

YOUR  
CHILD  
from 3 to 5  
is...

# LEARNING EVERY DAY

Debby Johnson and Zelda R. Williams\*

Young children spend most of the preschool years learning about people and the world around them. Preschoolers want to know how machines work. They want to know what hurts and what does not hurt. Children want to know why it rains and why the sun shines. Children are naturally curious and want to learn.

As a parent, you are a child's first teacher. You probably spend more time with your children than anyone else. What you teach your children when they are young will help them for the rest of their lives.

Children learn many things at home during eating, bathing, cooking and cleaning times. Parents can play games with their children as a part of daily routines. This helps children have fun learning how to act around other people. They learn what others expect from them. At the same time, learning is a playful experience.

Children start to learn at birth. As they grow, it takes time and experience to grasp what is going on around them. Children need help from their families so they can learn and try out new skills. Pushing children to learn something they are not ready to learn can be harmful. For example, parents cannot teach children to read before they learn letters in the alphabet and put them together to make words. Likewise, children

cannot learn to go to the bathroom by themselves until their body muscles develop enough to send a signal.

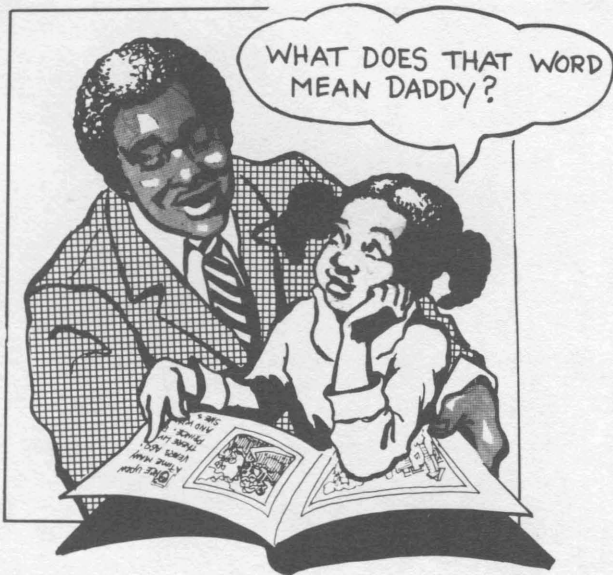
Children enjoy learning when their home life is happy and loving. A home can encourage curiosity and questions rather than discourage them. After all, questions show that your child is interested in learning.

Everything children do from the time they are born helps build understanding. With encouragement from parents, children are happier and get more out of life. If they have fun learning during childhood, they will want to go on learning for the rest of their lives.



*Make everyday routines a part of your child's learning experiences.*

\*Extension family life education specialist, The Texas A&M University System, and Extension program specialist — family resource development program, Prairie View A&M University.

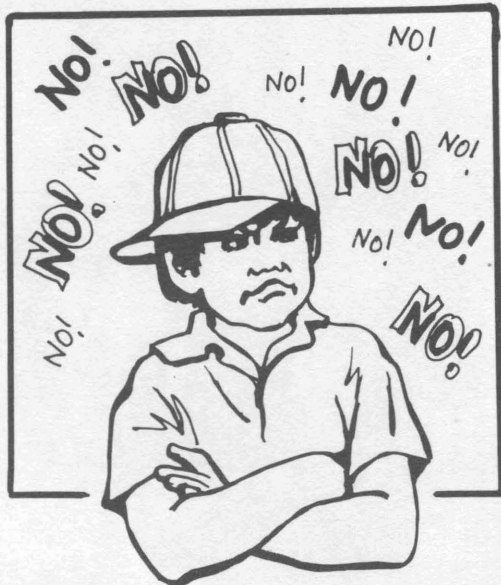


Children learn many new words and ideas through reading with parents.

### Learning to Talk

Talking is one way children learn about things around them. Parents can ask children questions and *listen* to the answer. Then children will learn to express what they think, feel and know.

Children learn new words by listening to other people talk, especially parents. Talk to your children as often as you can. Explain to them *how* things work, *why* they need to go to bed, or *what* new words mean.



Saying "no" often is a sign that children want to do things for themselves.

Children like for parents to listen to them. What can parents do if they are too busy to listen when their child asks a question? Parents can tell children in a nice way that they will listen later. Parents can repeat what children say and ask questions. This lets children know their parents are listening and interested in what they have to say.

Children, like adults, do not like to be interrupted while they are talking. What children have to say is very important to them. If parents must interrupt, they can say, "Excuse me." Children appreciate manners, too! This is one way children learn manners.



Children usually learn words that they hear adults use.

