



Early Childhood: Quick Tips for Parents

About Quick Tips:

Early Childhood Quick Tips is a publication of Graduation Matters Missoula, a collaborative effort of Missoula's families, schools and community to help every student stay and succeed in school through high school graduation. These periodic tips are designed to help parents support early learning and development before their child starts school.



Tips *Reading and Language*

Bring books alive. Use a dramatic voice, when reading aloud to your child - different voices for the characters, and sound effects. What voice should Billy Goat Gruff use? Different than the little goat. Try a quiet voice and a loud voice, depending on the action. This helps your little one engage with books and learn words.

Help "Brian" **think of other words** that start with B. Start with a couple of with a couple of B words – ball, book . . . What other words can Brian think of that start with B? Help him find B words while looking around the house, the store, the park. Point out labels or signs that have the letter B and ask him to find them, too. Try other letters later to help him learn the alphabet.

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Tips *Making Food Fun*



Trust children to eat what they need, as long as the selection of food is healthy. Offer healthy foods in bite-size pieces. Kids love to dip foods in hummus or ranch dressing. Encourage them to try foods; don't force them to eat anything. Kids often have to try a new food 7-10 times before they like it.

Make more foods available in a variety of ways. For example, you might serve some cooked vegetables, but also offer a plate of fresh raw vegetables like carrots, pea pods, broccoli and green pepper slices. If a picky eater refuses a food prepared one way, she may like it prepared another way. Be sure to try the foods yourself!



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Tips *Science Projects*

Does it float or does it sink? Invite your toddler to gather small items and guess if they float or sink. Contribute some yourself as part of the science game. Fill a dishpan or big bowl with water and try each item. Why did it float or sink? Help your toddler explore the world around her - it's science!

Which glass has more? Gather a few clear glasses in different sizes and shapes. Ask your young child which glass holds more water. Fill up the one the child guesses. Then, pour the water into another glass to see if it holds more or less. Children often pick a tall slender glass over a wide short glass, though the glasses might hold the same amount. Science is about inquiry and experimentation – give it a try!

Tips *Building Skills*

Children enjoy helping with “Big Jobs” at home. Give her a small rake or shovel, or let her help you with the big tool. She can help bag the leaves. Let a child carry his plate and silverware to the table. Put a small clothes basket in his room and ask him to put his dirty clothes in the basket. Helping with family tasks helps children learn to work with others and to compromise. They contribute to the family and prepare for more responsibility later. More time now results in more skills and cooperation later.



Help your child build fine motor skills to promote independence with daily activities. Encourage your child to dress herself, use utensils to eat, create with play-dough or colors, and to build with small blocks. Who cares what she wears, or if her shirt is on backwards, to go to the park? Accepting less-than-perfect performance helps her build confidence to try new activities.

United Way
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