

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

September 2019



KID BITS

Stay in touch

Reach out to your child's teacher whenever you have a question or concern—no need to wait for parent-teacher conferences. You could email to let her know about any changes in your youngster's life, such as a new sibling. She'll be happy to hear from you, and the information can help her help your child.

My library card

Using a library card teaches your youngster to take responsibility for books. Visit the library to get her a card and check out books. Then, consider celebrating with a reading picnic in the park. At home, help her write the books' due date on the calendar so she remembers to return them with you.

DID YOU KNOW?

The visual skills your child needs for school success are still developing. You can help by offering activities that let him follow moving objects with his eyes, sharpen his eye-hand coordination, and improve his depth perception. *Examples:* Play catch, read hidden-picture books, build with blocks, color.

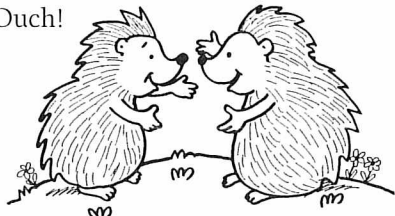
Worth quoting

"It is books that are the key to the wide world." *Jane Hamilton*

Just for fun

Q: What did one hedgehog say to the other after they hugged?

A: Ouch!



Chicora Elementary

Supporting your little student

Whether your child is starting school for the first time or beginning a new year, your involvement will help her do her best. Try these ideas.

My school

Encourage your youngster to draw a map of her school so she can show you where she spends her days. Together, label her favorite spots (music corner, science lab, playground). Then, let her tell you about what she does in each place. You might ask, "Which musical instrument is your favorite?" or "What do you like to play at recess?"

My learning

Have your child share with you what she's learning in school, and do related activities at home. For example, if she's studying community helpers, you could visit a fire station or set up a pretend post office where family members "mail" cards to each other. Or if the class is



learning about apples, perhaps you'll go apple picking or bake an apple pie.

My work

Find special ways to save your youngster's schoolwork. You might let her decorate a binder or box and write "2019–2020" on it. She can put her favorite papers and projects inside. Every so often, look through it with her. You'll both have a reminder of her accomplishments.♥

Routines to count on

Life with little ones goes more smoothly when everyone knows what to expect. Consider these tips for setting up predictable daily routines.

● **Mornings.** Create a goodbye ritual that your child can count on. For instance, you might sing a favorite song together on the walk or car ride to school.

● **Evenings.** As part of dinner cleanup, help your youngster pack tomorrow's snack and set out breakfast supplies (cereal box, spoon, bowl). Also, look through his backpack with him to make sure he has everything he'll need for school the next day.♥



How to make friends

Your youngster's earliest friendships build social skills he'll use throughout life. Here's advice to help him get along with classmates and make new friends.

Friendly introductions. Encourage your child to introduce himself to new classmates. He might say his name, ask a question, and share something about himself. ("Hi, I'm Adam. What's your favorite color? Mine's blue.")



Role-play at home so he's more comfortable starting conversations.

Shared activities. Suggest ways your youngster can ask to play with others. For example, he could take a toy dump truck to a group of kids playing with construction vehicles and say, "Can this truck help out?" And if he is playing with a group of kids,

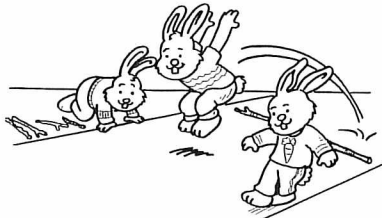
he might warmly invite a classmate to participate by asking, "Would you like to play with us?"

Playdates. Have your child tell you the names of classmates he'd like to get together with. Then, call their parents to set up a playdate at your home or the park. Help your youngster think of ways to make the visit more pleasant—perhaps by setting out or taking along toys his friend might enjoy.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Jump and measure

A family jumping contest is an active way for your child to practice measuring. Follow these three steps.



1. Jump. Mark a starting line. Each player stands behind the line, jumps forward as far as possible, and marks her landing point.

2. Measure. After each turn, have your youngster measure how far the person jumped. She can use her own feet as a unit of measurement by walking heel-to-toe in a straight line between sticks. Let her write the correct number of "feet" next to each player's name on a sheet of paper.

3. Compare. Ask her questions about the results. "How many 'feet' was the longest jump?" (9) "The shortest?" (4) Help her find the difference between the longest and shortest jumps ($9 - 4 = 5$ "feet"). *Tip:* Play a few more times to give family members a chance to beat their distances.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Alphabet rocks

This rockin' activity builds your youngster's alphabet skills as she writes letters on rocks and matches them with objects.

Write

Ask your child to gather five rocks outside and use chalk to write a different letter on each one. Together, say the sound of each letter as she writes it.

