

FIRST TEACHER



A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS
OF BIRTH TO SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

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New Information About Babies

When a baby is born, her brain is about 1/4 the size of the brain she will have as an adult. In addition, many of her brain cells are waiting to be connected.

They get connected by being used.
If they aren't used, they disappear.

This is just one of the scientific breakthroughs that have dramatically changed what we know about the importance of the early years of a child's life. Here are a few more:

- ▶▶ The brain never stops changing throughout a person's life.
- ▶▶ The most intense period of growth of the brain is during the first three years.
- ▶▶ Even at age 3, the child's brain is twice as active as an adult's brain.
- ▶▶ The child's brain develops based on her genetics and her experience.
- ▶▶ The quality of relationships and experiences in the first three years has a deep and lasting impact on how the brain gets "wired."
- ▶▶ The early wiring of the brain sets the foundation for development in every aspect of life.
- ▶▶ Brain development and behavior are bound together. They continually influence each other.
- ▶▶ Each brain can develop in many different ways depending on genetics, experience, relationships, health, and nutrition.

The importance of what you do as a parent begins earlier than we used to think it did. This is not a cause for anxiety. It is an opportunity to make parenting more rewarding than ever while still being one of the most exciting and joyful opportunities a parent will ever have.





Good luck in being a part of your baby's astounding development.

Ramey, C. T., and Ramey, S. L., *Right From Birth*, Goddard Parenting Guide, N.Y., 1999.



Summer is Here Already

So what do you need to keep in mind?

-  Keep your baby out of the sun, (Have him wear a hat and sunglasses, and be sure to use sunscreen.)
-  Plan ahead for trips. (Make sure you bring things for him to do while you are driving or flying.)
-  Think of ways to keep him busy. (Drawing with chalk on the driveway, playing outside, board games, friends, and plenty of time for reading.)
-  Feed him healthy snacks.

"The easy part
is becoming a parent;
the difficult part
is being
a good one."

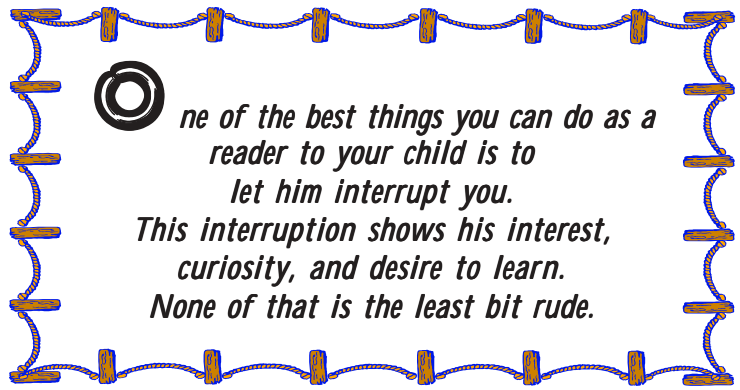


The Importance of Imitating

The primary way young children learn most behavior is by imitation. You, the parent, are teaching your baby from the very beginning of her life. Long before you see the actual behavior duplicated by the child, the child is watching and taking in the behavior of all of those around her. But as she grows, you can observe her behavior and you will see the results of her imitation.

She pretends to read exactly as she sees her parents read, maybe even in the same chair. She uses some of the same expressions and tone of voice as her parents. The hammers, tools, vacuums and telephones of her parents become the toys with which she plays. She mimics her father's shaving and her mother's putting on makeup. The anger and scolding she sees, you are likely to hear repeated as she becomes angry or scolds her doll. In the same manner, the enthusiasm and loving gestures she observes become part of her play.

This imitating begins early and lasts throughout the child's growing years. Is there any doubt that you are your child's first and most important teacher?



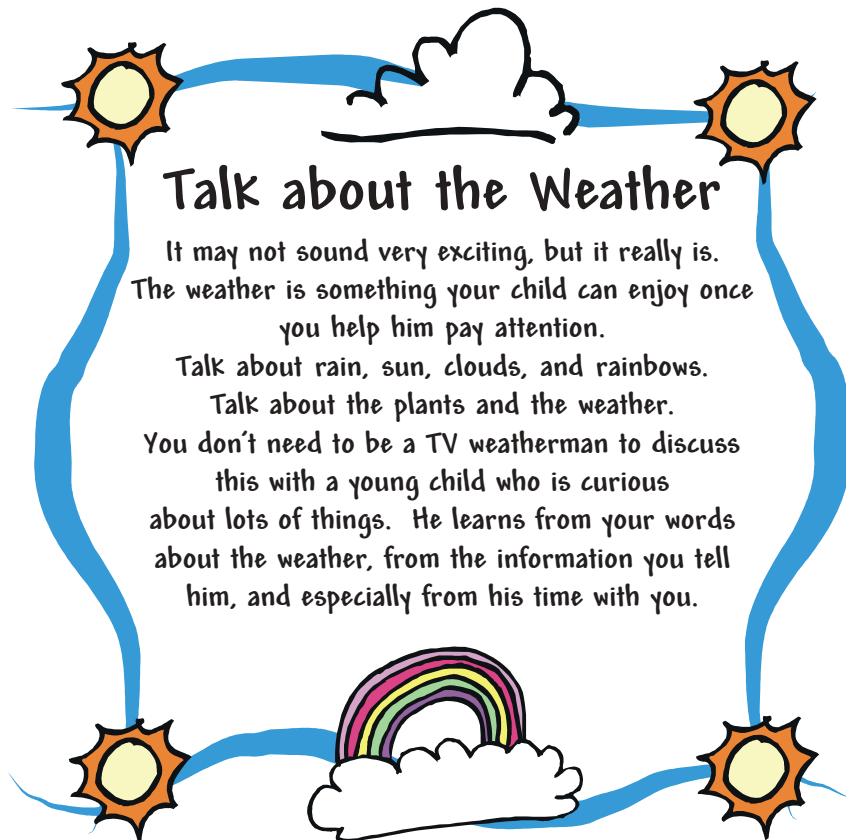
One of the best things you can do as a reader to your child is to let him interrupt you.

