



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

## Toys

### Many toys are good for all ages

All children, regardless of age, need playthings to build physical, mental, language, emotional and social skills.

Some toys will appeal to children of all ages. These include music-related items, plush toys and books.

For children two years old and up, a well-rounded toy selection should also include playthings from the following groups:

- Pretend/dress-up play
- Arts and crafts
- Blocks
- Science and nature play
- Outdoor toys for active play
- Puzzles, games, and construction toys. □



## Academics

### Learning about time

Time is something that cannot be seen or felt. Its passing is measured artificially by clocks and calendars.

Early mankind measured time only in the natural cycles of day and night and the rhythmic occurrence of the seasons.

A journey was three days walk; an event took place during the last full moon.

Time during the day was measured by the passage of the sun. Longer periods were measured from new moon to new moon, from season to season.

Now when many families live in cities, the cycle of seasons is less apparent.

We use calendars instead of moon phases to measure off the months, and clocks to measure off the days.

Children measure their time by the events of their days that begin at waking-up time and end with bedtime.

Their day does not include twenty-four hours but only the hours between waking and sleeping.

To expand a child's concept of time, begin with answers to the ques-

tion: "How long until \_\_\_\_\_?"

To answer questions like this, use a large calendar. Circle the date of the holiday, visit or special event that is anticipated. Mark off all days of the month that have already passed.

Hang the calendar within easy reach so that each night before she goes to bed, the child can X out the days remaining.

As you do this, you are teaching duration of time over periods longer than one day and the child can begin to learn the concept of how time progresses in steady, measured segments. □



## It Wasn't My Fault

By Helen Lester,  
Illustrated by Lynn Munsinger  
Houghton Mifflin, 1985

You and your children will laugh your way through this story about Murdley Gurdson.

When things don't go well for him, it's usually his fault, but he won't admit it.

Not until the day a bird laid an egg on his head, but said it wasn't her fault. The reason was that a horrible aardvark had screamed and scared her.

When they found the aardvark, he said it wasn't his fault either, as the nasty hippo had stepped on his tail and a scream just popped out.

Tracing back through the animals' excuses, we come full circle to Murdley, who finishes by repeating that it is not his fault, although he clearly caused the whole chain of events.

Learning to take responsibility for their actions is a difficult task for little children.

Perhaps the first evidence that they understand right and wrong comes as children vehemently deny that they have in fact done anything that had a negative result.

But being accountable for actions and making amends is an important part of developing self-control.

Parents do well when they help children accept responsibility by using consequences as part of their guidance methods.

There are two kinds of consequences: natural and logical.

With natural consequences, things just happen as a result of the child's actions. When Murdley stuffed things in the closet, they were naturally going to fall out on his head.

Parents don't have to do much about this, other than perhaps verbalize cause and effect: "Hmmm—guess things fall down when they're not put away in the right place. Better get that fixed."

There is more of a role for parents in devising the logical consequences that provide the needed experience to help a child correct an error or make amends for actions.

It's important to understand that we are talking not about finding an appropriate punishment, but rather structuring a learning situation for the child that links behavior and the necessary resulting action.

A matter-of-fact attitude helps children understand that fixing mistakes is just one of the things that people have to do.

So it is: "I know you didn't mean to spill the milk, Emma, but it needs to be cleaned up. Here's the sponge."

Or: "When you grabbed the book away from the baby, you made her fall and bump her hand. What can you do to make her feel better?"

Logical consequences avoid the temptation for us to devise an appropriate lecture or sermon, and also prevent our increasing children's guilt feelings.

As we concentrate on helping children follow through on accepting responsibility, we all avoid the blame game, with us pointing fingers and children feeling the need to deny culpability.

There's one other way to minimize the "it wasn't my fault's." That is to keep away from asking children direct questions to which we already know (or suspect) the answers.

"Who made the mess on the kitchen table?" is bound to elicit nothing but "Not me!"

Rather, let's go with no-fault policies that don't focus on pointing fingers, but on finding solutions.

Not a bad lesson for both parents and kids. □



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## Putting feelings into words

Faulty patterns of communication begin in childhood. You can begin now to help your child learn to communicate her thoughts and feelings clearly and accurately.

