

Parents Make the Difference!



New Year's resolutions can help your student learn

January is a great month to start over! Of course it is the first month of a new calendar year. But it also falls right in the middle of the preschool year. So you can use this time to look back on the first half of the year. What went right and what didn't? Consider making some New Year's resolutions to boost your child's learning.

Your entire family can resolve to:

- Get enough sleep every night. In early childhood, about 11 hours each night (or more) are needed for your child to grow and thrive. Return to a schedule if your child was up late during winter break.
- Eat a fruit or vegetable (or both!) at every meal.
- Limit screen time. If your child indulged too much over break, it's time to remember the guidelines: one to two hours per day, maximum. That is a total amount for time spent watching TV, using computer or playing video games. It does not mean one to two hours of TV, plus one to two hours of computer, plus one to two hours of gaming.
- Read together every day.
- Try activities that help your child learn but are also fun, such as putting together jigsaw puzzles, building with blocks and playing board games.
- Take trips in the community that also offer fun and learning for your child. Go to the public library to check out books or attend story time. Go to a local park to identify animals and plants.

Encourage physical fitness even over the cold winter months

Winter is a time when many people, including children, retreat to the comfort of the couch. It's understandable, because the weather can be brutal.

But on most winter days, the weather does allow you to go outdoors for short periods. Continue outdoor exercise to keep your child healthy and fit. You should:

- Take advantage of the snow if you have any. Most children love snow activities. Have a gentle snowball fight, make a snowman or snow angels. Sled if you can do it safely.
- Don't worry too much about your child getting sick outdoors (as long as she is appropriately dressed). Actually, it is indoors in winter, where germs and bacteria thrive, that children usually get sick.
- Always dress your child in warm layers including a hat and mittens. Drink water. You may not feel as thirsty as you do in summer, but you can still become dehydrated without enough water.
- Be safe. A brisk walk in winter raises your heart rate briefly and helps your blood circulate more easily. In the cold, your body has to work a bit harder. Don't get overtired.

Carve out moments with your preschooler when time is short

Here is the bottom line about time with your child. Quality time-- when you can really focus on your child-- matters. But so does quantity time. Even if you are not doing anything special, even if you only have a few minutes, your child wants and needs those minutes.

Here are some ideas for finding those minutes:

- Have your child work with you around the house. Young children love to help, and they can! Your child can carry small loads (like a small bag containing paper goods), help you put clothes in the washing machine, dust with a feather duster. What matters to your child is that you are working on something together.
- Schedule breaks. If you are doing something your child absolutely cannot help with, have a break time and spend it with your child. Set a timer. Let your child know that when it goes off it will be break time and you two can do something together, like read a book.
- Take your child along when possible. Not every errand is child-friendly, but bring your child along on those that are, such as short trips to the grocery store. If you have more than one child and there is another adult in your household, these errands are a great way to have "special time." Alternate bringing one child with you and leaving the others at home with an adult. Keep track of whose turn it is.