

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Mexico Academy & Central School District



May 2025

Enrich your preschooler's summer by combining fun and learning

A fun and relaxing summer can still be full of learning for your child. There are many ways to add a learning element to activities you are already planning. Here are a few things to do when you and your child are:

- **Visiting relatives.** Help your child make connections to history by telling family stories about the past. Talk about all the ways the world has changed, and the exciting things that are possible now that weren't when older family members were young.
- **Reading together.** Choose books, poems and other material about things your child might be doing this summer. There are books for preschoolers about everything from putting on sunscreen to eating ice cream to growing a juicy tomato.
- **Spending time outdoors.** Ask questions related to science: *Why does that toy boat float in the pool? Do you think a flip-flop would float? How many legs does that bug have? What kind of bug do you think it is?* Then, look for the answers together online or at the library.
- **At the store or in the car.** Make math a fun part of activities that might otherwise be boring for your child. Count aisles as you walk down them or lampposts you pass, hunt for numbers on store shelves or license plates, compare sizes of cereal boxes or buildings.



Expand your child's thinking skills

Children go through amazing brain development in the preschool years. One effective way to nurture this cognitive growth is to help your child think independently.

To foster your preschooler's ability to think this way:

- **Choose toys** that require your child to do the playing. Classic toys such as blocks, puzzles and toy vehicles and animals are better than electronic toys your child just sits and watches.
- **Encourage your child** to ask questions. The more your child asks, the more your child will learn
- and think. Sometimes, ask what your child thinks the answer is.
- **Ask your child** open-ended questions that can't be answered with one word. "Can you tell me about your block tower? How did you decide what to put on the bottom?"
- **Allow your child** time to think what to say. Children can't form responses as fast as adults can.

Celebrate nature in May

Nature's wonders are everywhere, from your own backyard to outer space. Celebrate them with your child on special days this month:

- **May 2—National Space Day.** View incredibly detailed images of space taken by the James Webb telescope at: <https://science.nasa.gov/mission/webb/>.
- **May 16—National Endangered Species Day.** Learn about animals that need our help on the WWF website at <https://tinyurl.com/2rx7ecdf>.
- **May 24—National Scavenger Hunt Day.** Make a list of items from nature (a sprig of clover, a forked twig, etc.). Go outside and see how many your child can find.



Say 'no' to tattled tales

Preschoolers love to tattletale on others, but adults don't love to hear tattling. To discourage it, respond to it with two questions:

1. *Is somebody hurt?*
2. *Is somebody going to get hurt?*

If the answers are *no*, say "No tattling." You can also recognize your child's feelings—"I see you are upset that Tom ate more cookies. I'd like to hear you tell Tom instead of me."

Make time for making art

Art activities let children discover creative ways to express themselves. To help:

- **Offer a variety** of supplies: crayons, glue, fabric scraps, etc.
- **Resist the urge** to tell your child what to create.
- **Be sensitive.** Some kids don't like to get their hands sticky, for example.
- **Describe the art.** Be specific. "What a colorful sky! I love it."





What kind of summertime structure do kids need?

Q: My five-year-old and I love summer's warm weather and outdoor activities. But my child functions better with a schedule, and I worry that without one, starting kindergarten in the fall could be rough. What are some ideas for creating a helpful summer routine?



A: Summer often offers more flexibility than the rest of the year. But you are right that having a routine will make re-entry into the school year much easier for your child. To create one:

- **Stick with daily basics.** Five-year-olds still need about 11 hours of sleep. If your child usually wakes up at 7 a.m., maintain an 8 p.m. bedtime. Eat meals at the same times when possible.
- **Plan "work time" each morning.** Your child can do learning activities or age-appropriate chores, such as putting clothes and toys away.
- **Include morning outdoor time.** The heat and the sun get more intense as the day goes on.
- **Schedule quiet time after lunch.** If your child no longer naps, this time can be for looking at books, doing puzzles, or other quiet activities.
- **Use a family calendar.** Your child may go to a summer program on some days, or visit with friends or family. Mark these days on the calendar together. Review the next day's plans with your child each evening.



Are you helping your child learn to listen?

Listening—to instructions, information and discussions—is an important part of learning. Are you helping your preschooler practice this skill and become a better listener? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you ask** your child to follow two- and three-step directions? "Please go in your room, get a hat and put it on."
2. **Do you play** games as a family that require careful listening, such as musical chairs?
3. **Do you go** outside together and take turns naming the sounds you hear?
4. **Do you tap** out rhythms and ask your child to mimic them?
5. **Do you model** patient, attentive listening when your child is talking to you?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are fostering your child's ability to listen carefully. For each no, try that idea.

"Life gets better
when you listen,
to yourself, and
to others"

—Maxime Lagacé

Commit to summer reading

Reading with you all summer long helps your child's developing literacy skills stay sharp and ready for school in the fall. To create a summer reading habit:

- **Bring books everywhere.** See how many places you and your child can find to read. Read on picnics, in the sandbox at the park, at a relative's house, etc.
- **Keep your supply** of reading material fresh. Visit the library often. Look for children's books at yard sales. Or, swap with families nearby.
- **Let one great book** lead to another. If your child likes a book, look for more books by that author or on similar topics.

Plan for screen-free time

This summer, guard against letting more free time turn into more screen time. To occupy your preschooler in more productive ways:

- **Give your child a job** to do for the family, such as dusting low surfaces or lining shoes up neatly.
- **Make a list** of fun activities: blowing bubbles, twirling with scarves, playing restaurant, etc. When boredom strikes, let your child pick one.



Build kindergarten skills

To support a successful entry into kindergarten, help your child strengthen some basic skills this summer, such as:

- **Talking.** Discuss the things your child sees. Ask your child to name common objects and colors. Ask questions to keep conversations going.
- **Sorting.** Talk about how items are similar and how they are different.
- **Small motor skills.** Teach your child to zip and button clothing.

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