This interruption shows his interest, curiosity, and desire to learn. None of that is the least bit rude.



Dinner and Conversation

As you are planning dinner tonight, think about what you can talk about that will allow you a chance to include your child in the conversation. Did you go somewhere he can talk about? Could you have him talk about the book you read together today? Did he talk with grandma on the phone? Did you see the cow down the street or the neighbor's dog chasing a ball? Ask him about any of these things and to help him feel included in this special way.



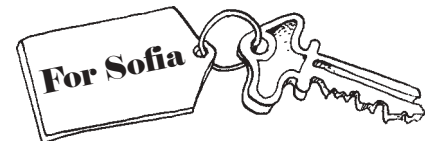
Talk about the Weather

It may not sound very exciting, but it really is. The weather is something your child can enjoy once you help him pay attention.

Talk about rain, sun, clouds, and rainbows.

Talk about the plants and the weather.

You don't need to be a TV weatherman to discuss this with a young child who is curious about lots of things. He learns from your words about the weather, from the information you tell him, and especially from his time with you.



A Special Gift for Your Child

If you would like to give your child a very special gift, consider giving her a box with a lock.

There is something about a locked box that makes a child very excited.

Make sure you keep a separate key somewhere because it will surely get lost,

but in the meantime, she will have a great time putting her treasures in her special box with a lock.



ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENT PLAY

Babies are great fun to play with. However, sometimes it is nice to have them play alone. If you are always the playmate for your child, he will have a difficult time when you leave the room, answer the telephone, or go to the bathroom. It is to your advantage to help him learn to entertain himself for a period of time. Your one-year-old can play alone for 10-20 minutes in a crib or in a childproofed area. But most children need a little nudge to get them used to this kind of play.

1. Try to get him playing with something that he can do alone, like blocks.
2. Play with him for a few minutes, then stop and sit there. Talk with him but don't play for awhile.
3. Gradually move further away over the next few days until you can sit across the room but still talk occasionally.
4. Leave the room for a few seconds. Tell him you are going away for a moment, then step into the next room. When he realizes you're gone, he may fuss a little. Don't rush back in. Tell him you are in the kitchen and will be right back. Gradually extend the amount of time you are away.

Be Excited about Your Child's Learning

- Let your child know that you are paying attention.
- Clap for her new song. Smile at her high tower.
- Laugh at her four-year-old joke.
- Sing with her as she learns a new song and then clap for both of you.

Being excited about learning helps her be excited too. While you certainly don't need to overdo it every time she does something, make sure you show your enthusiasm regularly and sincerely.




Count the Times
How many times do you give your child an OK sign or a thumbs-up sign?
Make sure you say twice as many "good job" comments as negative ones. It's important.

GRASS AND WEED KILLER



Make sure that your child does not play on grass right after you put out weed killer. It is easy to forget that children can be seriously hurt by coming into contact with insecticides. Your child may also want to pick the lovely dandelions you just sprayed, so plan ahead to keep your child safe.

Looking for Special Dad Activities

- ✓ Read together ✓ Play ball ✓ Go out for lemonade ✓ Help write thank-you notes to grandparents
- ✓ Go for a walk together ✓ Dry the dishes together ✓ Show him how to feed the ducks ✓ Go fishing
- ✓ Talk with her about what could be improved ✓ Be the one to give him his bath ✓ Add bubbles to the bath ✓ Comfort her when she is hurt ✓ Tell him what a neat mom he has ✓ Hug her and tell her you love her.

Don't Forget about Fathers (and uncles, and grandfathers, etc.)



June is the month we honor fathers. But we also honor all of the others who are involved in fathering our children. Their role is an important one; just ask children how they feel about the men in their lives. The presents we give are neat, but the best things to give are the hugs and thank-yous for being there for our children.

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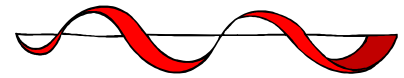
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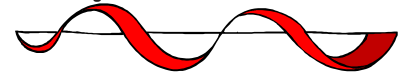
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and what you would like to
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