### Now it is your turn...

Finger plays, songs, stories and rhymes help a child develop good speech habits. A finger play you might want to try is:



### *The Eensy, Weensy Spider*

(If you know the tune, you can sing this.)

The eensy, weensy spider climbed up the water spout. (touch thumb to forefinger and climb upward)

Down came the rain (fingers wriggle down to make rain)

And washed the spider out. (arms and hands move from one side to the other in front of the body)

Out came the sun (arms form a circle above the head)

And dried up all the rain. (slowly move hands from circle down to side)

And the eensy, weensy spider climbed up the spout again. (touch thumb to forefinger and climb upward)

## Building Understanding

Children are not "small size adults," although adults often treat them that way. Parents may expect children to understand *why* they are mad, *how* it feels to have a headache, *where* rain comes from or *when* today becomes yesterday. Sometimes young children do not know exactly what adults are talking about.

Parents who take time to explain things to children help them develop understanding. Parents can explain things simply and on a child's level of understanding. Children wonder about things such as why the sun shines, how a telephone rings or why eggs break. If their questions are answered, children soon will be full of questions! This is a good sign that your child is learning, so encourage it.

Young children have not had enough experiences to understand everything that parents understand. For example, children do not understand numbers, weight, time and living things as well as adults do. A little explaining at times can make life simpler for them.

Parents can help their preschooler to understand the following concepts.

**Weight.** Children often break things. This is because they are not a good judge of how much something weighs. An object that looks lightweight, such as a small toy, may slip right through a child's fingers because it is really heavier than it looks to him.



**Time.** Oh, how parents wish little children could tell time. Then they would not always ask "when." But, children are usually about 7 years old or older before they can understand hours on the clock. Four-year-olds usually understand time based on their daily habits. For example, "time for school"; "time for lunch"; or "we'll go after dinner" are meaningful to them. Words like *yesterday*, *tomorrow*, *next month* or *in a little while* are not understood until around age 6.



## Now it is your turn . . .

1. *Practice counting.* Help your child learn about numbers by counting out objects as you use them. For example, four forks for the table, one shoe for each foot, or five buttons on a shirt. Say to your child, "Let's count as we button your shirt. 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 buttons!" This gives your child chances to learn more about numbers.

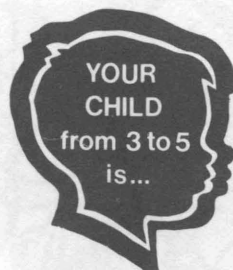
2. *Teach Sizes.* Your child can learn about size when you compare things to objects which are already understood. For example, say, "I am as tall as the refrigerator" or "A worm is about as long as my finger." You can do the same when explaining weight and width.

3. *Explain things.* When your child asks questions, answer them honestly and on your child's age level. Keep your answer simple and to the point. The way you react to questions will either encourage or discourage curiosity. Children need to be encouraged to explore new ideas and skills as they learn. Praise your child when he or she does well. This tells your child that you are proud and interested in what he or she is doing.

### References

Hurlock, E. B. *Child Development* (5th edition.). New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972.

Jackson, N. E., Robinson, H. B., & Dale, P. S. *Cognitive Development in Young Children* (National Institute of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare). Washington, D. C., 1976.



## LEARNING EVERY DAY!

## Growth Measuring Stick

### 3-Year-Olds

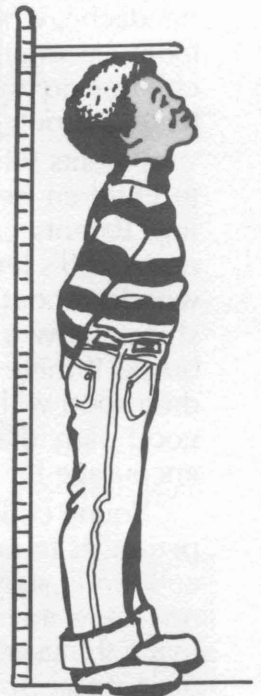
- Love to talk
- Can identify red, blue, yellow and green
- Find meaning in their scribbles
- Can sometimes carry a tune
- Can distinguish between, 1, 2 and "lots of"
- Enjoy hearing stories repeated
- Make up imaginary playmates

### 4-Year-Olds

- Ask Why? How? What? When?
- Are learning and using many new words
- Can make up wild stories
- Are beginning to draw recognizable figures
- Can think about things outside of the home, such as a store, train, or Post Office
- Understand a little about time
- Are curious about death

### 5-Year-Olds

- Can sing many songs
- Enjoy stories
- Like puzzles and manipulative toys
- Draw figures that adults can recognize
- Can understand simple reasoning
- Can learn full name, address and telephone number
- Can pronounce most word sounds (s, g, k, etc.)
- Have a longer attention span



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