Play

Can your youngster match each rock with an item that starts with its letter? For instance, she could place a *t* rock under a tree, a *b* rock on a picnic blanket, and a *p* rock on a plate. Now have your child wipe the chalk off the rocks. She can write five new letters and play again!♥



Q & A

Learning self-control

Q: My son sometimes acts without thinking about the consequences of his behavior. How can I help him develop more self-control?

A: It's common for children this age to be impulsive. As your son gets older, he will gain more control over his behavior. In the meantime, there are strategies that can make a difference.

First, ask your child questions rather than telling him what to do. For instance, if he puts a candy bar in the shopping cart without permission, ask, "What should you have done instead?" Coming up

with the answer on his own ("I should have asked you") will teach him to stop and think.

You could also create a special signal to use when he's acting impulsively (say, throwing a ball in the house). Maybe you'll put your index finger to your temple. That's his cue to think about his behavior.

As your son's self-control improves, you're likely to find yourself asking fewer questions and using the signal less often.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2019

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *The Day You Begin*

(Jacqueline Woodson)

The students in this story feel alone for different reasons, whether it's because of what they look like, how they talk, or what they eat. But the children discover that when they share their differences, they begin to see just how well they *do* fit in. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Night Night, Groot*

(Brendan Deneen)

In this bedtime comic book, Baby Groot is ready for bed after a long day. But his friend Rocket Raccoon has other ideas. He snatches Groot out of bed, and the two zoom across the universe with their superhero friends. Will Groot ever get to sleep?

■ *Tigers & Tea with Toppy* (Barbara Kerley and Rhoda Knight Kalt)

To Rhoda, her grandfather is "Toppy."



To everyone else, he's the famous wildlife artist Charles R. Knight.

This biography tells the story of a weekend adventure Rhoda and Toppy enjoy together. Tag along to the museum and the zoo to see many of the artist's drawings and paintings.

■ *The Cloud Book* (Tomie dePaola)

Can your youngster predict the weather by looking at the clouds?

Has she ever thought that a cloud was shaped like an animal? This nonfiction book teaches readers about common cloud types and the weather they typically bring.



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Fill your home with words

Your child learned to talk by hearing many words every day. Now that she's learning to read, *seeing* lots of words will make them familiar to her when she comes across them in books. Use these ideas to surround your youngster with words.

Label

On sticky notes, help your child label furniture, toys, and appliances with their names. She could put each note on the correct item, then walk around the house and see how many words she can read. *Idea:* Let her create a nameplate for each person's door—and even put one on the dog's food bowl or the fish tank.

Post

Use colorful tape to mark off a "bulletin board" on the refrigerator. Your youngster can post all kinds of things to read. *Examples:* The school cafeteria menu, notes from you, a joke. Then, make time daily to read the board. For instance, before



school, help her check the menu to find out what's for lunch.

Collect

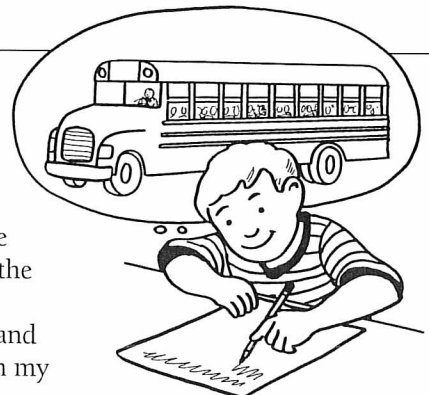
Cut construction paper into fourths and staple the pieces together to create word books. Your child might title one "Food Words," then cut words like *cereal* and *rice* from food packages and glue them all over the pages. She could put her books on a shelf or on the coffee table to pull out and read whenever she likes. ♥

My school story

"What did you do in school today?" Instead of having your child *tell* you, encourage him to write it down. He'll work on putting events in order, and you'll learn all about his day.

Ask your youngster to write a sentence about what he did first. *Example:* "I rode the school bus." Then ask, "What happened next?" He might write: "We had reading and writing time. I went to lunch and ate with my friends. We did math."

Tip: If your child isn't writing yet, let him dictate his story to you. ♥



Books and the great outdoors

Reading can be a quiet indoor pastime for your youngster—or a playful outdoor adventure! In your backyard or at the park, read stories that take place outside. Then, try these suggestions for helping your child make connections between books and his world.

Recreate a picture. Let your youngster choose an illustration from a book and use props to make his own real-life version of it. If the picture shows a pond with



the sidewalk after a rainstorm to see how they wriggle. Or after reading about a windy day, he may want to make a colorful wind sock to see which way the wind is blowing.♥

lily pads, he could float leaves on a puddle. Or if there's an illustration of a bear in a cave, maybe he'll use sticks and rocks to build a miniature hideaway for his teddy bear.

