooms, parent-child communications, discipline methods, and your child’s activities need to fit your child’s age.

As your child grows and changes, your parenting style can adjust to these changes to provide the best possible atmosphere for you and your child. Many excellent resources on this topic are available. Give us a call for more information.

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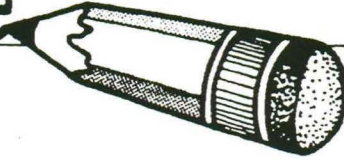
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## Responsibility

“Oh, if only he were more dependable!” How often do parents catch themselves uttering those words? Responsibility means taking appropriate action without having to be reminded. Parents can help their child to become responsible by remembering and following a few guidelines.

1. **Encourage decision making.** The child who is always told what to do does not develop inner standards and controls. Parents are responsible for the child’s nutrition, clothing, and health habits, but the child can still make choices. If the child needs new clothes, parents can offer several selections that are acceptable in price and quality, rather than handing the child new clothes.
2. **Give responsibility.** Teach the child how to do the task. Don’t do for the child what she can do for herself. This means teaching the child how to perform household tasks, encouraging good attitudes, and reinforcing her efforts even if they don’t quite measure up to adult skills or standards.
3. **Encourage independence.** Let the child know he can make wise decisions for himself. Here are some statements that foster independence: “It is really up to you,” or “If that is really what you like.” Don’t forget to allow for mistakes. By

overemphasizing errors or by blaming a child for mistakes, parents may train the child to give up. Children are no more perfect than adults.

Help your child to feel competent by reinforcing, encouraging, and appreciating accomplishments. To be happy and successful in life, children must come to believe that they are competent.

Teaching children to care for toys and other possessions will help them develop good habits. Encouragement can be provided by organizing the room so everything has a place. Labeling or color coding can help your child remember where things go. Also, parents will need to remind the child to put things away, and to explain why toys and other items need to be put back in place. When a child forgets, the gentle verbal reminder, such as, “Oh Mark, you will need to put the puzzle back before you start painting. I will get the paint set out for you while you do that.” And during cleanup time, pitch in and help your child, making comments such as, “I’ll get these things here; can you get the blocks over there?” or “What can I do to help you?” or “Can you help me here?”

Here are three steps for teaching a child to do a task:

1. Analyze the job and break it down into learning parts. The smaller the task, the easier it is to explain to the child.



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2. Teach work methods appropriate to the child's capabilities, and organize equipment and supplies so the child knows where they are and can get them easily.
3. When the task is completed, give positive feedback immediately. Recognize the child's accomplishments. Reinforce behavior that is close to standards.

Each step is important. For instance, parents often become frustrated when their order to "Clean your bedroom" goes unheeded. But go back to the first



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step: break the work down into learnable parts. Exactly what do you mean by "Clean your bedroom?" Have you broken the task down into parts that the child can grab hold of? Do you want things picked up and the bed made, or do you want the drawers tidied, the closet put in order, or the room dusted? For children of this age, the thinking ability of the command "Clean your room" is so vast that they most likely will not know what you mean until that task is sliced into smaller pieces: put away shoes, make bed, straighten bookcase. Children then will know what to do and will sense their accomplishment.

Children are not born with a built-in sense of responsibility. Neither do they acquire it automatically at a certain age. Responsibility is attained slowly over many years. In order to keep children carrying out their responsibilities, consider incentives, rewards, positive verbal compliments, love notes, happy grams, certificates, coupons, and privileges.

## Help Children Learn by Doing

Kindergartners are curious eager learners, but sometimes they lose that eagerness because grown-ups have set learning tasks they were not able to accomplish. It is natural for parents to have great expectations for their children, but they may want their children to achieve things in school or at home before they are really able. Be aware of expecting grown-up behavior from a child.

To be a doer is important to children — and there are many things they can do. Children will experience disappointments and failure from time to time (we all do), but failure can be absorbed if there are plenty of experiences with success. This is why it is so necessary to give as much approval and encouragement as possible rather than criticism.

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