



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

How are you consistent with your preschooler?

Ages & Stages

PRECHOOLER A child who is 3 to 5 years of age.

YOUNG CHILD A child who is 0 to 8 years of age.

Minding Our Language

Families come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. A “family” may include people who are related by blood, by marriage, and by choice. “Parents” may be biological, step-, foster, adoptive, legally appointed, or something else. When we use the words “family” and “parent” in these materials, we do so inclusively and with great respect for all adults who care for and work with young people.

Children need structure and rules, and people who care for children need to be consistent. Consistent parents have set rules and routines and are predictable. They follow through, use consequences, and mean what they say. They refuse to give in to nagging or whining requests. When parents are consistent, children know what to expect and when, and understand in advance what will happen if they choose not to behave. Most parents have a hard time being consistent, but good parenting demands that we do our best. Think about the following ideas as you try to be more consistent with your preschooler.

- Be predictable. Have routines and rules that they know well.
- Only have rules you are willing to enforce all the time. Being inconsistent with a rule is the same as not having one at all.
- Follow through on what you have said you would do.
- Before you say no, make sure that you mean it. It is better to think for a second than to make a quick decision about something and then change your mind about it a short time later.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say. If you said “no candy” at the grocery store, that means no candy, even if your child asks 50 times or throws a tantrum.
- Calmly remind your child of the consequences when they break the rules. If they know a rule and the consequence related to it in advance, there is no reason for anyone to yell or nag.
- Catch them being good! Praise your child when they follow the rules.

Find Out More

MSU Extension provides the following resources for parents and caregivers of preschoolers and young children at no or low cost. Be sure to check out these and other MSU Extension resources available at www.extension.msu.edu.

Extension Extras (<https://bit.ly/2LC2vdX>) – These compilations of news articles, activities, parenting tips and advice are published online Monday through Friday. The resources are designed for parents and caregivers of young children who are home all day during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Each day has a theme: Mindful Mondays, Tips on Tuesday, Working Wednesdays, Thinking Thursday, and Fun Fridays.

Extension Extras Enrichment Kits (<https://bit.ly/35QAplQ>) – These kits feature five or six early childhood activities with learning goals focused in areas such as social and emotional health, literacy, and STEM; a supply list; suggested children’s books; introduction letters explaining how to use the materials; and an evaluation. The kits are available as free downloads.

Early Childhood Videos (<https://bit.ly/3ioyEkS>) – These short videos offer parents and caregivers of young children information on parenting topics. Titles include “Perspective Taking,” “Family Movies,” “Goals of Misbehavior,” “Using Thinking and Feeling Words,” “The Waiting Game,” and “When Siblings Fight.”

Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES) in Young Children (<https://bit.ly/38XW4KI>) – This page provides links to a variety of free online parenting courses, workshops, and events offered by MSU Extension for parents and caregivers of young children aged 0 to 3.

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