Explore science. Do a science activity related to a book. Say the main character in a story is an earthworm. Your child might observe worms on



A back-to-school recipe

Your youngster can practice writing instructions as she whips up a recipe for a great school year!

Together, read recipes for favorite dishes so she sees how they include an ingredients list and step-by-step instructions. Then, suggest that your child write her own list of ingredients for a great school year. *Example:* “1 friendly teacher, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup reading, a dash of recess.”

1. Combine 1 friendly teacher with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup reading.
2. Sprinkle in a dash of recess.
3. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup math games.



Next, she should write a step for each ingredient. Encourage her to use cooking words like those in the recipes she read (*stir, combine, blend*).

Finally, listen while your youngster reads her finished recipe to you.♥

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Q&A Read-alouds for new readers

Q My son loves it when I read to him. Now that he's learning to read on his own, what should I do differently at story time?

A Simply continuing to read aloud to your son is one of the best ways to support his reading. Kids who have pleasant experiences with books tend to become better readers.

Try following your child's lead at story time. If he points out words he knows, offer encouragement. (“You're right, that word is *blue*.”) Or if he asks what a word means, give a quick kid-friendly explanation. (“*Locomotive* is a big word for *train*.”)

Also, share your reactions to the book, and let your son do the same. *Example:* “I was really hoping the train would make it up the hill. Did you think it would?” You'll find that talking about stories is a natural way to boost his comprehension.♥



Parent to Parent

Let's do research!

My daughter Kara asks a lot of questions. During a recent trip to the library, we read a non-fiction book that answered her most recent one: “Why do we get the hiccups?”

Now Kara keeps a list of questions she thinks of. When we visit the library, we look up the answers. Our research is turning out to be far more educational—and more fun—than asking

my phone to answer Kara's questions. For instance, I help her type her topic into the library database, and we look at the list of suggested books. Then the librarian points us toward the section where we can find what we need.

Kara is learning her way around the library, and she's even learning to use a book's index to locate the information she's looking for.♥



Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2019



Book Picks

■ *Lunch Lady and the Cyborg Substitute* (Jarrett J. Krosoczka)

Three students discover that their lunch lady is a secret agent who's investigating a new teacher. The agent and her assistant use special gadgets—like an apron that's really a cape—to help them crack the case. Book one in the Lunch Lady graphic novel series.



■ *Our Story Begins* (edited by Elissa Brent Weissman)

Get a glimpse into the childhoods of 26 favorite children's authors and illustrators in this collection of their earliest works. Readers will find stories, poems, artwork, and more—and may even be inspired to get creative themselves!



■ *Who Was Rosa Parks?*

(Yona Zeldis McDonough)
In this biography, readers will learn about the heroic woman who bravely refused to give up her seat on a bus. The book describes Parks's childhood and the changes she inspired. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *A Boy Called Bat* (Elana K. Arnold)



Bat, a boy who has autism, bonds with a baby skunk his veterinarian mother brings home. He names the skunk Thor and wants to keep him as a pet,

but he has to convince his mom. This story about acceptance and friendship is the first book in the Bat series.

Chicora Elementary

Motivated to read

Reading for pleasure is one of the most important ways for your child to build the skills he needs for school success. Get him into the reading habit this year with these ideas.

Find an "in"

Choose a book you think your youngster will enjoy—say, one about a boy his age who is short like he is. Read the first chapter or two aloud to him, and then ask him to read the next one. Don't be surprised if he gets hooked on the story and finishes reading it on his own!

Become a team

Pick a new hobby to try with your child, and team up to learn everything you can about it. The two of you might get into stamp collecting or photography. Check the library for collectors' guides or how-to books related to your hobby.

Use pictures

Colorful illustrations make picture encyclopedias and coffee-table books

hard to resist. Your youngster can explore kid-friendly topics like animals and sports. Leave the books around the house, perhaps on your child's nightstand or an end table. The pictures may spark his interest in reading the words.

Think outside the book

Reading doesn't always have to mean books. Is your youngster a movie buff? Let him read film reviews before you head to the theater. Does he like board games? Steer him toward trivia games that require players to read and answer questions. ■

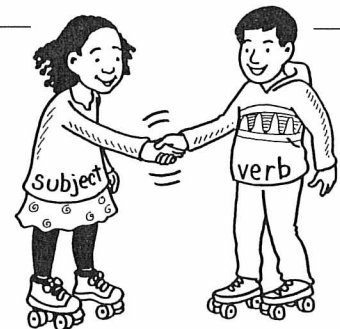


Let's agree!

