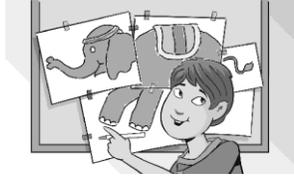


Parents Make the Difference!



Encourage your child to try activities that boost thinking

Your young child's brain is expanding rapidly at this age. He is quickly developing new abilities to analyze, understand and question. Foster these new skills with activities that enhance them.

Here are some activities that will build your preschooler's thinking skills:

- **Organizing.** Your child is learning to classify and sort things into groups. Take advantage of this as well as your child's natural desire to help you at this age. Ask him, "Can you help me unpack the groceries? Please put all the boxes on the table. Put the cans on the bottom shelf."
- **Understanding that parts make a whole.** Drawing pictures is a fun way to do this. If your child draws a person or animal, ask him to show you the head, the body and the legs. Then say, "It's great how all these parts make up the whole person!"
- **Questioning.** Most preschool and kindergarten children ask questions all day long. It can be tiring for you, but it benefits them. Remember not to supply the answers right away. Instead, ask your child: "What do you think? How do you think that happens?"

Experts agree that effective discipline is consistent discipline

Can your child predict how you'll behave when she does something wrong? If so, you've probably been consistent! Consistency is essential to good discipline. For example, if you always ignore begging for sugary cereal while shopping, your child learns not to beg. But if you give in once, she learns that begging works!

Experts recommend that parents:

- **Prioritize.** Pick one or two behaviors to work on, such as tantrums and talking back. Decide ahead of time how to handle them. Then stick to your plan.
- **Be patient.** Your child's behavior won't change immediately. Give her several weeks to see that you're being consistent.
- **Use reminders.** Being consistent is tough, so post notes that will motivate you. ("Ignore tantrums." "Be calm and caring.")
- **Team up.** Join forces with other caregivers, such as a spouse, grandparent, babysitter or teacher. The more consistency, the better.
- **Be careful.** You'll have to make exceptions sometimes, but do this in advance. ("Grandma is bringing over cookies today, so you'll get to have an extra treat this week.")

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Teaching about patterns is fun for the family!

The world is full of mathematical patterns, and kindergartners aren't too young to enjoy them! Teaching about patterns is fun for parents, too. To make the most of it:

- **Consider your child's abilities.** He might be able to recognize short patterns (such as red, yellow, red, yellow) or long ones (such as red, yellow, green, blue, red, yellow, green, blue).
- **Make a pattern together.** You might arrange blocks in a certain order, such as circle, square, triangle. Then have your child copy the pattern. He can also make a pattern for you to copy.
- **Extend patterns.** Create a pattern for your child by arranging items. Encourage him to continue it. Ask, "What comes next?"
- **Hide part of a pattern.** After you've made a pattern, cover part of it and challenge your child to guess what's missing. Or draw a pattern but leave part of it blank. Can your child fill it in?
- **Look for patterns.** They're everywhere! Find them on fabrics, fences, dishes, playground equipment and more.
- **Play with patterns.** Clap patterns or act them out. (Step, step, hop, step, step, hop.) You can even arrange people in patterns! (Parent, child, parent, child.)