Without thinking, adults often forget to treat children like human beings with valid opinions to offer.

Children are often left out of decisions that affect them. It's not fair to you, the rest of the family, or to your child to allow her to rule situations as can happen when parents are hesitant to set limits.

But it is fair to all concerned to allow each family member to have a say in matters that concern them, when appropriate.

For example, if your child is very shy and quiet, something as simple as encouraging her to tell you some foods she'd enjoy having for meals and snacks can be an important step in helping her begin to express herself.

If she's more verbal, asking her a question such as what she thinks and feels about adults who talk to you about her as if she weren't there ("What a pretty little girl?") can further open the lines of communication between you.

Encourage her to share positive feelings about herself — joys and accomplishments as well as worries, fears, and anxieties.

If she isn't used to putting her thoughts and feelings into words, be patient.

You will help her learn to share more of her needs, desires, feelings and opinions by showing her that you really are interested in them. □

## Will it float?

Children are natural scavengers, so why not make them collectors for a purpose?

Suggest that children look around for things that are expendable — twigs, leaves, stones, egg shells, pencils, straws, popsicle sticks, aluminum plates, ping pong ball, napkin, comb, and so on.

The objective is to predict whether or not these objects will float. To test the prediction, use a large container with water and check floating vs. sinking.



In addition to the actual experience, kids will learn about the words that describe water. For example, you can discuss the different sounds made by water—splashing, bubbling, dropping, roaring, and trickling.

How about the way water feels? Hot, cold, lukewarm, icy, fast running, slow running.

What are the various uses of water? To drink, play in, wash clothes, cook with, water gardens, clean windows and take a bath.

And finally, how many places can you name where water is found? Lakes, oceans, streams, inside plumbing, puddles, dams, ditches, ponds, fountains, and so on. □

## Pizza party!

There's no denying it: kids love pizza.

For a grand pizza party, make these mini-pizzas together. Serve with peeled fruit, such as apple slices and easy-to-eat grapes or melon balls. (Grapes or melon balls not for children under three.)

While you're eating, read the lively story: **Curious George and the Pizza** by H. L. Rey.

Afterwards, settle the children down for naptime with a quiet activity like drawing pictures of the little monkey on his big pizza adventure.

Here's how to make the pizza:

### Preschooler mini-pizzas

Toast whole wheat English muffin or pita bread.

Spread with spaghetti sauce (from a jar).

Sprinkle with pre-shredded mozzarella cheese.

Broil until the cheese bubbles.

Be very, very careful with little ones — the cheese needs to cool before they dig in! (Also be sure to keep hot plates and serving utensils out of reach — they're very, very hot too!) □

## Something New!



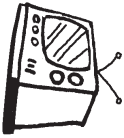






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[www.GrowingChild.com/](http://www.GrowingChild.com/)

**FreeGrandmaSays**

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# March 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>6</p> <p>What is your favorite dessert?</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>Find four things that are very soft to touch and hold.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Shrove Tuesday. Mardi Gras Day.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Ash Wednesday.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>What did you do, hear or see today that was special?</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Toss a very soft ball in the air and catch it. How many times can you do that in a row without dropping the ball?</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Watch a favorite DVD together.</p> 
<p>13</p> <p>Daylight Savings Time begins.</p> <p>Spring ahead!</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Buy a new book for your child's permanent library.</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Which state do you live in? Can you find it on a map?</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Tell the baby how your day went.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>St. Patrick's Day. Eat a green vegetable.</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Go outside and look for flower buds coming up, sometimes in the snow!</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Purim begins at sundown.</p>
<p>20</p> <p>First day of spring!</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Offer to help someone with a chore today.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Orange and banana slices for a snack.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Name five things you can do with your hand.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Count your toes. How many are on your left foot? How many are on your right foot? How many are there all together?</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Find out what a harmonica is.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Go to the library and look for a book about spring.</p>
<p>27</p> <p>Practice a home emergency drill.</p> 	<p>28</p> <p>Take a walk. What changes do you see from winter to spring?</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Is it warm enough to play with a Frisbee™ outside?</p>	<p>30</p> <p>What is the weather forecast for today?</p> 	<p>31</p> <p>Measure your nose.</p>	