It's important for subjects and verbs to agree—just as it's important for your child to get along with others! Share these tips and strategies to help your youngster choose the correct verb:

- A singular subject (except *I* and *you*) gets a singular verb. Have your child pick a sentence from a book and read it with and without the *s* at the end of the verb. Example: "John *skates* around the rink," "John *skate* around the rink." The subject (*John*) is singular, so the verb (*skates*) is singular, too.

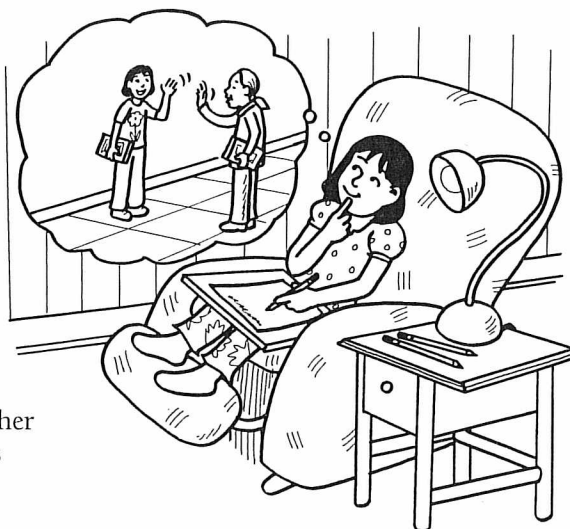
- Even if the subject and verb are separated by other words, they still have to agree. Suggest that your youngster ignore the words between the subject and verb to make sure she selected the right verb: "The boy ~~with the dogs~~ *walks* by our house every day." ■



The elements of a story

Your youngster has been asked to write a story. She has a topic in mind but isn't sure how to begin. Sound familiar? Have her consider these story elements to get her creative-writing juices flowing.

Theme. The theme is the "big idea," which is different from the topic. For example, if your child's story is about a girl who is new at her school, the theme could be courage or perhaps



friendship. Keeping the theme in mind will help her dig deeper into her topic.

Tone. Will your youngster's story be suspenseful or funny? For a horror story, she might choose words that keep readers in suspense. If she wants to write a funny story, she could think of dialogue that will make readers laugh.

Read, write, and get involved

Did you know that your youngster can gain reading, writing, and speaking skills by joining after-school activities? Suggest that he check out extracurriculars like these.

Student council

Your child will practice persuasive and explanatory writing when he composes speeches, creates campaign posters, or takes minutes at meetings. And giving speeches is good experience for oral presentations in class.



Publications

Working on a school newspaper, yearbook, or literary magazine offers lots of reading and writing opportunities. Your youngster will write questions for interviews, conduct research for articles, or write stories or poems to be published.

School plays

Memorizing his lines and saying them with expression can make your child a smoother reader. He'll also become familiar with dialogue, narration, and stage directions. ■



child decide when her story will take place. During a specific period of history? A season of the year, such as winter? She can bring her story to life by including details about things like the clothing that characters are wearing and the weather outside. ■

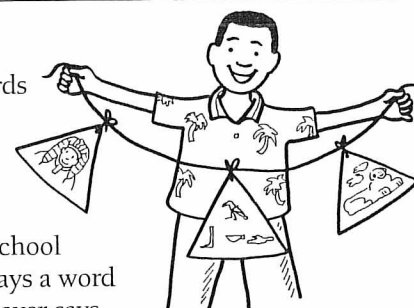


Create word chains

Making "chains" of related words is a fun way to stretch your child's vocabulary. Play this game together, and see how many words you can link!

Have your youngster think of a category that's related to something he's learning in school (say, ancient Egypt). To start the game, he says a word that fits his category (*pyramid*). The next player says another word that goes along with the category. But there's a catch! Each new word has to begin with the last letter of the one before it.

A word chain for ancient Egypt, for example, could be: "*pharaoh, hieroglyphics, sphinx.*" Continue calling out words until someone can't think of a new one. The last player to come up with a word picks the next category. ■



Making sense of graphics

Q My daughter tends to skip over graphics, such as charts and diagrams, when she reads a textbook. What do you suggest?

A Point out that graphics work as a team with words to help her understand subjects like math, science, and history. She can become more comfortable with these textbook features by reading and using graphics that appear in everyday life.

For example, the nutrition-facts box on her

favorite snack contains a chart with useful information. Suggest that she slide her finger across rows and down columns to keep her place as she reads. Explain that she'll need to read the whole thing—"120 calories per serving" is useful only if she knows the serving size.

Also, have her practice using diagrams at home by following them to build toys or to help assemble furniture. She'll see that a visual image makes it much easier to understand the instructions. ■



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