



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

How do you talk with your child?

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.

Preschool-aged children learn about themselves, their relationships, and the world they live in by talking. Talking helps them understand what is happening, who and what is important, and why. How you talk to your child makes a difference in how they feel about themselves, too. It is important to spend time talking with your child. Not only are they learning new words and ideas, but you are also teaching them that who they are and what they think matter!

Try some of the following tips for talking with your child:

- Ask your child about their ideas often. This helps them recognize that their thoughts are important.
- Encourage talking by asking open-ended questions that require more than yes or no answers (“*What did you like about school today?*”) because yes or no questions tend to be conversation-stoppers (“*Did you have a good day?*”)
- Use responses that encourage more talking. (“*Tell me more.*” “*Hmm.*” “*Oh, really?*” “*What do you think?*”)
- Try asking questions that begin with “how” to help your child add details while talking. (“*How did you pick up your clothes so fast?*” “*How did you think of that?*”)
- Show them how to talk with respect. (“*I feel mad when you don’t pick up your toys*” instead of “*You are such a slob*” or “*This room is a disaster!*”)
- Ask questions about things that have already happened so your child can practice remembering and storytelling. (“*Tell me about what you did at school today.*” “*Remember that time when . . .*”)
- Speak kindly. Talking is more than the words you use, it is also the way you say the words. Your child will learn how to speak to others by listening to and copying you!

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/38XW4Kl>) – 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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