

Learning

Helping your child learn at home

As you know, your child is changing and learning from the moment he is born. You're probably learning a great deal yourself, just watching your child's endless curiosity in action. A child's eagerness to explore new things is incredible to see. It's wonderful to see children keep trying, even when they fail in their attempts. Can you imagine yourself as an adult sticking to a task if it required the effort and practice of learning to walk?

There are many things you can do to guide your child's learning at home that don't take a lot of time or money.

The following list gives you some suggestions to get you started. Show older children how to do these things with the younger ones. Their help can mean extra time for yourself. Remember, children learn by your example.

- Introduce only a few things at a time. Try to be patient. Young children often need to have ideas repeated many times. Let your child play with everyday objects, such as paper bags (not plastic ones), measuring cups, empty boxes, jar tops, cake pans, pot lids, spoons, and large empty spoons.
- Never let your child play with plastic bags of any type.



- Read stories to your child every day, taking time to talk with him about the pictures.
- Teach the names of animals and the sounds they make.
- Point out the difference between round and square by showing these shapes to your child with things around the house, such as bowls and books. Then ask him to show you round and square things.
- Teach colors by showing your child different objects and saying what color they are. To test understanding, ask him to show you things that are a certain color.

- Use magazines and books to teach the names of animals, vegetables, fruits, and other objects.
- Introduce numbers when your child helps you. For example, you could ask her to give you two socks, three socks, etc.
- Sing simple songs and rhymes with your child.

• Taking your child's hand in yours, practice simple movements (swaying, going up and down, hopping) in time with music.

- Teach your child to be courteous by saying "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" to him and in front of him.
- Teach your child to cover his mouth when he yawns. Teach him to cough or sneeze into the crook of his arm rather than in his hands. Most colds are spread by hand-to-hand contact.

- Show your child how to wash her hands before meals and after using the toilet, and how to brush her teeth after meals and snacks.
- Teach your child his own name and age.
- Encourage your child to color and draw.
- Let your child be responsible for watering a particular plant in the house. Perhaps help him plant a seed and watch it grow.
- Encourage your child to make a collection of something — rocks, seeds, insects, feathers, etc. An empty egg carton makes a good container for some collections.
- Create awareness of feelings by cutting out pictures from magazines of people's faces and bodies that express different feelings. These pictures could be glued into a notebook.

Of course you want your child to know specific things, like words, numbers, and colors. It's also important to help her learn positive attitudes and feelings. Here are some general ideas for doing that:

- Encourage curiosity, being careful that it doesn't put your child in danger.
- Learning something new feels good, so don't force a lesson and take the fun out of learning.
- Above all, help your child gain confidence. Give tasks she can handle. Praise success in terms of the child's progress, not some perfect ideal.

Point out to your child the things he or she has accomplished.

Note the effort needed to do these things.

Praise your child.