



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

How have you seen your child use self-control?

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.

Parents of young children spend a lot of time teaching their children how to act. By the time they are 3 or 4 years old, children are able to understand and follow many of the rules that are expected of them. Even though preschoolers may follow the rules *most* of the time, parents shouldn't expect them to behave the way they should *all* of the time. Preschool-aged children still cannot control their thoughts and actions completely. It takes many years and a lot of practice to learn self-control. Some things you can do that will help your preschooler learn self-control follow:

- Respect their feelings and needs.
- Create a predictable structure to the day that your child can count on.
- Reduce your own and your child's frustration as much as possible by keeping their routines and needs in mind. Go out *after* your child has had lunch or a nap, not before.
- Keep your child busy with toys and activities that are fun and appropriate for preschoolers.
- Teach them to use words to express how they are feeling and what they need.
- Have consistent and fair rules.
- Help your child solve problems and work out difficult situations.
- Let them make choices and see the consequences of their choices.
- Talk to your preschooler about how you expect them to behave and what will happen if they don't.
- Use time-outs as a way to help your child calm down. Have them sit out until they have cooled off.
- Wait until your child has calmed down to talk about what they could have done in a situation instead of acting out. The middle of a tantrum is never a time to teach!
- Act the way you would like your child to act. Children behave a lot like the people around them, so be a good listener!

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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